

Care home life, what it's really like!

Cedar House



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Acknowledgements

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 Lynn was held at Cedar 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 27th September 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 gathered from residents, their family 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	 Strongly 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

Cedar House is located at 3-4 The Cedars, Ashbrooke, Sunderland, SR2 7TW and is run by Parkside Care Limited. It is a converted domestic residence and is situated within a scenic conservation area. It has front facing views over Backhouse Park and a private south facing garden to the rear.

The staff at Cedar House specialise in dementia care, offering long term residential care for up to 31 people some of whom may be living with dementia or physical or mental health conditions.

The home has access to a minibus for trips and outings.

See the latest CQC inspection report here:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-119633891>

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 11 staff and 4 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 Cedar House had difficulty identifying the Manager but this may have been due to their own individual health or capacity. During our visit the Healthwatch team witnessed the Manager interacting with the staff and residents, who all seemed relaxed and comfortable in each other's company.

Family and friends who were asked knew the Manager, liked her and said she kept them updated with what was going on in the home. Both Managers asked stated that they were attracted to their role as it would give them the opportunity to help and support the residents and they enjoyed making a difference.

All staff who completed the survey said they felt supported by the management, found them easy to talk to, approachable and also felt able to raise any issues or concerns.

Prior to our visit the Manager had asked the Healthwatch Engagement Team for assistance to find a domiciliary dentist. Healthwatch Sunderland staff provided the Manager of Cedar House with the contact details for the Community Dental Service and accessed the correct referral form for her to enable possible access for residents to the service. During our visit the Manager stated that she had not yet completed the referral form as she was unsure how to. The Healthwatch team advised her about this and encouraged her to call the service if required.



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 spoken to commented that staff were pleasant, friendly and caring. When asked if the staff had time to stop and chat to them the responses given were split, some saying they did and others saying they didn't. Most of them did say that they were often very busy.

Family and friends who completed the surveys felt that the staff had enough time for their relatives and felt "part of the family". They also commented that they felt comfortable enough to ask staff questions when the need arises.

Managers stated that they encourage staff to develop their skills on a daily basis, at supervisions and training sessions. One Manager added that there are times when there isn't enough time for staff to spend as long as they would like with residents.

A few of the staff told us that although the residents are their priority, there were times when they felt pushed to spend time with them. The majority of staff, with one exception, felt encouraged to develop their skills by taking part in training courses. The staff member who stated they were not always encouraged added that they felt competent in their role. The staff also told us that the thing they enjoy most about their job at the home are interacting with the residents and their families.

During our visit the Healthwatch team witnessed one resident who informed us she had asthma becoming anxious. The Manager cared for her by calming her down by doing some breathing exercises and eventually the resident was laughing and joining in on the activities.

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 residents we spoke to felt that the staff knew them and knew their likes and dislikes, with one resident adding that the staff would ask them if they needed to know something about them which they didn't already know.

Family we spoke to told us that they feel the staff know their family member and were able to notice differences in their health, wellbeing or behaviour. They went on to say that the staff at Cedar House wouldn't hesitate to call a family member straight away to inform them of any changes, when it was appropriate.

The Managers and staff stated that a good knowledge of the resident is built up by liaising with the resident, their families and friends, social workers and by



completing the residents 'Life Story' books and care plans. All documentation is updated on a regular basis and any significant changes are documented as they happen and passed on to relevant staff.

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.

The care home provides a range of indoor and outdoor activities for the residents and their families and friends to take part in if they wish e.g. Oomph activities (a programme designed to enhance the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of older adults), exercises, games, music and sing and dancing etc. Also outside entertainers visit to offer variety to the residents. Outdoor activities include trips to the seafront, park and local restaurants for lunch. Staff stated that they encourage residents to take part in activities and offer reassurance, help and assistance where necessary to enable this. Relatives who completed the surveys informed us that they regularly attended activities too. Staff also added that residents are consulted with, to ensure they are given the opportunity to take part in activities that they enjoy. The Healthwatch team witnessed some activities taking place during the visit, these included Oomph activities, board games, a quiz, a parachute game and one resident was sitting reading the newspaper. Residents appeared to be enthusiastic about the activities and were laughing and smiling.

Not all residents were able to talk to us about the available activities at the home, this may have been due to their own individual health and capacity. Some of them were able to tell us that there is a range of activities, most of which take place in the main lounge, although trips outside were available too, which they enjoy. A couple of the residents told us that they were able to pursue some of the interests which they enjoyed before they moved into Cedar House, which included knitting and completing crosswords.

The Healthwatch team witnessed information on the range of indoor and outdoor activities available to residents and leaflets and fliers on local organisations and their services which were all displayed in the main entrance of the building. Notice boards also included photographs of some of the past activities the residents had taken part in.



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 STRONGLY AGREE this was met.

Residents told us that the food at Cedar House is good, they have choice and one gentleman added that he is never hungry. Residents told us that they enjoy mealtimes, which give them a chance to socialise. During the Healthwatch visit we witnessed the chef asking each of the residents what they would like for lunch from a choice of two meals. We also witnessed the staff giving residents cups of tea, biscuits and juice and encouraging residents to drink whilst replacing drinks that had gone cold.

The relatives asked informed us that they felt the food is beautiful, that their relatives was well-fed, they enjoy the food and mealtimes. One went on to say that her husband has put on weight since living at Cedar House and that she likes the fact that residents are encouraged to drink and that fluid intake is monitored.

Managers and staff told us that residents were offered a range of choice at mealtimes as indicated in their care plans i.e. their favourite foods and drinks, whether they require soft food or any other dietary requirements. Residents can choose from two options at main mealtimes and menus used are available in picture and large print to help residents to make a choice. If there is nothing on the menu to suit the resident they can choose an alternative.

Staff told us that residents are given the option to eat in the dining room or in their own rooms and mealtimes are a time for socialising, where residents are able to choose their own seats which enables friendship groups to sit together. There is music played to encourage a relaxed atmosphere and the dining room is always kept clean and well lit, they use bright coloured cutlery and tableware.

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.

Some of the residents told us that they have new glasses since starting to live at Cedar House and most residents told us that a range of healthcare professionals visit the home on a regular basis.

Family stated that a range of health professionals attend the home regularly to offer check-ups and treatment to their relatives.



When asked the Managers and staff told us that an optician, nurses and GPs visit the home on a regular basis to offer check-ups and treatment to the residents. The chiropodist visits ever 6-8 weeks and can be called out if necessary. They added that they recently lost their domiciliary dentist and they are looking for a new one.

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 stated that they are able to get their hair done in the home on a regular basis and are able to make choices about which of their own clothes they wear.

Both relatives and staff told us that a local vicar and other members of the church come to the home to give Holy Communion and hold regular services. Relatives and friends are able to attend these visits if they wish.

Managers told us that information on resident's personal, cultural and lifestyle needs are accessed through discussions with family and friends and from an 'all about me form' which is completed when the resident joins the home and all wishes and beliefs are respected.

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.

When speaking to residents the Healthwatch team asked if staff ever asked for their feedback about the home, some residents stated that they could not remember, however some did say that they were able to give feedback, but they had no complaints. None of the residents said that they would change anything about the home. One did add that they had raised a complaint with the Manager on a previous occasion but that the issue was 'sorted straight away'.

Those relatives who were asked said that they felt welcome in the home and also felt they were constantly able to give feedback to Management and staff at the home. They said they were happy with the home and wouldn't change anything. One resident's wife said that her daughter is happy with the home too and that there is no reason not to be. All stated that there had been no reasons to complain.



The Managers and staff told us that the opportunity for feedback is given via a yearly survey and that residents and family can approach any member of staff at any time. There is a suggestion box in the foyer and an online review system is available via an external website: www.carehome.org.uk. Staff added that they feel they can have their say about how the home is run and that there are different mechanisms in place to enable this.



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 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**
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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