

Care home life, what it's really like!

Belle Vue House





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Healthwatch Sunderland would like to acknowledge the support of the residents who allowed us into their home and talked openly and honestly with the team. We would also like to thank those staff members, family and relatives who took time out of their day to answer our questions and give their feedback.



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1. Introduction

What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch England is the national consumer champion in health and social care. It was set up by the government to ensure that people's views around health and social care services are listened to and fed back to service providers and commissioners with a view to improving services.

There is a local Healthwatch for every Local Authority area in England. Healthwatch Sunderland aims to be a strong local consumer champion working with our partners to support:

- People to shape health and social care delivery
- People to influence the services they receive personally
- People to hold services to account.

We achieve this by:

- Listening to people, especially the most vulnerable, to understand their experiences and what matters most to them
- Influencing those who have the power to change services so that they better meet people's needs now and into the future
- Empowering and informing people to get the most from their health and social care services and encouraging other organisations to do the same.





2. Background and rationale

Independent Age and Healthwatch Camden have recently carried out some initial research into the information currently available on care homes. The results indicated that there is a need to provide qualitative information on care homes that goes beyond basic safety standards. It shows that the information needed by people looking for a suitable care home, should provide a real sense of what a home may be like to live in.

Healthwatch Sunderland have responded to this need and will be carrying out visits to all 47 care homes currently available to older people across Sunderland. The complete results will be published to enable members of the public to make more informed choices when considering which care home to move into for themselves or their relatives.

To enable this, 8 indicators have been devised to be used and will focus specifically on issues of quality, rather than safety, such as how much residents and family can have a say in how the home is run, and whether residents are able to pursue their hobbies etc.

The 8 indicators are:

1. A strong visible management
2. Staff with time and skills to do their jobs
3. Good knowledge of each individual resident and how their needs may be changing
4. A varied programme of activities
5. Quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes
6. Ensuring residents can regularly see health professionals such as GPs, dentists, opticians or chiropodists
7. Accommodate resident's personal, cultural and lifestyle needs
8. Provide an open environment where feedback is actively sought and used.



3. Methodology

An initial pre-visit meeting with the home Manager Christine was held at Belle Vue House. This was to explain the reason for the ‘Care home life - What’s it’s really like!’ visit, to understand the needs of the residents and to arrange a visit that would cause as little disruption as possible.

The ‘Care home life - What’s it’s really like!’ visit took place on the 3rd October 2017 and was carried out by Healthwatch Sunderland staff and volunteers who are trained so that they can effectively capture the resident’s experience.

At the visit residents were asked a range of questions via a set questionnaire (see appendix 1). The questions were constructed to reflect the objectives of the visit. Observations were also made on the physical environment and staff/resident interaction.

Staff and relatives were also given questionnaires to complete (see appendix 2, 3 and 4).

We also ran a facebook campaign asking local people to comment on their experiences of care homes across Sunderland. Any feedback we received was incorporated into the findings.

4. Findings - Summary

The Healthwatch team collated the survey findings we gathered from residents, their relatives and friends, staff and Managers and our observations made during our visit. The findings have been scored against the eight indicators in terms of the degree which they were met, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A neutral rating indicates both positive and negative feedback, which when averaged results in a neutral score. A summary of this can be found below:

Here is the key which shows the indicator scores



Strongly disagree



Disagree



Neutral



Agree



Strongly agree

1.	A strong visible management	 Agree
2.	Staff with time and skills to do their jobs	 Agree
3.	Good knowledge of each resident and their changing needs	 Strongly agree
4.	A varied programme of activities	 Strongly agree
5.	Quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes	 Agree
6.	Regular access to health professionals	 Agree
7.	Accommodation of resident's personal, cultural and lifestyle needs	 Agree
8.	An open environment where feedback is actively sought and used	 Agree



Findings

Belle Vue House is a converted domestic residence located on Gray Road, Sunderland SR2 8JB. A short walk from the city centre it has resident accommodation over three floors, with a lounge and dining room on both the ground and first floors and a small garden to the front of the property with seating.

The home provides personal care for up to 27 people, with dementia or general care needs.

See the latest CQC inspection report here:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-965550712>

At the time of our visit there were 26 residents living in the home. Due to the capacity of the majority of the residents, the Healthwatch team were only able to support 7 residents to fully complete the survey. The team received 6 staff and 3 friends and relative surveys back.

The results of these surveys are given below:

Indicator 1 - A strong visible management

The indicator states that the Manager should be visible within the care home, provide good leadership to staff and have the right experience for the job
The Healthwatch team AGREE this was met.

Some of the residents at Belle Vue House had difficulty identifying the Manager but this may have been due to their own individual health or capacity. The residents who knew the Manager said she is helpful, pleasant, very good and approachable.

The relatives we asked added that 'she is a very nice lady.'

All staff who completed the survey said they found the Manager to be very supportive to both their professional and personal needs. They added that the Manager and her deputy are both easy to talk to.

During the Healthwatch visit the management were on hand to introduce us to some of the residents and were dealing with relatives who were visiting at the time and wished to speak to them. Both residents and the relatives appeared to be comfortable in the Managers company. The Manager encourages staff to help residents forge friendships.

Indicator 2 - Staff with time and skills to do their jobs

The indicator states that staff should be well trained, motivated and feel they have the resources to do their job properly.

The Healthwatch team AGREE this was met.

All of the residents we spoke to told us that the staff at Belle Vue House are very nice, although they don't always have time to stop and chat.



The relatives who responded to the survey told us that the staff at the home are very good. One lady whose husband was at Belle Vue for respite care told us that she felt ‘the staff were marvellous and had the patience of saints.’ One family member did say that the staff ‘mostly’ had the time and skills to look after their relative.

All the staff who responded to our survey felt that they have the time and skills to care for the residents at the home, with some adding that this can change if a shift is short staffed. All of the staff told us that they are encouraged to undertake courses to develop their skills, some went on to tell us that they are currently completing a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3. Staff stated that they all like their jobs for various reasons such as: ‘seeing the residents happy and looked after’, ‘providing good care to the residents’ and ‘progressing within my role by completing other qualifications.’

The Manager told us that she enjoys working with residents with dementia. She finds it challenging, but rewarding.

Indicator 3 - Good knowledge of each resident and changing needs

The indicator states that staff should be familiar with resident’s histories and preferences and have processes in place for how to monitor changes in health and wellbeing.

The Healthwatch team STRONGLY AGREE this was met.

All of the residents we spoke to felt the staff at the home know what they need and what they like and don’t like. One resident added that the staff ask them about their likes and dislikes and another said that the staff find out as they go along.

The relatives who responded to the survey felt the staff at Belle Vue House know their relatives very well and that changes in their health and wellbeing are noticed straight away.

Staff informed us of the range of mechanisms that the home has in place for ensuring they get to know a resident’s life history, personality, needs and preferences, these included; talking to residents and their families, care plans, handover meetings, risk assessments and personal statements.

During the Healthwatch visit the team witnessed a lady who had been discharged from hospital that day. One staff member was sitting with her and her relative to ensure she was comfortable, offering reassurance and a drink.



Indicator 4 - A varied programme of activities

The indicator states that care homes should provide a wide range of activities (and ensure residents access these) in the home and support residents in taking part in activities outside the home.

The Healthwatch team STRONGLY AGREE this was met.

Some of the residents were unable to tell us about the activities in the home, this may have been due to their own health and capacity. Others told us that there are a range of activities available, most of which take place in the lounge, these include: bingo, sing-a-longs, card and draught games and being taken out to a swimming class. The residents stated that the staff are available to assist at activity times, they are encouraged to take part and it is easy to do so.

When asked about trips outside of the home there was a mixed response from residents, some told us that there are outings available, some said they go out with friends and others said there are none available.

We asked the residents if they get the chance to do the things they used to do before they came to live at Belle Vue House; one person said that they enjoyed singing and dancing but can still do this in the home, another added that they used to practice martial arts but is now unable to do this due to physical problems.

Relatives felt that the home has a good range of activities, with one person adding that these were both inside and outside the home. They felt their relatives were encouraged by staff to take part.

Staff members asked told us that there are a range of in house and outdoor activities available to residents. They encourage the residents to take part in the activities by joining in themselves.

Indicator 5 - Quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes

The indicator states that care homes should offer a good range of meal choices and adequate support to help residents who may struggle to eat and drink including between mealtimes. The social nature of eating should be reflected in how homes organise their dining rooms and accommodate different preferences around mealtimes.

The Healthwatch team AGREE this was met.

The kitchen staff at Belle Vue House develop menus to suit the resident's individual tastes and dietary requirements. The chef speaks to each resident to ask them which of the available 2 options they would like for both lunch and evening meals. Alternative meals are available upon request and hot and cold drinks and snacks are offered to residents throughout the day.

Residents gave mixed reviews about the meals at the home, most seemed to enjoy the food, whilst others said the food was OK. One resident told us that they are 'getting used to the food'. All of those asked said that there is always a choice of



food available with some going on to say that staff would make sandwiches for them if they didn't like what was on the menu. One resident added 'the cook knows my favourite food' another said 'the chef is a lovely lad, he would make something different if there is nothing you like.'

The relatives told us that the food at Belle Vue is good with one lady saying 'the food is beautiful and visitors can also have a meal here but there is small a charge.' They all felt confident that their relative is supported to eat as much as needed, but one person said that they felt their relative could be offered and helped to drink more.

Staff told us that mealtimes are a time for residents to get together in the homes vintage diner, where soft music is played, to socialise with one another and the staff. They went on to say that staff try to encourage residents to eat together to enable them to experience this sociable aspect of mealtimes. Appropriate dining wear and cutlery are available if required and staff are available to assist residents with eating and drinking if needed.

During the visit the Healthwatch team saw a variety of hot and cold drinks being served to residents and staff members encouraging them to drink them.

Indicator 6 - Regular access to health professionals (GPs, dentists, opticians, chiropodists etc)

The indicator states that residents should have the same expectation to be able to promptly see a health professional as they would have when living in their own home.

The Healthwatch team AGREE this was met.

Most of the residents were unclear if they had recently accessed either an optician or a dentist at the home, this may have been due to their own individual health or capacity. Two residents did say that they have had their eyes checked.

Relatives asked told us their relatives have access to appropriate healthcare professionals both inside and outside the home.

The staff members who responded to the survey told us that residents have regular access to health professionals such as chiropodist, dentists and opticians and access when required to other professionals such as GPs, nurses.



Indicator 7 - Accommodate resident's personal, cultural and lifestyle needs

The indicator states that care homes should be set up to meet residents cultural, religious and lifestyle needs as well as their care needs and shouldn't make people feel uncomfortable if they are different or do things differently to other residents. **The Healthwatch team AGREE this was met.**

Residents told us that they are able to make choices about the clothes they wear. They can have their hair cut/styled regularly, some of the ladies said they can have their nails painted and the gentleman told us they can have a regular shave.

The family member who answered this question on the survey felt that their relative's specific lifestyle or religious or cultural needs are met by the home.

All staff members asked told us that a member of the clergy from a local church visits the home once a month and all residents can take part in a service if they wish too.

Indicator 8 - An open environment where feedback is actively sought and used

The indicator states that there should be a mechanism in place for residents and relatives to influence what happens in the home, such as a residents and relatives committee. The process for making comments or complaints should be clear and feedback should be welcomed and acted on.

The Healthwatch team AGREE this was met.

Some of the residents were unable to tell us if they get asked by the home for their feedback, but others told us that they would speak to members of staff if they wanted to give any feedback. Only one resident said that they would change things about the home and this was a new and more comfortable mattress and more time for toileting etc.

Some of the residents told us that they are happy living at Belle Vue House with one adding 'the staff are very good and if they aren't we tell them.'

All of the relatives who responded to the survey told us that they feel like welcome participants in the home. One added that she sometimes has meals at the home, which both she and her relative enjoy. Another said that they are able to give their feedback about the home via residents meetings, which are advertised on the notice board. Whilst another stated that the Manager has an open door policy if you need to talk to her. All added that they would know how to make a complaint about Belle Vue House and would feel confident doing so if needed.



5. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Questions for residents

1. Do you know the Manager of the home?
2. What do you think of the Manager?
3. What do you think about the staff here?
4. Do the staff have the time to stop and chat with you?
5. Do the staff know what you need and what you like and don't like?
6. What activities are there for you in the home?
7. Is it easy to join in the activities?
8. Do you get a chance to do any of the things you used to enjoy before you came here?
9. Do you go on trips outside?
10. What do you think of the food here?
11. Is there enough choice of what you eat and when you eat?
12. Do you enjoy mealtimes?
13. Have you seen a dentist to check your teeth or an optician to check your eyes recently?
14. Is there respect for your religion or your culture here in your home?
15. Do you get asked what you think about the home?
16. Would you like to change anything about the home? Have you told anyone about this and what happened?
17. What would you do if you wanted to make a complaint about the home?



Appendix 2 - Questions for Managers

1. **Have strong, visible management**
What attracted you to the role of care home manager?

What do you enjoy about the role?
2. **Have staff with time and skills to do their jobs**
In what ways do you encourage staff to develop their skills?
3. **Have good knowledge of each individual resident and how their needs may be changing**
How do you ensure that staff get to know a resident's life history, personality and health and care needs when the resident first arrives?

How is information about a resident's tastes and their health and care needs updated as these change?
4. **Offer a varied programme of activities**
What activities are available for residents inside and outside the home?

What encouragement and assistance do you give to residents so that they can take part in activities?
5. **Offer quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes**
What systems are in place to support residents to eat and drink at mealtimes and outside of meal times?

What choices do residents get about what they eat and drink and when and how they eat and drink?

In what ways do you try to make mealtimes sociable?
6. **Ensure residents can regularly see health professionals such as GPs, dentists, opticians or chiropodists**
Do residents have regular, preventative dental and optometry (eye-care) appointments?
7. **Accommodate residents' personal, cultural and lifestyle needs**
How does the home find out about and cater to residents' cultural, religious and lifestyle needs? Can you give an example?
8. **Be an open environment where feedback is actively sought and used**
In what ways can residents and their family have a say in how the home is run?

Are staff able to have a say in how the home is run?

How do you make use of feedback or complaints from residents and relatives?



Appendix 3 - Questions for staff

- 1. Have strong, visible management**
What support do you receive from the manager?

How easy is it to talk to the manager when you want to ask a question or raise an issue?
- 2. Have staff with time and skills to do their jobs**
Do you feel you have enough time to care for residents?

Are you encouraged to continue to develop your skills? In what ways?

What do you enjoy about your job?
- 3. Have good knowledge of each individual resident and how their needs may be changing**
How do you ensure that staff get to know a resident's life history, personality and health and care needs when the resident first arrives?

How is information about a resident's tastes and their health and care needs updated as these change?
- 4. Offer a varied programme of activities**
What activities are available for residents inside and outside the home?

What encouragement and assistance do you give to residents so that they can take part in activities?
- 5. Offer quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes**
How do you make sure residents are able to eat and drink at mealtimes as well as outside of mealtimes?

What choices do residents get about what they eat and drink and when and how they eat and drink?

In what ways do you try to make mealtimes sociable?
- 6. Ensure residents can regularly see health professionals such as GPs, dentists, opticians or chiropodists**
Do residents have regular, preventative dental and optometry (eye-care) appointments?
- 7. Accommodate residents' personal, cultural and lifestyle needs**
Can you give an example of how the home caters for religious and cultural needs?
- 8. Be an open environment where feedback is actively sought and used**
In what ways can residents and their family have a say in how the home is run?

Can you provide an example of how a resident or their family member has influenced how the home is run?
Do you feel staff can have a say in how the home is run?



Appendix 4 - Questions for friends and relatives

- 1. Strong visible management**
Do you know who the Manager of the home is?

Is the Manager friendly and helpful?
- 2. Have staff with time and skills to do their jobs**
Do you think the staff have the time and skills to care for your friend/relative?
- 3. Have good knowledge of each individual resident and how their needs may be changing**
How well do you think the staff know your friend/relative's life history, personality and health and care needs?

Does the home notice and respond when your friends/relative's needs change?
- 4. Offer a varied programme of activities**
What do you think of the activities available for residents inside and outside the home?

Is your friend/relative properly encouraged and supported to take part in the activities?
- 5. Offer quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes**
What do think of the quality and choice of food?

Are you confident that your friend/relative is supported to eat and drink as much as needed?

Do you think that mealtimes are sociable?
- 6. Ensure residents can regularly see health professionals such as GPs, dentists, opticians or chiropodists**
Does a dentist and an optometrist (optician) come to see your friend/relative regularly or only if there is a problem?
- 7. Accommodate residents' personal, cultural and lifestyle needs**
Does your friend/relative have any specific lifestyle or religious or cultural needs? Are these respected and accommodated?
- 8. Be an open environment where feedback is actively sought and used**
Do you feel that you are a welcome participant in the life of the home?

In what ways can you and your friend/relative have a say in how the home is run or give feedback?

Would you know how to make a complaint if you wanted to?

Would you feel confident to make a complaint and do you think it would be acted on appropriately?



DISCLAIMER:

- The observations made in this report relate only to the visits carried out.
- This report is not representative of all residents' views; it only represents the views of those who were able to contribute within the time available.

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