

IN CONFIDENCE

QUALITY  
SOUTH WEST  
Raising Performance  
Standards

# INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT

For

Voyage Ltd

Lichfield Staffordshire

ASSESSOR: Richard Sloane

DATE: 17 March 2009



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE  
**South West**

# CONTENTS

1. Outcome
2. Executive Summary
3. Strengths and Areas of Good Practice
4. Feedback against Agreed Objectives
5. Potential for Further Development
6. Continuous Improvement Plan
7. Findings against each Principle of the Standard

## I. OUTCOME

Voyage Ltd fully meets the requirements of the Investors in People Standard. I am pleased to confirm that there are no actions required to meet the Standard, following this successful assessment visit.

The Assessor would like to thank Ellen Parker for all her hard work during the assessment and Sue O'Brien for aiding and abetting me in Sheffield!

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Assessor would like to acknowledge the 104 staff and managers who were kind enough to give their time for interview and to those who voluntarily came for interview in their own time. The enthusiasm and commitment of all staff was astounding and all those interviewed were driven with this spirit to the point where it almost overwhelmed the Assessor – this is absolute magic! Every one of the interviewees was supportive of Voyage management – brilliant!

The care that is provided to residents is extremely serious and professional, but there was so much laughter in the homes that this also becomes infectious. On a number of occasions the Assessor was caught up in this – particularly Church Street Mansfield where the mini bus was being reversed out of a tight space!!!

The Company has gone through significant change in management structure since 2003 and there have been a number of major organisational changes culminating in the realignment of Regions to Divisions and the creation of a Development Division. Despite all this change the morale and commitment of staff has not wavered. In fact, members of staff who were employed in the business before the acquisition report that the management style has gone seamlessly from autocratic to democratic!

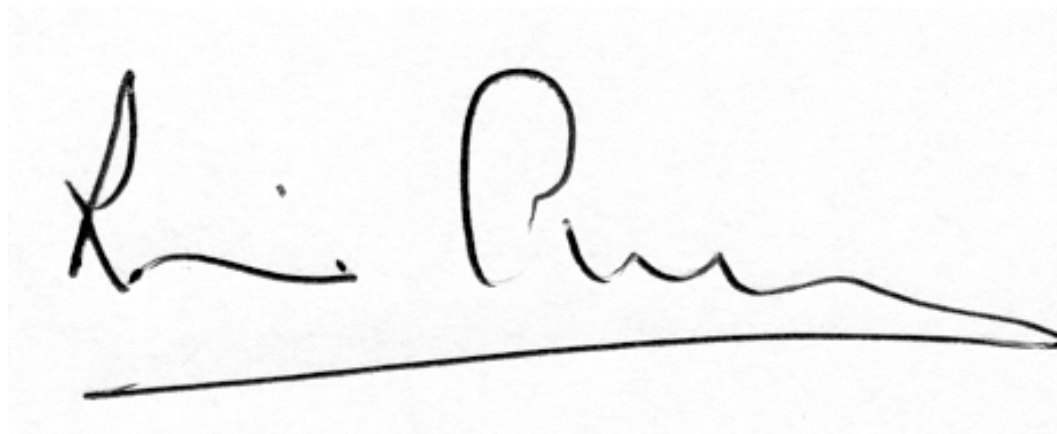
The assessment covered visits to 19 homes and support offices from Gloucester in the south to Falkirk in the north and the excellent culture was the same at all locations. There was an overwhelming sense of team spirit in all the premises visited. The Voyage word was imprinted into everyone interviewed just like a stick of Blackpool rock – most impressive.

A number of staff and managers have confided in the Assessor that they have been head hunted and offered significantly more money elsewhere but are loyal to Voyage because of the opportunities for corporate growth which will inevitably mean better opportunities for them. It is also true to state that the vast majority of staff are extremely happy with the style of management in all parts of the business.

There is a real sense of potential advancement within the Company. A large number of senior support workers and support workers remarked on the amount and quality of learning and development they are required to undertake and how this will set them up for promotion. They also said that the quality of training given helped them to provide excellent care to residents which in turn gave them immense job satisfaction. I think this is quite a potent statement and reflects how much this Company cares about the skills of its people.

Voyage South Division achieved Investor in People recognition some years ago when it was owned by a previous Company. They were successfully reviewed in 2008 and will be absorbed into a companywide recognition process when Voyage Ltd achieves recognition.

The feedback session was attended by members of the Management Board and senior management which demonstrates the Company support for this assessment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Sloane', written over a horizontal line.

**Richard Sloane**  
**Specialist Adviser & Assessor**  
**Quality South West**  
**17 March 2009**

### 3. STRENGTHS AND AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

The culture of the Company can be summed up in the following words – ‘quality assurance is everyone’s business’. There is a fantastic ethos emanating from the Chief Executive and other members of the Board. He firmly believes that the residents and staff are the most important parts of the business and was keen to show the Assessor that the ‘bottom line’ ethos of competitors is the driving force but in Voyage it is a desire to give quality client service first. This view was expressed many times across the Company and managers and staff from all parts of the business believe in it.

There is a huge sense of social responsibility in the Company and this is reflected in individual homes where relationships are fostered between the home and statutory agencies such as the local PCSO’s at Arnos Road Bestwood.

One of the great strengths of this Company is team working and mutual respect from the directors, operational managers, managers and staff towards each other. The team spirit at the various sites visited was exceptional and the ‘buzz’ was evident at many locations.

People spoke of the basic objectives of the Company as:

- Quality of care provided – over profit
- Quality of learning and development compared to competitors Focus on resident value
- No pressure on Home Managers to fill vacancies to the detriment of quality care and environment
- Zero agency use
- Focus on organic growth and development of new services such as acquired brain injury and Forensic Care. In Scotland staff were aware that the Company has purchased 4 sites to develop acquired brain injury and other unspecified services in Glasgow.

Many staff indicated that ‘our business is about people’ and managers believe residents are well cared for because of the quality of staff. There is a Statement of Purpose that describes how Voyage will manage its residents and is clearly displayed in most homes.

There is a brilliant ethos within the Company that encourages and supports initiative at all levels. Everyone interviewed acts together as one team and supports each other in every aspect of business. The team spirit in all the homes is brilliant and those visited by the Assessor were quite outstanding.

All staff interviewed were supportive of the management style of the Chief Executive, Directors and Operational Managers. The title of Head Office was changed recently to Group Support

Office to reflect the nature of the business and make the support more user friendly. This was welcomed by those the Assessor discussed it with.

The main business strategy is to retain existing relations with Social Service departments for the long term, provide an exceptional quality of service, and attract new clients through the development of services at new locations. All staff in the Group Support Office were aware of this strategy as were managers in their parts of the business. In the Development Division all those interviewed were clear on the strategy for growth and moving into new care areas such as acquired brain injury and forensic care. It was also clearly stated to the Assessor that Voyage would walk away from potential contracts with clients if the price did not reflect the quality of care that Voyage has a reputation for.

Managers gave many examples of how they involve their teams in the planning function and staff interviewed felt that they were part of the decision making process because of this. It was very interesting to hear that whilst the budgets reflect the business plans, managers were required to submit cautious ones and not be over confident.

The Company has held an Annual Conference to plan the strategy for the coming year and for managers to contribute to debates about the service provided. All managers from across the business attended and cascaded information back to staff in their homes/departments. Support staff from the divisional and group offices were also invited and felt this to be the most useful meeting they had attended. At the very least it enabled people to put faces to names.

A number of managers indicated that they had joined the Company some years ago because they saw potential for their own advancement which had now come to fruition.

It was good to see that the Company values input from all staff through contributions to the business. Staff at all levels often provide information on the activities of competitors and through reading the publication Care Matters. There is regular communication from the Management Board and Operations Managers meetings. Briefs are cascaded through the email system so that nearly all staff are aware of current thinking in the Company. There is an inhouse magazine 'The Kite' which describes the way the business is managed and provides commentary on issues within the Company. It also celebrates people success and who are encouraged to contribute articles. This is seen by staff as a major communication vehicle throughout the business. Staff at homes were proud to show the Assessor contributions made by residents to the magazine. It seems the editorial responsibility will soon pass to the Manager at Treddinloch as one resident has had 5 articles published!

The centre for the management of learning and development relocated to Lichfield from Taunton to improve coverage and consistency of the process. A number of staff commented how much better the new service was in providing the range and quality of training.

There are a number of trainers in house who manage the EL Box – a schedule of mandatory training. Some are full time in the Development Division whilst others combine this role with operational duties. There is a substantial amount invested in ensuring people are fit and capable of driving the business forward to meet the objectives set above. There is a huge feeling of job satisfaction and personal worth from acting as a trainer.

The investment in staff is huge and amounts to over 1% of Company turnover. To this should be added a further 2% to represent the total time staff are unproductive whilst being trained in-house, attending meetings and partaking of the appraisal process. This is a truly staggering amount and reflects the desire of the Company to provide a quality service to the resident. The Divisional Training Plan is often posted on individual home notice boards.

The appraisal process is now robust and most staff interviewed had either had their review or were scheduled for it. Those in the former category felt the process was extremely worthwhile and conducted in a superb manner. The Training Plans follow the appraisal process. Staff at homes have their own plans that are kept in the personal files.

'I always go to the home with a smile on my face' was how one employee described her experiences.

All staff feel communicated with either through emails, regular meetings or impromptu sessions in the homes. All those interviewed felt the appraisal process was a valuable tool in allowing them the opportunity to plan their futures. They also felt that managers make them feel valued through this process.

Managers cascade information to their staff from daily/weekly/monthly meetings although this is slightly patchy. At these meetings they do try to share good practice which is cascaded to home staff. Some staff feel there are too many meetings but it is clear they have a sound understanding of the business and are involved in contributing to its success.

Staff can view vacancies that arise in the whole Company from the bulletins displayed on notice boards and the intranet.

There is a considerable amount of senior management support for junior staff. In one case a Deputy Manager had been Acting Manager during an intense period of construction and expansion. All staff at the home felt that was excellent and Voyage style.

The culture is brilliant and encourages people to contribute to the development of the business at their level. The management ethos drives through the Company. Everyone was able to describe the qualities of management and those descriptions were remarkably similar in the business – well done Voyage. Some of those management behaviours and capabilities are reproduced in the main body of the report.

There is an in house facilitated management development programme in addition to the Registered Managers programme and a recently introduced and separate management course for succession planning. This demonstrates the Company desire to multiskill and manage the manpower requirements for the service development. To a large extent this will produce qualified managers for the future expansion of the Company. However, as discussed with the Chief Executive, care will need to be taken to manage people's expectations. One benefit already noticed by the Company is the increasing quality of applicants for jobs within Voyage because of the huge learning and development programme undertaken and the opportunity to advance in a Company that has a relatively flat management structure.

There will still be a requirement for managers to be recruited externally for the acquired brain injury and forensic care services and the supported living units. At a point in time these managers will be able to be promoted from within.

All staff feel rewarded and valued as members of their team through:

- General praise for a job well done,
- Inviting comment on performance
- Whole staff Christmas parties although these have now been substituted by the Annual Conference.
- Many local manager initiatives
- Ten Pin and skittles events

Part of the culture at Voyage is the way staff are multiskilled which results in them being able to handle tasks when senior staff are incapacitated or on vacation. This is particularly relevant when promotion is in prospect either through natural wastage or expansion of the business.

Staff regularly recounted instances of being consulted and encouraged to make suggestions. In one home a food shop is being designed and all staff were invited to comment on the plans. Some suggestions were then incorporated in them. In one home the Assessor observed a Wish List of Capex for the coming year. The reader will be amused by the following comment on the list:

- *Draught Excluder required on the Lounge windows to prevent the night staff from freaking out when the wind blows the blinds at night!*

All staff feel empowered and can contribute to the decision making process. As noted elsewhere in this report the management culture encourages contributions.

The induction process is excellent and in an effort to make improvements the Company has created a DVD describing the life of a Support Assistant. This has reduced the attrition rate which was already amongst the lowest in the sector.

All staff interviewed confirmed that when training is identified it invariably occurs shortly afterwards. However, staff are also encouraged to identify their own learning requirements. As noted earlier in this report succession planning is being practised in the Company through grooming and promotion of promising staff. One senior manager began working with Voyage as a part time Saturday agency employee and has progressed through the grades to Operations Manager. There were many examples of this type of promotion throughout the Company.

Voyage has a huge budget for the training and development of its staff as noted above. The skills of people are the main drivers that set this Company apart from its competitors. Ensuring a return on investment is viewed as crucial to the continued success of Voyage and to ensure this is the case, the training budget when set at the start of the year is split across the various learning priorities identified, most of which links to an objective contained in various business plans.

The evaluation of learning and development is carried out continually. The key focus here is to measure whether the Voyage investment in people has been worthwhile and whether managers and their team's understand the impact it has had on the Company, their team and themselves. Most of the evaluation of learning and development is carried out by observation of managers and the independent audits carried out by CSCI.

Evaluation is generally based on observation although at Management Board level the cost and the return on investment of learning and development forms part of monthly review. The Board and senior managers were able to give quantifiable improvements as the result of the investment in training, support and ongoing development including:-

- Staff turnover for the Company is running at 20% and is extremely low for this sector - as noted elsewhere in this report.
- The budget set for the next financial year is robust and challenging as it is based largely on improved local marketing and expansion. Whilst figures must remain confidential in the Company the financial position of Voyage is increasing with new businesses being acquired or constructed through the Development Division.
- Multi-skilling, giving staff a wide range of skills to competently handle all tasks in homes and also to be used for gaining experience to move to higher grade positions.

#### 4. FEEDBACK AGAINST AGREED OBJECTIVES

The principal objective was to achieve the Investor in People Standard and as such there were no additional agreed objectives.

This visit was conducted in accordance with the agreed Plan.

## 5. POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

### **Business Planning**

As noted elsewhere in this report substantial contribution has been made to Divisional and whole Company business plans at various levels of management in the Company. The Assessor would like to see clearer evidence that staff in the homes have contributed to individual home plans and possibly seen this contribution as impacting on divisional plans. This would support the initiatives of the Company to involve staff at all levels in the management of the business. A very few managers have not yet grasped the importance of agreeing objectives with their staff. This does need to be looked at and could possibly be a subject for the new management development course.

### **Appraisal Process**

There is a robust process in place but not all managers have bought into the impact such an initiative can have on the business. It is essential that all managers have the necessary training in order that they can provide support and encouragement to their staff.

There was a series of core competencies within the process but this seems to have been lost along the way. It is suggested that this is a crucial part of appraisal.

### **Communications**

There are substantial strategies in place to ensure that staff are provided with information about the various objectives of the Company. However, a few managers do not really buy into the ethos of sharing information. It might be worth considering having a standing agenda item at all top meetings to ensure the correct messages get through to everyone. A number of senior managers noted that communications could be substantially improved with a simple email programme with terminal located at all sites to reflect the initiative in Scotland.

### **Annual Conference**

This is seen by all those attending as a brilliant way to improve team bonding. Now that the initiative has been established it might be good to substitute some guest speakers with more break out groups to make suggestions on how the business might be improved or to build on initiatives already suggested. Some managers felt the conference was more geared towards learning disabilities than acquired brain injury.

### **Succession planning to achieve business plan objectives**

The Company is focused on the need to develop staff to achieve promotion in order to sustain the growth described in the business plan. Although there is a management development programme for this it does seem to be uncoordinated. Perhaps a software programme could be created for Operational Managers to identify suitable candidates for grooming and track them

through the system. Managers at all levels in the business would have the opportunity of contributing to the process often as a result of appraisal. It would be monitored and controlled by HR.

### **Incentives to encourage performance.**

There appear to be few incentives to encourage managers to beat the budget and none for staff to assist in this. Senior managers are included in a share scheme. Perhaps a way can be found to reward staff – with vouchers for excellent work or achieving Level 3 NVQ.

Your first Review against the Standard is due at the latest by March 2012. It is suggested that you consider interim review/discussion to reflect on progress against action points arising from this report and for me to keep in touch with developments going on within the Company. The Review process then becomes much more dynamic and less reactive as experience elsewhere is showing. Linked to this approach, later this year Investors in People will offer 'new choices' in the way organisations undertake their reviews. You are encouraged to use relevant parts of the extended Investors in People framework (currently 'Profile') in future, as it provides a wider ranging framework of good practice. Using the Investors in People Standard as a foundation, it also embraces a wide range of people management issues which are not contained in the core Standard itself. The wider framework can be used very effectively as a tool to help drive continuous improvement and it is recommended that you identify relevant areas from the framework to support your business development now and then be reviewed against these at your next review to assess the outcomes and plan further development (N.B. you must be reviewed against the core Standard to retain your IIP status). As well as providing ideas for organisation development and detailed feedback this could offer you an opportunity to benchmark your performance across the range of people management and development activities by comparing your organisation's achievement to averages for other employers. [www.investorsinpeople.co.uk](http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk) provides guidance on working with the wider framework and 'new choices' including case studies and a free online tool.

Consider using our **Staff Survey** service to help you identify and track staff feedback. We can provide questionnaires for top managers, managers and people levels for both the Investors in People Standard and Profile. Survey reports show how many (and what percentage of) people chose each answer to each question and can be broken down to show results by department or location. The surveys are completely confidential. Your Assessor or adviser can set this up for you.

Our Investors in People **Networking Club** provides the opportunity to meet other organisations in your area to share experiences and ideas and improve your business knowledge. Visit our website at [www.qualitysouthwest.co.uk](http://www.qualitysouthwest.co.uk) to find out more and book your place. These events are free.

Visit Quality South West's website to maintain a view of the developments around the Investors in People Standard and for details of our **workshops and events** across the region: [www.qualitysouthwest.co.uk](http://www.qualitysouthwest.co.uk) .

For some useful information on the whole area of **employee consultation**, try looking at either [www.dti.gov.uk/er/consultation/proposal.htm](http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/consultation/proposal.htm) or [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

The basis of a Plan has been prepared on the next page to help you move forward by addressing the development areas identified during this visit.

## 6. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The first column of this Plan has been completed for you as a basis for moving your organisation forward.

Suggestions for further development	Action agreed	Responsibility	Date
<p><b>Business Planning</b></p> <p>A substantial contribution has been made to Divisional and whole Company business plans at various levels of management in the Company. The Assessor would like to see clearer evidence that staff in the homes have contributed to individual home plans and possibly seen this contribution as impacting on divisional plans. This would support the initiatives of the Company to involve staff at all levels in the management of the business.</p> <p>A very few managers have not yet grasped the importance of agreeing objectives with their staff. This does need to be looked at and could possibly be a subject for the new management development course.</p>			

Suggestions for further development	Action agreed	Responsibility	Date
<p><b>Appraisal Process</b></p> <p>There is a robust process in place but not all managers have bought into the impact such an initiative can have on the business. It is essential that all managers have the necessary training in order that they can provide support and encouragement to their staff.</p> <p>There was a series of core competencies within the process but this seems to have been lost along the way. It is suggested that this is a crucial part of appraisal.</p>			
<p><b>Communications</b></p> <p>There are substantial strategies in place to ensure that staff are provided with information about the various objectives of the Company. However, a few managers do not really buy into the ethos of sharing information. It might be worth considering having a standing agenda item at all top meetings to ensure the correct messages get through to everyone. A number of senior managers noted that communications could be substantially improved with a simple email programme with terminal located at all sites to reflect the initiative in Scotland.</p>			

Suggestions for further development	Action agreed	Responsibility	Date
<p><b>Annual Conference</b></p> <p>This is seen by all those attending as a brilliant way to improve team bonding. Now that the initiative has been established it might be good to substitute some guest speakers with more break out groups to make suggestions on how the business might be improved or to build on initiatives already suggested. Some managers felt the conference was more geared towards learning disabilities than acquired brain injury.</p>			
<p><b>Succession planning to achieve business plan objectives</b></p> <p>The Company is focused on the need to develop staff to achieve promotion in order to sustain the growth described in the business plan. Although there is a management development programme for this it does seem to be uncoordinated. A number of companies wishing to plan for succession use software programmes to identify suitable candidates for grooming and track them through the system. Managers at all levels in the business would have the opportunity of contributing to the process often as a result of appraisal. It would be</p>			

Suggestions for further development	Action agreed	Responsibility	Date
monitored and controlled by HR.			
<p><b>Incentives to encourage performance.</b></p> <p>There appear to be few incentives to encourage managers to beat the budget and none for staff to assist in this. Senior managers are included in a share scheme. Perhaps a way can be found to reward staff – with vouchers for excellent work or achieving Level 3 NVQ.</p>			

**Date for your Investors in People Review: 2012**

## 7. FINDINGS AGAINST EACH PRINCIPLE OF THE STANDARD

### **An Investor in People develops effective strategies to improve the performance of the organisation through its people.**

The business plans are designed to grow the business and to increase client satisfaction.

Managers at Management Board, Operational Board and third line manager level have attended the Annual Conference to consider the plans for the coming period. This ensures that the plans are owned by this senior group. Managers discuss the plans with their staff before they are finally agreed and published. It was interesting to note that all staff from Group Support Office in Lichfield, Divisional Offices and Development office were invited to attend the 1 ½ day meeting together with Home Managers. In all there were over 250 managers present. The individual home Development Plans and Annual Service Reviews are contained in all the homes booklets which are displayed in home entrances. It is usually known as the Statement of Purpose.

The Divisional Plans are clear and contain measurable objectives which are time bound. Examples within the plans include:

- Assess and minimise potential Health & Safety hazards so that staff teams and residents are safeguarded.
- Communication of standards of behaviour and performance required of all staff to maximise the Company's achievement awards to promote key individuals to achieve national recognition.

At Sunnyside Nursing and Respite Centre Rotherham, Sheffield Hallam University sends student nurses on placement. This has helped Voyage maintain quality links with local hospitals and health commissions for future referrals. At Stockton a support worker has excellent experience in non invasive crisis intervention. This has been recognised by providing a course to increase his experience and ultimately to share that with others as a trainer in the Company.

A key objective in the Company is to ensure that referrals are rigorously investigated to ensure they can be given the appropriate level of care in the correct environment. If this is not possible Voyage will not accept the referral and would prefer to allow a place to remain empty until a referral matches the care that can be provided. This approach to care was described by numerous staff in the homes. As a member of staff at Saxon Lodge said 'this is short term pain for long term gain'.

As in a number of new developments, staff at one Hartlepool home were brought on board a full three months before the first resident was welcomed.

Staff at all levels could give objectives for teams and individuals such as ensuring the quality of care was consistent to all residents. Objectives are reviewed by Operational Managers at their monthly visits to individual homes and by Home Managers at the two monthly supervisions. Individuals gave evidence of their own objectives being directly linked to home and Company plans such as multiskilling to gain experience for promotion and/or moving to other homes. Other examples of individual objectives are:

- Attendance at communication courses to improve confidence in dealing with the public and Company staff.
- Achieve CIMA qualification to develop current role and be even more effective
- Achieving an in-depth knowledge of epilepsy by the summer to manage an epileptic resident who has been booked into a home. To undertake challenging behaviour courses when new residents enter the homes with difficult histories.
- Continue to provide a high level of care in the day centre to ensure continuation of funding from the Independent Living Fund.

Annual appraisal provides an opportunity to capture individual learning and development needs. These are then collated into home training plans which held by the Home Manager. There are also individual training plans and personal training records. Nearly everyone in the organisation has an appraisal and those interviewed felt the occasion was pleasurable and meaningful and provides the opportunity to contribute ideas and suggestions.

As noted elsewhere the investment in learning and development is in excess 3% of turnover. This figure includes the substantial amount of in-house activity comprising meetings and appraisal.

Recently the learning and development service has relocated from Taunton to Lichfield and been strengthened. There are learning and development managers charged with the responsibility of managing the huge NVQ programme with funds from the LSC and channelled via T2G. The regulatory body for the industry (CSCI) require care providers to achieve 50% of support staff with NVQ Level 2 Care. Voyage has approximately 75% so qualified. All employees have individual personal files that contain evidence of learning and development completed.

The Company has introduced in-house training programmes called EL Box. This is a clear framework of courses that staff need to achieve in order to maintain their employment. The courses reflect the requirements of CSCI. At induction all the programmes are undertaken with refresher courses at appropriate intervals. The Assessor viewed the EL Box programmes

and was surprised to see how user friendly software is. This is quite an achievement as some newly appointed staff do not have PC skills. They have the opportunity to revisit sections that are not correctly completed. Individual staff have folders where certificates of training are held. These can be accessed by auditors such as CSCI and relatives of residents.

As noted elsewhere there are a significant number of trainers in the Company with briefs on health & safety, first aid, client care and induction. All of this helps to provide additional job satisfaction for those members of the teams. It also ensures that the commissioning process of new homes is much more focused. In order to achieve a consistency of approach across the Company, appraisal training is regularly provided for managers. A Deputy Manager in Scotland who is also a retained fire fighter has just passed his manual handling course and is also acting as a trainer in fire fighting. At Stockton on Tees a support worker has gained valuable experience in non invasive crisis intervention care. He is now registered on a course to enhance those skills with the objective of becoming a trainer.

The Company has strived to maintain contact and communication at all levels in the business during the continued expansion. Meetings are a requirement of the business and many staff referred to the benefits of these. Staff at all levels described how managers involve everyone in meetings and thought management was fair and well liked. Most homes hold meetings for all staff on a monthly basis although some prefer quarterly meetings with ad hoc sessions when appropriate. The meetings cover retraining, coaching, team working, reviewing missed opportunities and new ideas. There are also daily meetings to discuss the care being given to the residents. All of the homes are bright cheerful, friendly and a 'home from home'. In some homes there are Communication Folders where different shifts communicate with each other.

At Group Support Office in Lichfield there are a number of staff meetings and managers use the Management Briefing document that is emailed on a regular basis from the Management Board as a vehicle to inform staff of current developments in the business.

There is a Staff Handbook that is provided to all staff at induction and there are copies at all homes for staff to access. This includes a Whistle Blowing strategy which no one that the Assessor interviewed had felt the need to access.

The Management Board and senior managers continually describe the ethos of management style they want to use to support staff. Generally, managers apply the maxim that making staff happy improves productivity, reduces absenteeism and creates an excellent atmosphere.

Staff at all levels in the Company were crystal clear on what their managers were doing to support and encourage them. The Assessor was told time and again of how managers are

looking to provide experience for staff to gain promotion. Although there are many management development courses, there are so many enthusiastic managers that they lead by example.

The Chief Executive explained the Company position with regard to staff development - 'To move forward we have to grow from within'. This statement was echoed many times by managers across the UK. A number of staff offered evidence of the huge support provided by the HR Department in Lichfield and felt this was so much better than previous employers for whom they had worked.

The Development Division has a number of Focus Groups that reviews performance of the various disciplines during the commissioning and management of new facilities. People in the whole business felt this was the best way to improve quality of projects. An example was given by the Home Manager of Sunnyside Nursing and Respite Centre, who described the design of the resident mini bus to accommodate a substantial number of wheel chairs,

As noted in Section 3 of this report there is a management development programme and a recently introduced and separate management course for potential managers mainly drawn from Deputy Managers. To a large extent this will produce qualified managers for the future expansion of the Company. However, as discussed with the Chief Executive, care will need to be taken to manage people's expectations. One benefit already noticed is the increasing quality of applicants for jobs within Voyage because of the huge learning and development programme undertaken and, the opportunity to advance in a Company that has a relatively flat management structure.

One manager described how an Operations Manager supported her through the process of interviewing staff at appraisal reviews and even offered to attend some interviews with him. Home Managers feel very supported in creating and managing budgets. There is a Finance Team that will visit managers who are having trouble understanding budgets. This is intended to support the manager and those interviewed felt it was a really positive and needed initiative.

The sense of team spirit is evident in all the homes and offices visited during this assessment. In one home the management team had been together for 16 years although they had occasionally worked in different locations.

**An Investor in People takes effective action to improve the performance of the organisation through its people.**

The culture of the Company has been retained despite the organisational changes and growth in the business and is a credit to all concerned. It encourages people to contribute to the development of the business at every level. People were asked to describe the behaviours and competencies of managers and it was quite remarkable how similar those qualities were. Some of those competencies, behaviours and capabilities are reproduced here:

- Community and team spirit, respect and understanding
- Passionate about the business and the people in it
- Creating team spirit
- Clarity of target setting and describing how to achieve them
- Compassionate, supportive, approachable
- Learning from mistakes – no blame culture, professional
- Leading by example – all managers assist in client facing roles when required to do so
- Open, honest and understanding.
- Knowledge of the business and individual competency
- Listening

It is quite clear that the motivated managers understand the benefits from the delegation of responsibility. A number spoke about the job satisfaction and motivation this engendered in staff given additional responsibility. It also has the effect of lifting the whole team.

'Do you know what's good about this place – they listen to us!'

'It's like coming home here'

The supportive nature of senior management was very much in evidence from the discussions with Home Managers of new facilities and where senior support workers have been on their own during periods of absence of the Home Manager. A number of managers feel that 'there's doing a job' attitude in some companies whilst at Voyage it is 'doing a job and doing it well'. One recently appointed Deputy Manager in Leeds was able to explain how the Home Manager had supported him in learning about acquired brain injury and how to deal with problems at a practical level.

One employee remarked that 'there is no I in team'. The Chief Executive reflects this by inviting staff to comment on the business by email to him. He always responds.

Many staff made comments about their experiences within Voyage such as:

'Everyone has a specific responsibility given to them at the meeting prior to the home opening'

'Delegation gives me job satisfaction'

'If a mistake is made it is seen as an opportunity to improve'

'I come in on my days off to take \*\*\*\* horse riding'. The employee is not contracted to do that but believes the Company is so good to her that she is repaying faith and support.

'As soon as you walk in you are welcomed' – a comment from a new member of staff.

'I'm not in it for the money – it's the Company and you know you can talk to the manager about anything'

Vacancies are published on all home notice boards and on the intranet.

Tremendous support from HR was how a number of staff commented on the role of Group Support Office staff.

The culture of the Company is to thank staff for doing a good job and is always striving to find ways to recognise people's worth. Recognition is given to people during their appraisal reviews, at the end of shifts and during walkabouts by managers. There are a huge number of examples of staff being valued for their work and include:

- Recognition of individual effort at the Annual Conference and prior to that at Regional Conferences. The Chief Executive provided champagne at the Annual Conference to thank staff for their effort in 2007/08
- Christmas parties for residents to which members of staff are invited
- BBQs as above but often homes will invite other homes in the locality
- Evenings out by staff in individual homes
- There are a number of Company awards for team working and individual success. Winners of the categories are presented with their awards at the Annual Conference. One winner was enjoying a foreign holiday on the proceeds of the award, at the time of the ceremony!!
- All staff feel they are recognised for the work they do and have indicated 'it's a nice place to work'.

A number of people interviewed were able to explain how they had been recognised for their dedication. A support worker in Stoke was nominated as employee of the year and received £20. Another employee in Bramley was similarly rewarded and recognised. They all said how this increased job satisfaction and felt valued.

Those promoted are cared for to ensure they succeed in the role. Where this is not possible there is an understanding that the employee can return to the previous role.

Interviewees provided many examples of how they were informally and formally involved in identifying training and development needs, their effectiveness and to some extent, the difference this had made to the teams and/or home. Examples included the Maxaton method of communicating with autistic residents and mini bus vehicle competency training.

The sharing of good practice regularly occurs at meetings of Operational Managers, Divisional Managers, Focus Groups and individual staff meetings. This is evident at all levels in the business. An excellent example is sharing the results of CSCI audits with those homes shortly to be inspected. This has produced significant results. It was also pleasing to note that Operational Managers meetings were rotated through the homes in the area so that managers got a feel for the geography of buildings and staff they might be asked to manage on a temporary basis. It also gives staff in the homes a good insight into the managers within the area. One Operational Manager confirmed that training and development together with Health and Safety and human resources are standing agenda items.

Staff have always been encouraged to make their own decisions. There is so much learning going on it is difficult to record all the good practice that results, but a number of staff referred to managers wanting their staff to multiskill. There were examples of staff using their initiative and asking for learning and development such as managing behaviour and autism courses. Managers at all levels agreed that the Company culture included encouragement to make decisions. They were not always successful but senior managers regard those situations as an opportunity to learn. Staff and managers working within the supported living service feel very strongly that sharing good practice is vital to good communications.

Some meeting agendas are posted on the staff room notice boards and staff can add subjects as they wish. These are discussed and where appropriate – implemented. Minutes are posted on the notice board for all to see. Where the agendas are not displayed the manager asks staff for items before the meeting during regular walkabouts. At Treddinnoch Falkirk the Assessor observed a management team meeting and was so impressed with the contribution being made by members. At Hemlington Hall Middlesbrough discussions centered on creating a garden for the residents and at Croft House Leicester there were discussions on how to decorate the recently provided sun house.

All Home Managers were able to confirm that they contributed to the monthly reports prepared by Operational Managers. It was fascinating to trace the communication network to the

Operational Director and thence to the Divisional Directors meeting and responses back down the line. This makes for excellent job satisfaction at all levels in the business.

Senior management in Scotland were keen to describe the initiative 'Make a difference Day' to mirror the event in England but with the emphasis on Scottish protocols and legal requirements. The Divisional Director and his team are attending to support the day and speakers on subjects such as Scottish Law have been invited.

The induction process across the Company is excellent and at all homes many staff would say their induction has been comprehensive and enjoyable. There is a DVD describing the role of the Homes, their resident needs and a general picture of the experiences support workers will encounter. This has been produced to reduce the attrition rate experienced at the end of probation. However, now that the Company is expanding into new areas of care there is a need to produce DVDs that reflect that.

Learning and development usually takes place when booked. The philosophy of the Company is to ensure that there are no delays in the process of training staff. There have to be extremely good reasons should this occur. A member of staff said 'its' fantastic training here – every week and never gets boring.'

**An Investor in People can demonstrate the impact of its investment in people on the performance of the organisation.**

The evaluation of the impact that learning and development has on the way residents are cared for is a continuous activity – usually through observation at home level. At the team level Operational Managers carry out evaluation during the monthly visits to the homes and in discussion with managers. The Management Board is regularly briefed by the Human Resources Director on training matters and at the budget setting process he describes the impact that learning and development has had on the various divisions.

Some other KPIs that are used to measure the effectiveness of learning and development are:

- Attrition
- CSCI Star ratings
- Health & Safety issues
- Resident meeting complaints
- Maintaining earnings at division level
- Speed with which vacancies are filled. In some cases the Assessor was told that the health commissions were often 'fighting' each other to place residents in Voyage homes.

Performances on P&L are discussed monthly at Operations Managers meetings. Where there are significant variances from that expected managers will phone each other to determine how a particular home managed a starring performance and often introduce similar ideas in their own home. It was decided to create a special meeting to consider performance improvement as this subject did not have sufficient time devoted to it during the normal meetings. On a two monthly basis performance at all levels is examined and includes quality assurance, human relations matters – particularly recruitment success and, home safety issues.

The key focus in this section is to measure whether the Company's investment in people has been worthwhile and whether managers and their teams understand the impact it has had on the Company, residents and themselves. This indicator also looks at the way Voyage Ltd has improved the way it manages and develops the staff across the Company.

The strategy is to continuously improve and this has been embedded in the culture. Staff and managers are constantly reviewing practices and improving where necessary. Multi-skilling has resulted in staff learning new skills and being able to manage clients better. This has led to improved job satisfaction for a huge number of staff. The staff provided many examples of how the evaluation of its investment has resulted in improvements in the organisation's strategy for leading, managing and developing people.

Examples include:-

- Production of the DVD 'Life in a Home' and its subsequent update
- Trampoline sessions being sourced by a support worker who recently trained as an instructor
- Recruitment of staff is being relocated centrally with members of the Opportunities UK Team assuming this responsibility
- Office Set up Tool – to ease the managerial problems of managers in new homes.
- Introduction of initiatives as a result of the Home Managers surveys
- Welcome Pack for families to eliminate the need for relatives to phone managers for information
- In one home the Manager supported the support worker to gain confidence by slowly giving her responsibilities commensurate with a senior post. In time the support worker gained confidence and is now being considered for promotion.

It is interesting to note that both managers and staff could see definite improvements in performance of the way they lead, manage and develop people. Not all staff could see this however, possibly because of the regular contact they have with managers whilst others hardly ever see their managers and could not recount any changes because of the infrequency of contact.