

# **AVALON DRIVING UP QUALITY SELF ASSESSMENT**

## **1. Introduction**

Following the Winterbourne View scandal, **Driving up Quality** was launched. The Avalon Group signed up to the principles of the code, and recognised immediately that the values included within the code were ones our organisation had held dear and enacted since its founding in 1994.

We are proud to be an organisation which strives to go beyond minimum standards of care, adding value to customers' lives, and nurturing a healthy, passionate staff team to create high quality, values-led services for all stakeholders.

This is demonstrated by achieving solid 'good' CQC ratings and positive Local Authority contract monitoring audits across all our services which evidences effective embedding of good practice.

The Teesside Service gained an 'outstanding' CQC rating in its most recent inspection (July 2018):

*'We saw evidence throughout the inspection that the provider's vision was being made a reality by a team of dedicated staff and a strong management team. Supporting people to live the best life they could was very much at the heart of service delivery and staff were empowered to try new methods to achieve this.'*

## **Added Value of our Charitable Status**

As a charity we commit to good governance as this is fundamental to our success. The starting point is that all trustees are committed to our Mission, to provide responsive, personalized care and support to enhance and enrich the quality of people's lives, and they have joined our board because they want to help us deliver our purposes most effectively for public benefit.

The board acts with integrity, adopting values and creating a culture which helps achieve the organization's charitable purposes.

- **Quality Services** -We aim to provide excellent services. By listening to our staff and customers we use feedback to continually improve, ensuring the quality of support exceeds your expectations.
- **Competent and motivated workforce** - We believe customers deserve to receive the best support provided by a skilled team who share our values. In turn, we value our staff and invest in their learning and development to ensure customers receive care by a consistent

team.

- **Personalised Support** - Everyone is different and everything we do is about choice. This means we work with individuals to create personalized support, whether it's for an hour a day or 24 hours a day.
- **Equality and Inclusion** - We celebrate and promote diversity at every level within the organization. Our strategic customer committee ensures that our customers make a real contribution to the organization and make recommendations for future improvements.
- **Value for Money** - As a charity we are not profit driven. We aim to ensure we remain financially sustainable and can continue to invest in new and innovative services for our future.

# 1 Support is focussed on the person



1. What proportion of the people Avalon support receive a service that demonstrates the description of 'good'

- As an organisation all our service delivery is in the persons own home, a shared lives carers home or in the community. The individual is supported to find a suitable property and if it is through the council they are supported to bid. If an individual wishes to share a property with a friend or move into a shared lives home then a matching process is followed.
- Customers can interview with our staff to select their team, or is they are not able to undertake this level of engagement a matching process is undertaken.

	<p>Following this introductions are made and shadowing shift if there is already a worker known to the customer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All our training embeds person centred approaches and Active support is enhancing this model.</li> <li>• Support plans are developed with the customer from their strength based assessment, support staff engage in this process, and their written account of how they have been engaging with a customer when implementing the support plan is used to support the development of the following plan.</li> <li>• All our CQC reports for all services are rated 'good'.</li> </ul>
<p>2. What has Avalon done to make people's lives better?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All support is built around the individual, the location the team, the support plans.</li> <li>• When an enquiry or referral come to a manager, we assess what the person is able to do for themselves and circle of support they have from family friend and the wider community.</li> <li>• If we believe we can enhance the person's life we will offer a support package to complement their life, giving the right level of support at the right times to suit their commitments.</li> <li>• We have facilitated individuals move from residential care homes into their own homes with bespoke teams to support them.</li> <li>• Promoting independence is key to our philosophy, ensuring environments are adapted to meet the needs of the person.</li> <li>• Having Social values is extremely important to all, and supporting our customers to live an ordinary life in the community, visiting local shop, pubs clubs, becoming familiar with local people helps build this.</li> </ul>

Engaging in local event and where possible volunteering to help. The recognition from neighbours help customers feel valued.

- We undertake a yearly survey to check satisfaction, from this we build an action plan which is shared across localities with “you said we did “ boards.
- We strive to add value to the communities in which we support people. This includes day services such as our ‘Golden Days’ older people’s service in Northallerton and our Out & About group in Skipton which provides access to the countryside and attractions for isolated rural customers.



- We foster a true community spirit at Avalon, which brings people together in a meaningful way, and on a regular basis. Each of our localities hosts events such as quarterly coffee mornings where open and honest discussions can be held, and people being supported can share their experiences and knowledge with one another and become more confident members of their community because of it.

<p>3. How Avalon measures outcomes for the person and their family</p>	<p>During the assessment aspirations and desired outcomes are discussed, this helps to identify which areas to concentrate on and when. From this assessment support plans are developed, identifying what outcomes the person or their family or commissioner want to achieve.</p> <p>Support plans detail the level of support a customer requires, the plan is documented in steps. This ensures continuity in delivery from staff with the customer. 10 staff learning 1 customers routine and support steps is much easier and necessary than 1 customer trying to remember how 10 staff like to support them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When staff support/engage in an activity and follow a support plan they document how the session went. This enable analysis or the engagement and progress is measured. Setting the next support plan at a reduced level of support from the staff or maintaining the same level if this is working well for the customer.</li> <li>• Support plans and PBS plans are reviewed at set periods, with a yearly full review with MDT and family invitations, where a collective agreement is made regarding the level of support we will deliver.</li> <li>• We have developed audio support plans to enable the customer to engage and understand their own plan.</li> <li>• We measure against the “I statements”</li> </ul>
<p>4. What Avalon has changed as a result of what families have said</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The initial set up of a service fully involves the customer’s family if they wish this to be the case. Families have helped train staff to ensure we utilise their expertise in the customer.</li> </ul>

<p>5. How people are supported by Avalon to discuss their lives on a daily basis ie to make those daily choices and changes with flexibility and control</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A customer's routine and level of support is documented in the customers support pathway. This details the customer's capacity with regard to specific questions, support staff work with an individual to make choices and changes to this.</li> <li>• Staff are recruited from a values based interview, this assists with building meaningful relationship.</li> <li>• Staff training enable the staff to assess if the person has capacity to make an unwise decision.</li> <li>• Where the customer has complex needs and/or challenging behaviour, Avalon's in house specialist manager will also be involved in the very early stages of information gathering and will provide support to the customer, local team regarding specific monitoring processes to be adopted to ensure customers' needs are met in relation to Positive Behaviour Support</li> <li>• A support Co-ordinator (Senior Support Worker) will meet with a customer before support workers are assigned. A key outcome of introductory meetings is to understand the customer as an individual what their interests are? What makes them happy? What are the triggers for anxiety? What are their expectations?</li> <li>• Support is flexible and reviewed frequently to ensure that daily choices can be met and flexibility and control is maximised for the customer.</li> <li>• Ensuring support is delivered by a familiar worker/team maximises opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with support staff, a formal review is undertaken after six weeks with the customer</li> </ul>
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<p>6. How people Avalon supports and their families are involved in checking quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yearly satisfaction surveys are issued to family member, to give them the opportunity to feedback on our quality. Family Carers are invited to meeting and are given the opportunity to share their feelings about our quality.</li> <li>• As part of the internal audit process managers and directors make visits to customer’s houses and customers are included in discussions and feedback during these audits.</li> <li>• A question is asked from the survey at each Avalink meeting and the customers are asked to distribute this and bring the answers to the following meeting.</li> </ul>
<p>7. What Avalon has changed as a result of what people we support have said</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We conduct annual satisfaction surveys which we invite all of our customers to complete, and which we use to inform organisational change. For example, our 2017/18 surveys revealed that 19% of customers wanted more ways to get involved with Avalon. This led us to organise local customer committees who could meet quarterly and set their own agenda. This gives the people we support chance to discuss and debate the issues which directly affect them in a formal setting, providing direct feedback to our Senior Leadership Team. We also discovered that 17% of customers wanted to see more accessible information available to them. We used this feedback to inform a priority in our 3 year business plan to draft more materials in varied formats such as easy-read and audio.</li> <li>• Alongside the local customer committees mentioned above, we have a central customer committee (Avalink) which is made up of representatives from each locality to enact positive change at a strategic level. In 2017 this group pushed for more information</li> </ul>

which would help customers who are worried about Hate/Mate Crime, and also those who have become victims. 12 months of work in this area led to Avalon utilising the skills of a local disability drama group to perform a specially designed play and raise awareness of the subject, working alongside the police and Stop Hate UK to raise community awareness online and in local media, and creating a new Easy-Read Leaflet and 'Keeping Safe Card' for all customers which simply explains Hate Crime and gives advice on what to do in the event of an incident.

**Say NO**



**to hate**

**Stamp out bullying  
in your community**



<p>8. How people and their families are involved in training for Avalon staff?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avalink 2016 award breaking down barriers</li> <li>• Our Avalink Customer Committee members have been trained in delivering training sessions, and on a rotating basis, members attend the 6 day induction we deliver to all new staff, where they themselves deliver modules which help new staff see their work through the eyes of the person being supported. They also hold ‘ice-breaker’ sessions which get groups talking to one another and building relationships.</li> <li>• One of our visually impaired customers delivers a visual awareness training session.</li> <li>• Across much of our training we use real Avalon examples of good practice where feedback has been given by families to inform modelling.</li> </ul>
<p>9. What Avalon does if it’s difficult to support someone. Who Avalon seeks advice and input from. How Avalon learns what works for them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avalon focuses on delivering support using personalisation and active support principles, which are embedded in our vision and values. We support customers with a range of needs including complex health needs and behaviours that challenge. We have an established complex needs lead post within the organisation to support local managers and staff. (see also section 3 for staff training). All support plans and risk assessments are bespoke, formulated as required with input from the complex needs lead officer staff and others in the customers support circle to identify and review any specialist requirements. All aspects of the complex needs service are currently overseen by the operations director who is learning disabilities registered nurse who leads on complex needs including monitoring outcomes and incidents to improve service delivery.</li> <li>• Building positive behaviour support pathways is undertaken inclusive of local support teams, other</li> </ul>

	<p>professionals, family/ carers and is designed to identify behaviour triggers , risks and formulate support and interventions to consistently apply in all settings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a customer has complex health needs we would liaise with health professional to ensure we have the skills to support the person.</li> </ul>
<p>10. What Avalon does when poor commissioning practice means that it is very hard to be 'good'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a strong commitment to ordinary living and as such we have only accepted commissioned services that meet this model of with regard to housing and the environment, and if an environment becomes unsuitable we would work with the commissioner to address this together.</li> <li>• Where individuals lack capacity and their support amounts to a restrictive practice or a deprivation of their liberty we have informed the authority and requested formal assessments. Each area keeps spreadsheet of referrals and follow ups</li> <li>• Avalon prides itself on not undertaking 15 minute support calls</li> <li>• We would demonstrate through documentary evidence what level of support a customer needs and share this with commissioner to ensure we agree safe support hours staffing levels for the customer and the staff team.</li> </ul>

## 2 The person is supported to have an ordinary and meaningful life



1. How Avalon demonstrates it is ambitious for the people we support. How we demonstrates this through our standards, involvement in national initiatives in government, staff training and messages to staff, and information sharing?

The Avalon core belief is for “everyone to have an ordinary life”, this meets with government initiatives from early days of Valuing people to more recently transforming care and the Care Act Our commissioning strategy enable bespoke packages of support to individuals who would have previously been offered a placement in a shared residential environment or remained in a hospital setting.

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) is a value led model underpinning our support management processes. Avalon is also a NAPPI licensee, this approach equips staff with knowledge of a Non Abusive Psychological and Physical Intervention techniques they use to defuse, divert and deescalate situations where customers communicate feelings or react in a way perceived as challenging.

	<p>This is a key message to staff that we should maintain a focus on non-abusive interventions at all times.</p> <p>We use a range of and are developing tools, objects of reference and pictorial guides to make information accessible and to help customers make choices.</p> <p>Our deputy CEO attends the Skills for Care area CEO Network, and we are active members of VODG and ARC. We are also members of the community of practice for PBS practitioners in Teesside this enabling us to share practice and learn from colleagues in other organisations.</p>
<p>2. How Avalon encourages friends and relationships that are non-paid and don't live with the person being supported?</p>	<p>Our strengths based assessment ensure that we consider family and friends as this connection is so important. Our PBS training ensures that staff understand what makes their life have meaning – most if not all people state family. We do strive to build and maintain these connections. As well as other friends and unpaid support, showing value to the person.</p> <p>Many of our customers are supported to engage in community activities and we support and enable many people for example to take holidays of their choice both in the UK and abroad maximising the opportunity to encourage new friends and relationships to form and develop</p> <p>An example of this is our Out &amp; About Group, made up of customers who often live in rural/isolated areas, but who have – through the group – forged lasting and meaningful friendships and enjoy regular activities and even holidays together (the group has had breaks to Blackpool and Scarborough in the last 12 months alone).</p>
<p>3. How do the lives of the people you support compare to yours, and what are you doing to raise their ambitions?</p>	<p>Our commitment to an ordinary life is demonstrated though our assessment where we encourage aspirations from the customer. Considering how a person occupies their time. As loneliness and isolation can be a result of independent living if you do not build strong community networks.</p>

	<p>Work opportunities are sought with customers, we have facilitated a customer to undertake his compulsory bike training to enable him to get to a work opportunity where public transport was the only barrier. He recently won an award at our annual conference for his achievement, this hopefully encouraging others to aim high.</p> <p>Our staff code of conduct and professional boundary training underscores the need to respect customers' homes, possessions and ambitions. Our staff must sign a declaration stating that they understand and agree to adhere to this code. The importance of professional conduct is reinforced by classroom training in our six week induction programme. Staff are supported by accessible managers allowing attitudes in the workplace to be continually addressed. Staff are provided with clear guidance on the importance of maintaining professional boundaries with customers and their families while building strong relationship. Staff are provided with training and policy guidance to ensure customer confidentiality is maintained at all times. Staff sign a confidentiality agreement alongside the code of conduct. Staff do not wear uniforms or have liveried vehicles, this is part of our commitment to provide a discrete service and maintain confidentiality.</p>
<p>4. How Avalon works with local communities to better involve people. How we measure how people re connected to communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our out and about group is a great example of community connection.</li> <li>• Each locality held a cake base event where members of the public were invited, this was to raise awareness of mental health and was a good opportunity for community connections to be built.</li> <li>• Each individual customer's connection to the community is measured individually through their monitoring and review process.</li> <li>• Community access is important, we encourage participation in mainstream groups wherever possible. Avalink and customer groups are promoted in the localities in our</li> </ul>

	<p>localities as a first step to getting out and about and where necessary gaining confidence in group situations. We aim to ensure that all groups are self-directing, customers exercising choice. We would include family and carers as appropriate and only with customer agreement. Transition from home to independent living can be challenging for customers and families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In planning to build of customer abilities, promote independence and positive risk taking.</li> <li>• We have an Avalon minibus that is used to provide accessible safe transport. We help customers to access the community and plan trips using public transport, travel training is provided to increase independence.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Avalon’s approach to positive risk taking. How we balance individual dreams vs. organisational risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our assessment process encourages aspirations and dreams to be explored. The professional however strong relationships that have built between staff and customers have motivated some exceptional examples of people achieving their dreams. One customer who is able to walk small distances wanted to do the race for Life – her team assessed the risk and between them they made it happen, she used a wheel chair for parts of the course however was able to cross the line walking to clouds of onlookers cheers.</li> <li>• Another customer was supported to do a sky dive, risk assessments were undertaken and all checks were made to ensure his risk was no higher than any member of the public undertaking such a challenge.</li> <li>• We have worked with person centred material from Helen Sanderson to develop dreams and aspirations.</li> <li>• Customers Risk assessments are reviewed annually and following a change</li> <li>• We are developing new Risk Assessment formats (Customer/ Complex Needs/ Moving and Handling) to</li> </ul>

	ensure risk management plans are more clear and robust and reduction of risk is more clearly evidenced against a matrix of likelihood Vs potential outcome or consequences
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### 3 Care and support focuses on people being happy and having a good quality of life



1. How Avalon's recruitment links to what someone being supported says that they want. How rota planning is linked to what people say they want?

- Support staff are recruited locally, managers are trained in recruitment and selection processes, with emphasis on equality and diversity awareness and competency based interview techniques. A range of recruitment tools are used. Locality based Registered managers are supported by Human Resources specialists led by the Deputy Chief Executive. We have a values based recruitment procedure, which looks to employ staff who align with our mission and vision, and therefore can deliver person-centred support to customers with a variety of needs.
- We aim to deliver support at the times that suit the customer best, we are flexible with support and adjust

	<p>rostering regularly to allow desired outcomes or opportunities to be met. Obviously support is structured to meet specific outcomes e.g. benefit collection, shopping, medication administration or health related issues. Rotas are issued for the month ahead, customer's families and carers receive copies, but the rota can always be changed to accommodate new events. We promote a range of group activities and organise a number of community groups for customers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By understanding the people we support and making every effort to know likes, dislikes, preferences, triggers, what makes them happy, what a good day looks like and what they want to achieve we try our best to effectively match customer requirements and foster effective relationships</li> </ul>
<p>2. How people are involved in the probation and appraisal process for Avalon support staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avalink our strategic customer committee has been operating since 2008, customers trained in selection processes are included on job interview panels and are key decision makers, designing their own questions.</li> <li>• All staff receive an annual Performance Development Review from their manager and 6 weekly support and supervision.</li> <li>• If we have received feedback from a customer of family about a staff's performance whether it be positive or negative this will be discussed with the staff member in supervisor, the family or customer who shared their views name may not be with the staff unless they give consent for this to happen .</li> <li>• Customers and family member are encouraged to nominate staff who they feel have gone above and beyond their role. Many nominations are received from customer, they are invited to be filmed and attend the conference where the staff are awarded a certificate and thanked for their commitment to our customers.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers are actively involved in the induction of new staff.</li> </ul>
<p>3. How Avalon staff know what the organisation wants them to achieve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job profiles and specifications are in place for all roles clearly stating responsibilities and line management.</li> <li>• Potential recruits must meet core competencies as set out in the role profile.</li> <li>• By staff receiving a quality induction and probationary training. We employ an in-house team led by a Learning and Development Manager to plan and deliver classroom based training. Accredited courses are run locally wherever possible to minimise disruption to staff, travel expenses are paid for and training is free of charge. Booked training sessions agreed with staff are logged on an electronic rostering system allowing advanced discussion with customers about support cover choices to accommodate staff training.</li> <li>• A knowledge and practice based programme is mandatory for all new recruits. A standard six day taught induction programme exceeds the Care Certificate core competencies and includes: Introduction to the organisation and the support workers role, confidentiality, Safeguarding Adults and Children, Fire Safety, First Aid, Management and Administration of Medication, Manual Handling, Food Hygiene, Outcome based Support Planning, Positive Behaviour Support (Generic). Safe working practices including Infection Control</li> <li>• Avalink members deliver modules within the programme</li> <li>• Assessment of delegates is via group work, presentations and written workbooks.</li> <li>• Staff handbook is delivered to all</li> <li>• Workplace induction includes shadowing introduction to customers, matching with customers and staff, staff profiles for customers</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The workplace competency element of the care certificate is achieved within the local area and signed off by the Locality Manager</li> <li>• All Locality Managers (registered Manager) who are appointed and do not have level 5 Health and Social Care diploma are expected to start study within six months</li> <li>• Ongoing training needs are identified and delivered. Mandatory training modules are refreshed cyclically and specialist training required due to special needs for example Buccal Midazolam and PEG feeding is sourced from healthcare trainers and regularly refreshed</li> <li>• For role specific and complex needs training – a wide range of in-house training is available e.g. autism awareness, mental health awareness, dementia, epilepsy, moving and handling using equipment. Level 2 award in the Awareness of dementia , including 4 days classroom training covering all aspects of supporting people with dementia is available</li> <li>• Out of hours on all system to support staff at all times</li> <li>• In our most recent staff satisfaction surveys, which took place during summer 2018, 96% of staff answered the statement ‘I know what is expected of me at work’ with either ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’.</li> <li>• At the 2018 conference we undertook an exercise with delegates to identify behaviours that we at Avalon wish all members to be committed to doing, we also asked what we are good at, this information will influence the strategic review being undertaken by trustees and directors. Further work will be undertaken with customers and staff groups to ensure true engagement.</li> </ul>
<p>4. How Avalon trusts staff to make decisions. What we do when staff get decisions wrong.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managers and support coordinators undertake spot checks in where service are delivered, reading entries in support</li> </ul>

	<p>plans and communication diaries to ensure the support and decisions made are safe and appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We encourage an open honest culture where staff can discuss concerns or raise questions to check they are making the best decision with customers.</li> <li>• Staff are encouraged to constructively challenge their practice and that of their colleagues.</li> <li>• We have a no blame culture however this must be measured against safeguarding principles and actions must be taken in accordance with the situation.</li> <li>• We have a disciplinary process where is a decision has resulted in a concern being raised we have the ability to suspend the staff to protect them and others while an investigation is undertaken.</li> <li>• Accidents and incidents recording and responses</li> <li>• We have a Staff H&amp;S committee to support managers and staff and keep abreast of current H&amp;S issues using past incidents to learn lessons.</li> <li>• We share examples from CQC with managers to keep us up to date with current initiatives.</li> <li>• Depending on the circumstances we would</li> </ul>
<p>5. How Avalon at all levels keeps in touch with people to ensure they are happy beyond an annual satisfaction survey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally based services ensure that Avalon’s management team know customers on an individual basis and have regular formal and informal contact with them. Customers know how to contact us and many regularly visit our offices</li> <li>• We have a central customer committee (Avalink) which discusses a feedback question at each of its quarterly meetings. These feedback questions focus on specific elements of the service (e.g. Do you feel your support team listens to you and responds to your needs?), and are discussed centrally, following which representatives from each locality take the question back for further discussion at local sub-groups of Avalink.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directors undertake locality visits and this involves a visit to a customer’s home if they are willing for this to occur.</li> <li>• We have an open and honest culture where customers are encouraged to communicate with staff and managers of all levels to ensure we know that people are happy. Our annual conference, and monthly awards demonstrate this.</li> <li>• Trustees also visit localities and attend the Avalink meetings therefore having opportunity to share any feeling about the service we deliver.</li> </ul>
<p>6. How Avalon supports people through times of distress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our strengths based assessment helps us understand the people we support, it identifies what being well looks like as well as what not being well or not coping also looks like, we detail triggers to be avoided where possible and cues that will be displayed by the customer if things are going wrong for them. PBS plans detail how staff must respond at these times.</li> <li>• The longevity of relationship assist with, enabling staff to truly know the person and helps them recognise change.</li> <li>• If a situation is known to cause distress such as a hospital visit however, the procedure is necessary all reasonable measure will be taken to facilitate this, through joint working for reasonable adjustment to be made.</li> <li>• Avalon aims to be responsive and has a strong commitment to interagency working. To support people in distress we work extensively with customers during and throughout difficult periods, we have supported some customers for many years and work effectively alongside health specialists, social work professionals. We aim to build networks and effective relationships in localities with housing, police, fire services, trading standards and other agencies to keep customers safe.</li> <li>• Keeping customers effectively safeguarded from all forms of abuse, neglect, discrimination and harassment underpin</li> </ul>

	<p>our policies, procedures and training. Avalon is an established social care provider with a track record of safe, compliant service delivery whose services are all rated as overall Good by CQC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locality Examples (e.g. Northallerton Hospital support case)</li> <li>• We have signed up to be a mindful employer, and aim to support our staff in time of distress, making reasonable adjustment to their working life.</li> <li>• We have an employee assistance programme.</li> <li>• We offer compassionate leave and occupational health assessment.</li> </ul>
<p>7. How Avalon accurately gauge values, quality and attitude when recruiting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We operate a values based recruitment process.</li> <li>• The interviewers are trained people and customers</li> <li>• Questions are based on role profiles and competencies, scenarios are used to gauge how a candidate would act in a given situation.</li> <li>• Consistent and robust selection processes are applied to establish values and aptitude using a range of assessment tools including practical selection day exercises. Gaps in employment history are rigorously and satisfactorily explored.</li> <li>• Pre-employment checks are carried out centrally including previous employer reference, DBS checks, and eligibility to work in the UK in line with safer recruitment practice.</li> <li>• The induction training attended by all new staff forms part of the recruitment process and is a new starter demonstrate attitudes or behaviours that do not fit with ours the trainer will address this with them and inform the locality manager and a director. If this behaviour and demonstration of values that do not match Avalon's the staff members job offer would be ended.</li> <li>• The induction period also contains shadowing shifts where a buddy system is operated and if the supporting staff feels</li> </ul>

	<p>that the new member needs additional support they will feed this back to the manager.</p>
<p>8. How Avalon manages staff sickness/ leave to ensure maximum impact for individuals being supported</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a detailed sickness absence policy. Which details Trigger points and guidance at each stage. All managers are trained in managing absence. The process is shared at the recruitment stage with new staff and goes through ongoing support, in supervision, and meeting.</li> <li>• We make reasonable adjustment to rotas matching staff with customers to prevent added stress sickness where possible. Getting people back to work as soon as possible, keep in touch, we encourage staff to use the Employee Assistance Scheme, Occupational Health.</li> <li>• We endeavour to ensure that customers have more than one support worker to offer continuity when someone is off sick</li> <li>• We have a wellbeing strategy and we have signed up to being a mindful employer, utilising the tools available to ensure we are doing all we can to help the staff member.</li> </ul> <p>Invested in CASCADE can more effectively monitor and effectively analyse staffing sickness</p>

## 4 A good culture is important to the organisation



1. How Avalon discusses its culture and reflects on what's working / what's not working

- As part of the strategic review and the completions of this self-assessment, we asked delegates at the 2018 annual conference what works well at Avalon.
- We have away days with trustees to review our strategy and direction for future work using the feedback from the conference.
- Our Business planning process, brings together all departments, to consider the impact of a project on localities, and to ensure buy in from the onset from all across the business. Delivery plans were developed and discussed with Avalink members as well as staff teams. The progress of the delivery plans are discussed in personal development reviews and supervision.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We hold an annual Conference where different themes have been explored, but always celebrating success,</li> <li>• Our Satisfaction survey and results, help us to understand what we is working well and what is not</li> <li>• A question from the survey is explored at each Avalink meeting so we are not waiting for yearly result.</li> <li>• We analyse complaints to ensure we learn from all situations</li> <li>• We have a staff suggestion scheme</li> </ul>
<p>2. How Avalon evidences that change has happened as a result of feedback from staff, people being supported and their families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using feedback from our annual satisfaction surveys, we create and agree action plans for each locality, through which we aim to remedy any concerns which may have arisen. Once the tasks on the action plan have been identified, we create a suite of materials (posters, flyers, online content) called 'You Said, We Did' which is promoted throughout the organisation and tells staff, carers and customers what was done as a result of their feedback.</li> </ul>
<p>3. What Avalon does to contribute to society and speak out about bad practice beyond organisational boundaries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hate crime has been focussed on in recent years as a key area of work for the Avalink group. Safer places which is a national scheme was identified by customers to be a great initiative that gave them confidence when out alone. Our Dewsbury / Northallerton offices are designated safe havens and we are working to develop this initiative in other locality offices.</li> <li>• Avalon attended the North Yorkshire county council safeguarding board to share a customer's experiences to the panel members. Avalon directors in conjunction with the independent care group also attend strategy meetings with health and Local authorities to ensure their workforce is fully engaged in local Safeguarding Strategies.</li> <li>• We ensure our customer and staff views feeds into national initiatives such as VODG campaigns, CB</li> </ul>

	<p>foundation, ARC, ICG, Skills for Care and many more. Directors keep up to date with current thinking and best practice, contract meetings with commissioners, conferences and workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We report to the charities commission if unsafe bad practice has occurred.</li> </ul>
<p>4. When Avalon allocates a budget, how we make sure we minimise expenditure that doesn't relate to the quality of the lives of people we support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We ensure we commission work that is cost effective.</li> <li>• Value for Money is one of our values, investing in training and the right people, retention, service reviews</li> <li>• Budgets are shared with managers.</li> <li>• Where cost can be negotiated centrally to reduce them efforts are made to facilitate this.</li> <li>• Our finance team work closely with our operations teams</li> </ul>
<p>5. What proportion of Avalon's expenditure is spent on investment in getting and retaining the right staff, as opposed to staff disciplinarys resulting from poor practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great investment is made in learning and development, this assisting the staff member to feel skilled and equipped to undertake the role. Six weekly Support and supervisor sessions demonstrate our commitment to retaining staff.</li> <li>• Low level issues or situations are dealt with locally and promptly, reducing the need for disciplinary action.</li> <li>• Our new HR system Cascade assists managers to run management report to monitor data to ensure they are dealing with issues promptly.</li> </ul>
<p>6. How Avalon guards against tokenism when involving people we support in feedback discussions, in meetings and in planning at any level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avalink our self-advocacy group has been in operation for 10 years, it has developed and grown since 2008. It is customer lead and representatives on the group get feedback from their respective localities for each meeting. The group has reviewed Avalon policies, championed campaigns on Hate Crime and is currently working on bogus callers.</li> <li>• Avalon support customer to interview new staff, their views and opinions are listened to and do form part of the decision alongside the other panel members.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We have commissioned independent advocacy to guard against tokenism.</li><li>• We are supporting the keyring advocacy group to ensure we are involved with national agendas and have a voice.</li></ul>
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## 5 Managers and board members lead and run the organisation well



1. How much time staff, people being supported, and families spend with senior Avalon managers and the board. How accessible are they, and how much time do they spend engaging with people

- All Directors visit localities on a rota basis to ensure customers, staff and families have access to a Director. These visits are documented and a copy kept in the locality office. The day is facilitated by the Locality Manager (Registered) and includes visits to supported living services, shared lives houses, attending a staff meeting and holding one to one sessions with any individual who wishes to meet with a Director. Customer, carer and staff meetings are held in each locality and minuted.
- Our Avalink (self-advocacy) meeting is supported and attended by the Deputy CEO and the Operations

	Director as well as a trustee. We operate an open door culture where people are able to call in whenever needed or desired.
2. The Avalon senior managers and board members trained in safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding is recognised as essential for all people to undertake.</li> <li>• Trustee induction covers safeguarding in line with Charity Commission guidance</li> </ul>
3. What Avalon senior managers and the board do to demonstrate that they live the values of the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All roles at all levels have values and core competencies, board members and directors are recruited against these.</li> <li>• Our Culture of honest open management demonstrates that we live our values.</li> <li>• The annual conference was attended by many trustees and all directors who presented and demonstrated their commitment to the values.</li> <li>• A delegates exercise was undertaken to ask what behaviours we would all like all Avalon member to demonstrate and live.</li> </ul>
4. How the Avalon board drives up quality and ensures that they have evidence of doing so	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality is key to the offer Avalon give to customers. In 2017 we appointed a quality manager, who supports the locality teams to embed the key lines of enquiry into practice. Producing quality monitoring report and good practice files.</li> <li>• Health competitions and recognising achievement also helps to drive up quality.</li> <li>• Our involvement and commitment to organisations that challenge poor practice like STOMP , ARC, VODG and the independent care group.</li> <li>• Our robust Governance systems.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our board of trustees, have quarterly meetings and separate scrutiny committees, business plan review and away days</li> </ul>
5. How the Avalon board assures itself that it is achieving its mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Annual Staff Conference 2018 relaunched Avalon's Mission and Values and gathered information to check what we are doing well and what behaviours we want to live and demonstrate. This information forms part of the strategic review and assures the board that we are achieving our mission.</li> </ul>
6. The systems the Avalon board and senior management team have to find out about poor quality services, and what it does about them. How they deal with asking difficult questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2016 a Quality Manager post was introduced. This post sits outside operations management to ensure impartiality and reports to the Deputy CEO, but works closely with operations managers. Audits of services are undertaken on a comprehensive basis annually, with reports being sent to the Locality Manager and Deputy Operations Managers (who are responsible for implementing any actions identified as a result of the audit process). This post also supports managers to deliver the wider Avalon Quality Assurance Framework including quarterly checks against delivery of Care Quality Commission (Key Lines of Enquiry).</li> <li>• Directors report to the board on locality operations, safeguarding, complaints and grievances, as well as CQC reports.</li> <li>• We share the annual survey results with Trustees.</li> </ul>
7. How the Avalon board and senior management team reflects on lessons learnt from safeguarding cases, complaints and quality concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All safeguarding alerts are reflected on by the board and senior managers in reports shared with trustees. Serious safeguarding alerts are notified to the trustees and the charities commission immediately.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incidents and Accidents are reported via the incident reporting system with all reports being read by all directors, comments and questions are directed at the service submitting the referral.</li> <li>• Complaints are followed up promptly in accordance with policy, and are shared with the board.</li> <li>• Quality Manager service audit findings from reports are shared with the Board of Trustees.</li> </ul>
8. How Avalon ensures there are sufficient cross-section of skills and experience in board members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We recently recruited four new trustees to ensure we have a cross section of skills on the board.</li> <li>• We operated a Value based recruitment process as well as technical expertise. We Involvement customers in this process. We used charity commission guidance.</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

The information contained here will be used to inform our strategic plans in 2019 and beyond, and we look forward to providing regular updates to evidence where Driving up Quality takes us from here.

The Avalon Group is a learning organisation which uses regular feedback from stakeholders at all levels to drive continual improvement. As noted in this assessment we have several new and exciting initiatives which we are working towards to further benefit the lives of our customers, and to innovate our workplace so that our staff enjoy being part of a leading social care organisation, committed to the future.

Over the last few years we have increased how accessible we have become, through the use of customer-designed materials and schemes. And we have become even more inclusive through the expansion of our strategic customer committee (Avalink) which supports us to be led by the people we support at all levels of the organisation.

We celebrate achievement and we promote wellbeing in both customers and staff. Whether this be through public events such as our annual conference, or in one-to-one meetings where we work together with the people we support to identify goals, ambitions and aspirations for the future. We strive to

create meaningful moments every day, and we know that to do this requires the passion to innovate and improve. So whilst we recognise that we are already a high quality organisation, we know that by continuing to listen, and by committing to enact positive change at every opportunity, we will further improve lives across the North of England.