



## **AUTISM ACCREDITATION PEER REVIEW**

**SERVICE REVIEWED:** Marcus and Marcus Ltd

**DATES OF REVIEW:** 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017

**TEAM MEMBERS:** Rebecca Leeson, Joy-Margaret Samaroo, Sharon Hanner

### **OVERVIEW OF PROVISION**

Marcus & Marcus supported living services provide care and support to people in supported living projects across London, with its primary focus in the boroughs of Enfield and Haringey. Established in 2002, with a vision for supporting ordinary and fulfilling lives, the service now has a team of over 300 led by the Managing Director – Edward Marcus and is supporting 80 clients, 99% of whom have Autism. The team also includes two Senior Managers and an Operation Support Team (including Training, Compliance, Operations Managers (two), and Positive Intervention Team (nine)).

The service provides individual packages of support to enable people with complex needs to live ordinary lives in their communities, focusing on supporting people with high levels of need around behaviour that challenges services, Autism and learning disabilities with additional mental health needs. The individuals supported by the service have often had many placement breakdowns or repeated admissions to hospital.

### **SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

#### Observations

Over the course of the review, we completed a total of twenty-two observations visiting a variety of the projects throughout North London that Marcus & Marcus support. We observed many of the service users Marcus & Marcus supports over the two days of the review and saw progression videos for many more that there was just not time to meet and observe. The team at Marcus & Marcus were exceptionally organised, we were fully prepared before meeting each service user, briefed by members of the Positive Intervention Team and viewing a selection of the clients training and progression video's, so we not

only got to observe the session as it was on the day, but also how the team had worked to get there and the progress the individual had made. Some examples of the observations are:

- Structures 1:1 activity sessions: Sensory Session, Communication Session
- Of site activities: Orchestra, Place of Employment, Shopping Trip, Recycling, Music Session
- Work / Training Placements: Grass Roots – a woodwork workshop (independent therapeutic and training service)

### Interviews and Discussions

During our time at Marcus and Marcus, we were fortunate to be able to speak with several professionals, family members and people with autism. Their support for the service was exceptional and the information we collected during these discussions helped to influence and support the review process and outcomes.

#### **People the service supports:**

Told us:

“I love my flat, it is near my mums house and I know what busses to get to go and see her. I lived far away when I was younger and I didn't like it. I like Marcus and Marcus and Edward Marcus has always helped me. I go to work two days a week and I like the staff who support me”

“Marcus and Marcus is excellent. They give good support to all of their clients. I started to work in the office here in 2016, it used to be two days, but now I am full time and my duties have just been extended. I really like the people I work with”

“I am a clerk at Marcus and Marcus, I have a contract. I work two days a week, soon I hope to work three days a week. I have a work coach and I enjoy my job”

#### **Parents and Family members:**

We spoke with many parents and families over the course of the review, some of these on the phone by arranged meetings, we also attended a multi-disciplinary meeting for a client where family and staff members reflected on the service and met some family members in person. Family members told us that they were happy with the service their sons and daughters were receiving from Marcus & Marcus, they have a low turnover of staff and consistent staffing teams for their children. Buildings are sourced and adapted to meet the needs of their complex sons and daughters. Parents described feeling “very much in touch” and the service as “very responsive”. One mother commented:

“My daughter has a better quality of life than living at home because of the support and the variety of activities they can engage in. She has ‘gone from strength to strength’”.

Another commented:

“my son is grown in confidence and is now happy”.

Documentation

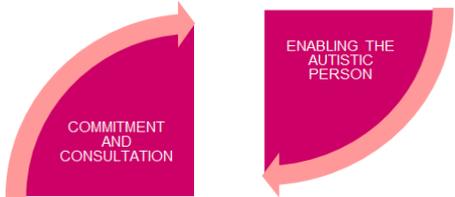
Key Documents Reviewed were:

- Service User Training Files (including Methodology, Training Materials, Attendance and Feedback from delegates & evidence of the outcomes achieved)
- Client Files (including pen portrait, Assessments, Person Centred Plans, Risk Assessment, Daily Schedules & Support plans)
- Sensory Profiles (Winnie Dunn Profile, Sensory Diets and Sensory Support Plans)
- Person Centred Plans (offering information on: decision making, socialising, spending money, communication, successful support and Positive Behaviour Support Plans)
- Supporting my Behaviour File (including Application of Autism Understanding, Making Sense of Behaviour, Functional Behaviour Assessments and ABC Records, Positive Behaviour Support Plan, incident evaluation, Consultation and sharing with external professionals and families and Review (including reviews of interventions and longitudinal evaluation of interventions)

Marcus & Marcus has a complex and comprehensive number of documents for each service user, primarily organised and mapped into a three-file system. For someone outside of the service, these can be fairly complicated to navigate, however, each staff member was able to explain the interaction of documents and how each of the systems interacts with each other to provide a holistic support, training and planning tool for each of the service users involved. For the staff teams, there are clear and concise support documents, not only for areas where the service user they are supporting need support with, but also activities, these are appendixes by protocols and guidance. Marcus & Marcus should be commended in their dedication to clear and comprehensive Support Planning.

**KEY FINDINGS**

As a result of this process, the following actions were identified for the service to work on:

Actions for Development	Reasoning
 <p><b>E2:</b> How does the organisation measure the overall effectiveness of the provision in achieving identified</p>	<p>Marcus and Marcus have dedicated considerable time and resources over the past three years to the training and support of their front-line staff. This has been highly successful and fully implemented throughout the company.</p> <p>On discussions with the Quality Assurance Manager, she advised the team that the next step for Marcus &amp; Marcus is to complete a new Induction Programme that they have been working on over the past six months, and to upskill some of the front-line staff to be able to train/mentor new staff whilst on shift. The review team felt this was an excellent development for the service and fully support this action.</p>

<p>benefits and outcomes for autistic people? and</p> <p><b>C6:</b> Are all staff trained to understand and follow the ethos and overall approach to supporting autistic people including administration and ancillary staff?</p> <p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete and implement the new staff induction.</li> <li>• Extend the current 'onsite practice observation to include a peer mentoring and peer audit process.</li> </ul>	<p>The review team believe that this will not only be an invaluable process for the new staff members and those who are mentoring them, but also free up time of the Positive Intervention Team – who are highly skilled and motivated. Giving them time to focus on other areas.</p>
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The following areas were also identified as examples of what the service does well:

Specific areas of strength	Reasoning
 <p><b>C10:</b> Are Specific methods and approaches employed in supporting autistic people based on reliable evidence of effectiveness and accepted models of best practice in the field of autism?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Outstanding levels of Consistent Good Autism Practice</i></li> <li>• <i>Collection and use of evidence towards planning and progression of autistic people</i></li> <li>• <i>Long term commitment to change and support for people being supported</i></li> <li>• <i>The organisation has grown organically around the people it supports</i></li> </ul>	<p>Marcus &amp; Marcus is committed to continuous improvement of the service and practice that it delivers. Having opened in 2003 with one service user (who is still supported by the service), it has grown organically around the people it supports to meet the needs if it's clients. The service has a strong organisational structure, which includes a Quality Assurance Manager and Positive Intervention Team – dedicated to improving the quality of service.</p> <p>Marcus &amp; Marcus have spent years collecting evidence towards the planning and progression of the clients they support. They hold a vast wealth of videos and photographic evidence, that not only helps to evidence progressions, but also trains and informs staff and professionals. This shows a commitment to change and building effective models of support around the individuals they are supporting.</p> <p>One area that impressed the Review Team was the commitment to long term support, not only collecting data on what has and hasn't worked and why, but during discussions with staff teams and members of the Positive Intervention Team it was clear they appreciated that some interventions that were put into place today, would not be successful for 'months or years' of continued persistence. Working today for long term rewards can be difficult for staff teams and often gets overlooked in favour of 'instant gratification' of short term fixes.</p> <p>A wealth of teaching and learning methods are utilised throughout the service, this includes TEACCH, PECS, Makaton, Talking Mats, Winnie Dunn Sensory Assessments and Profiles, Sensory Diets, Social Stories and Intensive Interaction. Approaches are adapted and planned to meet the needs of those they are supporting.</p> <p>The commitment to improving the understanding and awareness of Autism goes further than their own organisation, inviting recognised speakers within the field of Autism to share their experiences of autism with the local community, families and the staff team.</p> <p>Marcus &amp; Marcus apply consistently outstanding 'Good Autism Practice'. The Review Team felt that one of the highest compliments that can be given to a service supporting people with autism. Throughout the review process, the review team were very impressed by the standard of practice observed. Practice was well informed – both by documentation and by a team of dedicated professionals. Methods used throughout the projects were varied and personalised.</p>



**E18:** How is each autistic person enabled to make contribution to both the residential and the wider community?

- *Employment Opportunities within the organisation and the wider community*
- *Daily schedules with meaningful engagement and evidence of completion*
- *Support Plans for activities with clear aims for the activity and future progression*

The review team undertook twenty-two observations over the time of the review, each of the clients we met was taking part in meaningful occupation, whether that was within their own home or community or paid/voluntary employment. On reviewing client's files, we noted that there were full daily schedules in place for everyone that the service supports and for those individuals with complex needs who require a particularly structured day, the service has built schedules which run from morning to night covering all aspects from occupation to personal hygiene and socialising.

Activities were unlimited in their variation, from meaningful daily household tasks such as washing, cleaning and cooking to community activities and groups such as shopping, music groups and orchestras. One gentleman has a person trainer. All schedules were personal and tailored to the needs of the person, it was clear that there were regular updates undertaken and the views of the individual and their family and professional teams were taken into consideration when collating schedules for those who lacked capacity.

Staff teams were well informed about the daily schedules in place, they knew what activity took place when, how to prepare for it and the purpose behind the activity – even when that purpose was not initially explicit. Activities were underwritten by full 'Activity Support Plans', that informed the staff team how to complete an activity, the outcome for the activity and the client's current progression. The plan also noted the aims for further progression, although for clients who lacked capacity, these were not set in stone but discussed at client meetings and decided on in a multi-disciplinary environment.

Support plans included clear guidance on the use of communication tools for both the preparation and the activity. Observations showed these were clearly used consistently and were well understood by both the client and the staff team using them.

Data and outcomes collected over time evidences the use of daily schedules in people's lives and their progression towards their goals as noted in the activity support plans.

Some of the individuals being supported are in employment, either paid or voluntary. For a few individuals, Marcus & Marcus offer direct employment to learn the skills needed to work within the wider community. Those individuals who are offered work by the service have a contract they agreed with their work coach, which stipulates their work tasks, times and who their work coach is. It also gives guidance to the staff who they are working alongside them in how to support them within their roles to enable them to work to the best of their abilities.



**C12:** Do staff receive training in supporting behaviours that are a threat to the wellbeing of the

Marcus & Marcus has shown long term commitment to the training and support of its individual teams in the application of Autism understanding in their day to day practice. The service has always dedicated significant resources to classroom based training of its teams, after reflection the management of the service found that staff struggle to apply knowledge gained from this training into practice.

Over the last three years, the service has rolled out a new training programme, consisting of:

- Session 1a – Initial overview of autism (classroom based, with no more than 12 staff on each session). Training is held 'onsite' and tailored to the client the training is about. This way, staff and

autistic person by identifying and avoiding factors that provoke or escalate such behaviours?

- *Training and Support for individual staff teams in the application of Autism Understanding in their day to day practice.*

trainers have access to the resources being used on a day to day basis (e.g. TEACCH Aids, communication Aids, Sensory Aids). This allows role modelling / practicing with the actual material.

- Session 1b – An explanation of the thinking behind interventions used (e.g. why use a schedule, why have a change protocol, why use this type of communication aid).
- Session 2- Regroup and refresh.
- Session 3 – Support sessions in how to navigate and interoperate the Person Centred Plan, how to refer to it and aid their day to day practice.

Sessions 1 – 3 are trained around the individual, with their dedicated staff teams. They are noted to take approximately 5-6 days.

The Service holds files on each of the clients training, these evidence the outcomes from the training sessions and the impact on the client's life because of the changes to the training programme. For the servicer, this includes:

- Evidence of meaningful engagement
- Evidence of skills development
- Evidence of reductions of incidents and PRN used

For the staff members involved, the outcomes included:

- Structured training video's
- Onsite random observations
- Evidence of ability to reflect on Practice
- Evidence of knowledge of Autism understanding.

Each file contained notes on each staff member within the autistic person's team, including the last autism 'test' they did and the score, and the dates of observations that have been undertaken of their practice. Feedback from this training was fantastic, with 99.7% of staff rating the training as good or excellent.

Training is currently completed by the Positive Intervention Team – this team (which the Service were commented on within their last Autism Accreditation Review) have continued to be highly upskilled and educated and are in the best place to provide ongoing training and guidance to the staff teams.

**PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendation	Action taken to address recommendation
<p>Approaches to supporting individuals are not always articulated in their individual support plans...It therefore appears that there is a need to review support plans the communication elements to ensure that the content is correct, accurate, captures current practice and is specific to the individual to which they pertain.</p>	<p><i>The individual support plans / person centred plans were reviewed. Emphasis has been laid towards communication, each client has a Communication Profile in which is detailed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The way we communicate</i></li> <li>• <i>The way people make decisions</i></li> <li>• <i>The way people communicate through their behaviour.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>The review team found that support plans and their appendixes of documents were up to date and were used in practice. They evidenced the services understanding of the individual and their autism. Although, as noted above, the wealth of documentation that informs the Support Plans is vast, the support plans were well indexed and condensed information from all documentation into a usable document for staff to base their practice on. This was noted to be used as a training document.</i></p> <p><i>The review team feel the service has met this recommendation from their previous accreditation review.</i></p>
<p>The service user feedback forms however are not all individualised in nature, therefore the service may consider seeking to develop these documents to make them more individualised to service users cognitive ability and communication skills thus increasing the meaningfulness of the feedback and enable the people supported the opportunity to illicit more influence over, and take ownership of, their care plans and long term personal aspirations.</p>	<p><i>All service users feedback forms were reviewed by the service and personalised based on people's ability to comprehend and communicate. Majority of the feedback forms were aided with photos, pictures and Makaton signs.</i></p> <p><i>Feedback was completed either at one setting with the staff member, or over a few sessions, subject to someone's attention span and ability to process information (the forms are quite long).</i></p> <p><i>There was evidence of the feedback changes within each of the individual's files and forms were varied. There was evidence of well collected information, with one staff member noting "x appeared enthusiastic to answer the first couple of questions, then she looked like she was bored. So we put it away for a little while and carried on later using Talking Mats. X really enjoyed finishing the questionnaire using Talking Mats"</i></p> <p><i>The review team feel the service has met this recommendations from their previous accreditation review.</i></p>

## FAMILY QUESTIONNAIRE SCORES

SCORES					
Number of Questionnaires returned:					<b>21</b>
Number of sections <b>not</b> scored (figures only reflect sections scored):					<b>0</b>
	UNSCORED	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
I am able to contact the hospital about my child on a regular basis.	0	0	0	3	18
I am given information about my child / family member's progress on a regular basis.	0	0	1	5	15
The service listens to my views about my child/family member and their support and takes them into account.	0	0	0	4	17
I am aware of how to raise concerns about any aspect of my child's/family members support and am confident that they will be considered and addressed.	0	0	0	4	17
The Service has a good understanding of my child/family member and works well to meet their needs.	0	0	1	3	17
The service provides opportunities for me to find out more about autism and my child's/family members specific needs.	0	0	1	5	15
The Service has had a positive impact on my family member's life and learning.	0	0	0	4	17
<b>TOTAL REPLIES</b>	0	0	3	28	116
<b>PERCENTAGES</b>	0%	0%	2%	19%	79%

Comments taken from questionnaires were:

- “Good and reliable service with a focus on person centred approach”.
- “We are very happy that our son has such excellent care”.
- “...the heart of their excellence is the quality of staff they employ with respect to knowledge, empathy and their pursuit of continuous improvement”.
- “Lately I have not been able to visit my son as often as before”.
- “Marcus and Marcus is an extraordinary, wonderful company that always go the extra mile to meet my sons very complex needs”.
- “I appreciate the lengths they go to and their commitment to constantly improving services.

## PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE SCORES

SCORES					
Number of Questionnaires returned:					<b>9</b>
Number of sections <b>not</b> scored (figures only reflect sections scored):					<b>0</b>
	UNSCORED	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
I have a good working relationship with the service.	0	0	0	1	8
The service keep me regularly updated of any changes or progress in relation to the person we are both supporting.	0	0	0	1	8
I am able to take part (if the person wishes) in all formal reviews involving the person we support.	0	0	0	2	7
The service is contactable and easily accessible should I require information.	0	0	0	1	8
The service provides a person focussed approach with those it works with.	0	0	1	0	8
The service promote a knowledge and understanding of autism amongst professionals	0	0	1	1	7
Any concerns I have raised to the service have been listened to and acted upon.	0	0	0	0	9
The service provides a positive and quality service to those on the autistic spectrum.	0	0	0	1	8
<b>TOTAL REPLIES</b>	0	0	2	7	63
<b>PERCENTAGES</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2.75%</b>	<b>9.75%</b>	<b>87.5%</b>

Comments taken from questionnaires were:

- “Marcus & Marcus is an excellent, thoughtful, empowering and supportive service. Ideal. I can’t speak highly enough of them”.
- “M & M are a pleasure to work with, always striving to improve the quality of the clients lives through innovative and creative practices. Well done!”

## SERVICE USER QUESTIONNAIRE SCORES

SCORES		
Number of Questionnaires returned:		<b>6</b>
Number of sections <b>not</b> scored (figures only reflect sections scored):		<b>0</b>
	YES	NO
<b>Environment:</b> Do Staff help you to have a good time?	6	0
<b>Activities:</b> Do staff support you to do lot's of different things?	6	0
<b>Learning:</b> Do staff help you to learn new skills or do things you have not done before?	6	0
<b>Choices:</b> Do staff ask you what you want to do rather than just tell you?	6	0
<b>Independence:</b> Do staff encourage you to do as much as you can by yourself?	6	0
<b>Changes:</b> Do staff ask you if you are happy and make changes to make things better for you if you are not?	6	0
<b>Staff:</b> Things that I like or don't like about my staff team:	(Please see notes below)	
<b>TOTAL REPLIES</b>	36	0
<b>PERCENTAGES</b>	100%	0%

Comments taken from forms:

- "I am happy with the support I am receiving".
- "Staff always value my choices".
- "I like being with the staff, going with staff places, they help me with stuff".

### OBSERVATION SCORES

	Not Met	Partially Met	Majority Met	Fully Met
Social understanding and communication	0	0	6	16
Self-reliance and problem solving	0	0	9	13
Sensory	0	0	4	18
Emotional Wellbeing	0	0	2	20
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>PERCENTAGES</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>77%</b>

The observation scores from this review were exceptionally high, these scores are reflective of overall feedback for the service from both observations discussion with families and professionals and checks on documentation. The experienced review team found the autism practice within the service to be consistently of a very high standard.

### FINDINGS FROM OBSERVATIONS

Topic	Comments
Social understanding and communication	<p>Communication is a strength of the service, since the last review, the service has spent focussed time on improving and reviewing documentation within Support Files, and there has been a particular focus on communication. All clients have information regarding their communication within their Support Plans and this includes detailed information on how the client communicates, how they make decisions and how they communicate through their behaviour.</p> <p>The changes made in training since the last review have complimented the services focus on communication, training within the client's house has allowed the team to offer training which is not only bespoke to the client being 'trained', but it allows them immediate access their bespoke communication tools – bringing theory into practice for those working face to face with the client. This clearly showed within observations, where it was noted throughout all observations that communication tools were ingrained within the daily schedules and activities of the clients and used instinctively by the staff team. Both staff team and clients had a full understanding of the use of their communication tools and these formed the structure of their daily life.</p> <p>Communication aids were used as a tool for progression, and video training materials of service user's progression showed how far individuals had progressed using their communication aids.</p> <p>The review team noted a wide range of communication aids being used, these included:</p>

- TEACCH
- Makaton (signs & pictures)
- Photo's
- PECS
- Communication in Print
- Communication schedules (strips with daily tasks)
- Transition books (with communication strips)
- Written lists
- Talking Mats

All communication tools used had been adapted to suit the needs of the individuals being supported and were highly bespoke. Communication aids were being used particularly consistently for scheduling activity boards, braking down tasks (such as cooking) and informing service users of events that were happening.

There is currently a trial using Ipad and APPS as communication tools. Currently this is specific to making choices, schedules and now and next. The staff team are very excited about this and can clearly see the benefit of using Ipads as a communication tool.

The positive intervention Team were highly skilled and trained in communication techniques, with evidences of at least five of the team completing training in Makaton, PECS, TEACCH, Talking Mats and Social Stories. Within the clients training files, there was evidence of this knowledge being imparted on the staff teams and 'training in practice' taking place with the staff teams working directly with the clients.

Observations offered the following notes on communication:

- Staff understood the role of effective communication played in minimising potential triggers in the Autistic person and the challenges they have in social interaction.
- The Communication board was completed by the client with help from his support staff.
- The client has built up the skill to be able to make his shopping list in pictures, and then complete the shopping using his list.
- Staff modify their communication and spoke in a very clear and simple manner to enable the individual to understand instructions, requests or information. Where appropriate staff used no verbal communication at all.
- The autistic person was provided with planned activities and opportunities to enable him to develop skills and experience in social interaction and communication within an increasingly challenging range of situations.
- The client has a finish box for posting his symbols in once he had completed that part of the task.
- The client was using a flip chart with pictures to help him with his cooking. Video's showed his progression over the last few years using this communication aid.
- Staff used the activity schedule board with X to keep him on focussed on the task. Staff then used this to prepare him for his next task by removing the pictures and putting this into the finished box.
- Both staff had good knowledge of Makaton language to communicate with the client. They used the activity schedule board so she could understand what task was next. They also prepared her for my visit and had my photo on the visitors board.

Self-reliance and problem solving

All clients have a daily schedule with a range of meaningful activities, both in and out of the home. The review teams found that people with autism were directly contributing to their home and households by cooking, cleaning and shopping. These were planned into activity schedules with other activities such as community groups, arts and crafts and leisure activities. The review team found that people with autism supported by Marcus and Marcus were living rewarding and fulfilling lives.

Support Plans were in place for all activities with the client, these included a breakdown of how to complete the task and the communication aids that were needed. The objectives of the activity were clearly stated and thought on the next steps for progression of the activity were explored.

The service is excellent at recording outcomes for its clients, and have built up a wealth of video and photographic evidence that not only acts as an excellent training resource, but clearly shows the progression that the clients it supports continue to make. We could review not only the progression of the individuals that we met, but all other individuals the service is supporting.

The Positive Intervention Team were skilled in using TEACCH and use this within their training sessions for the staff teams and the support planning for service users.

Each activity support plan noted the goals for the activity, schedules were often very full, meaning there were a lot of goals being worked on at once! However, the service has addressed this, and schedules show several 'targeted' goals for each individual. These were goals that were being specifically targeted during the period and the staff team were expected to complete records for their completion to monitor progression and success. This was an excellent idea and offers the support team focus given how busy individuals lives were and the number of activities being completed daily.

Observations noted:

- The use of Talking Mats enables the autistic person to make choices as to what they like and dislike. It promoted their independence and encouraged them to make choices with limited prompts from staff.
- The service user was provided with personalised tools, support, and opportunities to make choices and take decisions.
- The service user completed his shopping list with some help from staff. He knew how to ask for help when he got stuck, and help was given only to the point that was needed.
- The service user was not overly reliant on their staff member and used their schedule to help him through the activity.
- When x got distracted she was redirected by staff and this worked. She was allowed to work at her own pace.
- Pictorial and written instructions were supplemented, where appropriate, with physical / hand over hand support for more complex tasks.
- Some tasks in the kitchen were done using trays and other containers to help locate and map out the positions the items needed to be located for the task to be performed.
- Some tasks were presented in a linear fashion to help with ordering through TEACCH, as such seemed to be adapted to individuals' circumstances.
- Service users had a 'structure teaching file' with copies of functional skills flip charts ready to use.
- Timers were used during the activity to indicate the ending of an activity.
- The service user has been practicing using this flip chart for a few years. There is obvious signs of progression and skill building.

## Sensory

Clients have a comprehensive range of reports and documents in their files relating to Sensory, these were used to inform Care and Support Plans used by the staff team. These included:

- Winnie Dunn Sensory Assessments
- Sensory Diet
- Occupational Therapy Reports (where appropriate)
- Sensory Profile (with recommendations) in an easy read format
- Sensory training for staff teams (relevant to the individual)

Where it was appropriate, projects had sensory rooms for service users to use. These were seen to be used in practice with support staff trained to lead a session – for example a aromatherapy session and a relaxation session. We visited one project with a Hot Tub, and there are plans to install one at another project too.

All staff received trained in sensory issues, and these were specific to the people with autism that they were supporting. Sensory diets were accessible and understandable and built into schedules to ensure that service users were receiving the support they needed in this area.

Staff teams that we spoke with could discuss the sensory needs of the individuals they supported, not only the common sensory experiences, but more unusual experiences that were specific to the individual.

Homes take into consideration sensory needs and are personal. For example, one clients home was very sparse, with little decoration and colour – offering the individual a low stimulus environment that suited his care planned needs. Another home was bright and colourful, with busy pictures on the walls and contained a lot of personal possessions and character. There was evidence of thought in environments, with some clients moving homes to more suitable sensory environments when they could be made available. Parents spoke positively about the consideration that went into the sensory environments of their sons and daughters and the resources the service dedicate to “getting environments right” for people with autism.

Observations Noted:

- Individual sensory diets planned and observed in practice
- Rooms and areas were well thought out and offered space to relaxation areas.
- There were several places to withdraw for quiet and relaxation should the service user have chosen to.
- Sensory resources were available to the client, including a weighted blanket, weighed ankleys and vests.
- The Service user had a sensory box with resources available through the activity.
- There was a colour coded system in place for resources to help staff make choices to meet the preferences and needs of the person with autism.
- Thermostat is used monitor and regulate the temperature of the environment of a service user who cannot regulate his own temperature.
- There was no unnecessary chatter during the observation.

<p>Emotional Wellbeing</p>	<p>The service has invested time and resources in overhauling the way they make sense of challenging behaviour, through the implementation of a group reflective approach. This started with training the staff teams in how to complete ABC charts, holding individual workshops with front line staff and supervisors. All incidents are now verified by a staff member who witnessed the incident and following this, the ABC chart is then further verified by either a supervisor or a member of the Positive Intervention Team. After verification, an incident reflection workshop would take place (as far as practicably possible) and all front-line staff and the individuals family are involved – together they reflect on the incident and the learning opportunities and the Behaviour Support Plan is reviewed.</p> <p>The review team witnessed a reflective practice workshop, and they found the workshop to be highly motivating and a positive learning experience for all. It was clear the positive effects of the workshop on the clients support planning and subsequent support.</p> <p>Clients have a detailed Person Centred Plan and Positive Behaviour Support Plan, both documents encompassed information that they service has built up throughout their time supporting the individual. The documents are current and easily accessible to the staff teams. The Positive Intervention Team following offering training to the teams in how to support their clients using them, complete unscheduled observations of practice, offering actions to be completed to improve the staff members practice. These are monitored by the Quality Manager to ensure they are complete – demonstrating a clear focus on continuous improvement.</p> <p>Clients were observed to be leading fulfilling and rewarding lives. Engagement and occupation levels are high in all projects that we visited, with a clear commitment to increasing the wellbeing and quality of life of all individuals being supported. Many of the people with autism being supported by the service have suffered multiple placement breakdowns or admissions to hospital – and the consistency the service is offering by way of Good Autism Practice is offering stable environments.</p> <p>Observations also noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He as smiling throughout the activity</li> <li>• X was beaming and in his element. He had an audience who cheered him on as he sang. X would like to sing at a concert and these sessions build his self-esteem.</li> <li>• Staff were praising x for completing the tasks and she was happy with this and started clapping with the staff.</li> <li>• Staff in a 2:1 session reciprocated and prompted interaction in the swimming pool. They intuitively approached and withdrew to avoid overwhelming the Service User and knew him well enough to anticipate his unease at the presence of a visitor.</li> <li>• Sole use of the pool has gained a pleasurable and sensory regulatory experience for the individual.</li> <li>• The beginning of the day was very well planned to ensure continuity and to provide additional staff when needed for external activities.</li> <li>• The staff team were reflective following episodes of challenging behaviour and carried out actions accordingly.</li> <li>• I observed staff employ personalised de-escalation techniques and positive behaviour strategies to prevent or address behaviour that causes concern or distress.</li> <li>• Staff understood the underlying causes and function of behaviour that caused concern and distress.</li> <li>• Staff supported the service user according to his individual needs, using a person-centred approach which</li> </ul>
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	<p>enabled them to understand the underlying causes and function of behaviour that causes concern or distress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I observed staff encourage the Autistic Person to experience activities which they find enjoyable, relaxing or which to build upon their strengths and interests.</li><li>• Staff interacted with the Autistic Person in age appropriate manner which assists in enhancing his self-esteem and well-being.</li></ul>
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## **CONCLUSION**

The review at Marcus & Marcus was overwhelming at times, the service has such a high understanding of the support that it offers and has built a wealth of information, documentation and practice that it was almost impossible to do it justice in a two-day review. As a review team, we left the service wishing we had another two days to spend there and see more of what they had to offer. Everyone was keen to get involved in the accreditation process and on speaking to people with autism who use the service, their families and the professionals involved in support, the consensus was that the service is a forward thinking, dedicated and compassionate. Each person we spoke to talked of the support and knowledge offered by the Managing Director and his team, noting them as approachable and dedicated. The number of people wanting to participate in the review process, including the staff team was impressive.

There is continuous learning at the services, the Managing Director and Senior Manager are very involved in everyone's support – considering there are now 300 staff and 80 clients, this is no easy task. Staff were described as knowledgeable, dedicated, passionate and happy in their jobs.

The service is organised and cohesive, from the structure of entire team down to the documentation in place and to the practice of the support staff. Their ability to review and reflect on themselves leads to comprehensive and informative development plans that are 'bought into' by the whole team. Marcus & Marcus will continue to develop and excel in the quality of service it provides.