

PICTURE BY JAKE MCNULTY



Users with, centre, Katie Hill, supported living manager and right, Melissa Lindo, support worker, in their supported living communal area.

Outstanding rating for disability charity

Service praised for its caring culture and protecting privacy

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Learning disability charity Style Acre, which has a branch in Banbury, has been awarded an outstanding rating by the Care Quality Commission.

Style Acre is a supported living service to enable people with learning disabilities and autism to live independently in their own homes.

The CQC carried out an inspection of the service in November last year and at the time of the inspection, there were 82 people being supported with personal care.

The grading is an improve-

ment on its previous inspection in September 2015, when the organisation was given a rating of good.

Nationally, less than two per cent of adult social care services have achieved the outstanding rating.

In its report, the CQC said Style Acre was 'exceptionally well-led by a management team who were highly committed to ensuring people lived fulfilling lives.'

It added: "Without exception people spoke positively about their experience of the service and the successes they had been supported to achieve."

"It was clear the culture within the service valued the uniqueness of all individuals. People had access to a wide range of activities which took

account of their personal preferences and were tailored to their individual needs.

"Staff went to exceptional lengths to encourage people to identify an activity that would enhance their health and wellbeing."

"There were many examples of people's lives being transformed through accessing activities."

"There was an extremely caring culture that ensured people's privacy was protected and respected. Everyone spoke of the openness of the service and without exception, people felt valued and listened to."

The service was rated as outstanding on four of the five areas inspected and was rated as good for 'is the service safe?'

Katie Hill, support manager

at the Banbury branch said: "We are absolutely delighted with our outstanding rating."

"Our staff continuously go to great efforts beyond what is expected and being recognised by the CQC has motivated us to work even harder to make the lives of the people we support as happy as possible."

Style Acre patron, John Craven, said: "I pass on to everyone at Style Acre my congratulations after being awarded the accolade of 'outstanding' by CQC."

"A truly wonderful achievement which makes me even prouder to be associated with this remarkable organisation."

The service won three awards at the Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers Care Awards in 2016.

Trust criticised for closing beds as A&E still under pressure

Health watchdog members criticised the permanent closure of hospital beds at a meeting on Tuesday as the Horton General Hospital's A&E is under severe pressure.

Healthwatch Oxfordshire board members slammed Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust as it had to take beds from other wards to cope with demand.

The Horton, John Radcliffe Hospital and Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre were on the highest possible pressure level, known as 'black alert', for four days last week with dialysis patients still having to go to Oxford for treatment because the emergency department has taken over beds.

Healthwatch chairman Prof George Smith said they warned the trust not to close beds on multiple occasions as they would be needed during the winter.

"The health authority has not been straight with us, a year ago they looked us straight in the eye and said they had more beds than they needed," he said.

"So they were either lying or they are so incompetent



Healthwatch Oxfordshire chairman George Smith

that they can't see the reality in front of them."

Board member Martin Tarran-Jones said Healthwatch needs to 'stand up and be counted' as a watchdog by not supporting any further bed closures.

The hospitals came off 'black alert' on Friday afternoon as director of clinical services Paul Brennan said the trust's decision to open extra beds and postpone non-urgent procedures was helping to alleviate pressure.

Extra beds taken from the Horton dialysis ward will stay at A&E until the end of the month, Mr Brennan added.

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Not guilty pleas over banned group

A man and a woman from Banbury, charged with being members of banned far-right group National Action, pleaded not guilty in court on Tuesday.

Adam Thomas, 21, and Claudia Patatas, 38, both of Waltham Gardens, appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court along with four other men after being charged on Monday.

Thomas also indicated a not guilty plea to possessing information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or prepar-

ing an act of terrorism, namely the Anarchist Cookbook.

The five men gave their identities as British while Patatas told the court she is Portuguese.

The others charged are: Nathan Pryke, 26, of Dartford Road, March, Cambridgeshire; Darren Fletcher, 28, of Kitchen Lane, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton; Daniel Bogunovic, 26, of Crown Hills Rise, Leicester; and Joel Wilmore, 24, of Bramhall Moor Lane, Hazel Grove, Stockport.

The charges relate to belong-

ing to the banned group between December 17, 2016, and September 5, last year.

Bogunovic also pleaded not guilty to intending to stir up racial hatred by posting National Action-branded stickers at the Aston University campus in Birmingham. Fletcher faces five counts of breaching an anti-social behaviour order.

The Government banned National Action in December, 2016, and membership of the group carries a sentence of up to

10 years' imprisonment.

All six were remanded in custody and are due to appear at the Old Bailey on January 19.

The group were arrested by West Midlands Police Counter Terrorism Unit in conjunction with units from across the country last week.

A warrant was granted to allow police to keep the five men in custody for longer for further questioning but Patatas was released on investigation, before being charged.