



Care home life, what it's really like!

## The Croft



Date of Healthwatch Sunderland visit: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017



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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?

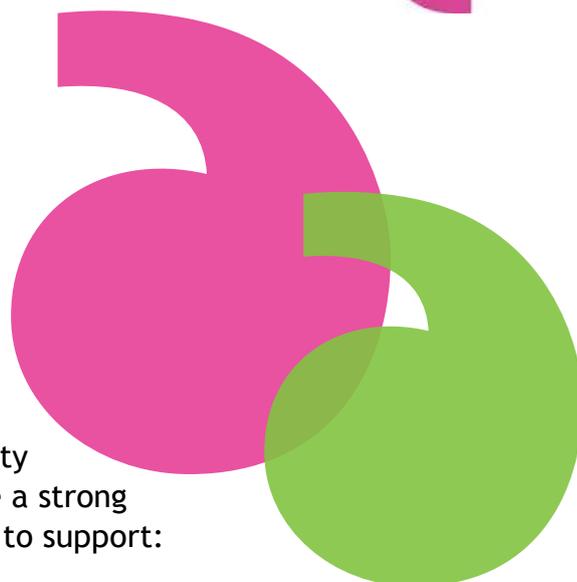
Healthwatch England is the national consumer champion in health and social care. It was set up by the government to ensure that people's views around health and social care services are listened to and fed back to service providers and commissioners with a view to improving services.

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.





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## 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.



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### 3. Methodology

An initial pre-visit meeting with the home Manager Kathryn was held at The Croft. 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 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	 Strongly agree
2.	Staff with time and skills to do their jobs	 Agree
3.	Good knowledge of each resident and their changing needs	 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	 Strongly agree
8.	An open environment where feedback is actively sought and used	 Strongly agree



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## Findings

The Croft Residential Care home is a converted domestic residence located in Ettrick Grove, High Barnes, Sunderland SR4 8QE and is run by Mr and Mrs Dunningham.

The home provides residential care and support for up to 33 people, most of whom are living with dementia. There are 29 rooms, 3 of which could be used as double bedrooms, all of which offer en-suite facilities.

There are 3 communal living areas; these consist of two lounges with high back chairs and wall mounted TV's with large windows looking out onto the gardens and decked area. The family / activity room can be booked for private parties, visits and is also used for activities.

They offer a free day's trial, where potential clients can join them for the day for breakfast, lunch and dinner, at no charge.

See the latest CQC inspection report here:  
<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-108935568>

At the time of our visit there were 33 residents living in the home. Due to the capacity of the majority of the residents, the Healthwatch team were only able to support 2 residents to fully complete the survey. The team received 5 staff and 7 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 STRONGLY AGREE this was met.**

When asked one resident we spoke to knew who the Manager was by name and spoke well of her and another was unsure but this may have been due to their own individual health and capacity. All family and friends told us that they knew who the Manager was and said they she was friendly and approachable. They also mentioned that she is always available, very supportive and if you go to her with any problem she will always listen and help resolve issues.

All the staff who responded stated they felt supported by the Manager, find her to be approachable and easy to talk to and her door is always open. One Manager told us that she was attracted to the role to help the quality of life of people with dementia in care homes and the other Manager wanted to add value to people's lives as well as influencing how staff work and treat the people they support.



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## **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 residents we spoke to commented that they liked the staff, stating they are all wonderful people, very nice or lovely. When asked if the staff had time to stop and chat to them, all residents replied with a yes. The Healthwatch team observed staff members sitting in the lounge area with residents and having one to one conversations.

The majority of relatives surveyed responded positively about the staff, stating the staff are attentive, skilled and care very well for the residents. One family member commented that the staff undergo various training events and relatives are informed of this via the home's newsletter. All relatives also stated that any changes that occur with residents are noticed by staff and that they are notified when this occurs. Some relatives did mention that staff do get busy and at times the staffing ratios don't always allow them with enough time in their role. One relative commented that senior staff get to know residents life stories but many staff are not aware and don't appear interested.

Two staff informed us that they feel they have enough time to care for residents and one stated that on most days this is true but some days feel more rushed than others. They all stated that they are encouraged to access training and two mentioned they were completing their NVQ (National Vocational Qualifications). They all stated they enjoyed their jobs and like to help people remain as independent as possible, help to make a difference or engage with residents.

The Manager informed us that they offer a lot of in house training and through supervision and appraisal determine staffs interest in training. They also support when staff need help and support and encourage good practise.

## **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 AGREE this was met.**

The two residents who answered this question stated that the staff knew them well and were aware of what they like and disliked. Most relatives and friends who responded to the survey said that staff have a good knowledge of their relatives and a good understanding of their relatives changing needs. They made reference to staff getting to know their life history i.e. where they grew up, family etc., their health needs and personality. Other relatives stated that senior care staff know their relatives very well but other care staff don't seem to be as aware.

Managers stated that they complete a "getting to know you" document prior to admission giving a full overview of current needs and family are involved in

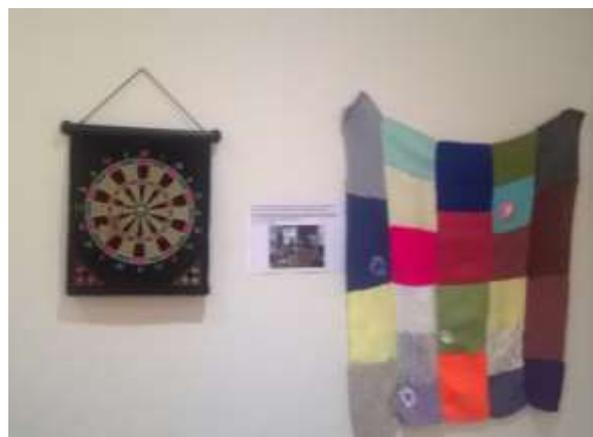


completing life history. All staff mentioned that care plans are updated at least monthly to monitor changes in relatives and these are communicated with staff to keep them aware of individual's needs.

#### **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.**



(Display boards showing available activities for residents and photos from past activities)

All residents we spoke to enjoy the range of activities available in the home and mentioned how staff will support them to join in when needed. The home has 4 activities co-ordinators and provides activities 7 days and 5 evenings per week. The Healthwatch team witnessed a display board that had the schedule of activities available on weekly rota and photos of the residents taking part in past event/activities. The range of activities available includes arts and crafts, taster nights, pamper sessions, movie nights, board games, singers and outdoor trips for coffee or local pubs etc.

The Healthwatch team also observed a TV in the lounge showing a film chosen by the residents. Many were engaged in the film and others were reading, completing puzzles or were interacting with several visitors including a pet dog.

Relatives commented on how the range of activities has recently changed and a new programme is in place with new co-ordinators who are working hard to accommodate all residents. They all commented that the choice is wide and varied and that staff are there to support residents to join in.

Managers and staff informed us that they have monthly meetings for residents and relatives with activity co-ordinators to discuss upcoming activities and people can put forward suggestions. They also added that they follow the Jackie Pool



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activities dependency tool which allows them to establish monthly the level of need and type of activity best suited to each individual. They encourage residents to join in with gentle encouragement but do respect choices and past interests and social environments. They also encourage friendships within the home to make residents feel included and belonging and physical support to reach activities outside the home and the local community.

## **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 Croft provides protected mealtimes and provide residents with a breakfast of their choice and two set meals at lunch and tea. The residents we spoke to all found the food lovely with enough choice for them. One resident commented that if she is out of the home for the dinner and misses a mealtime the kitchen will keep her a meal for when she returns. Another resident told us that they are offered a choice of two meals but they would make something else if they didn't like it. They all commented that they are encouraged by staff to sit in the dining room to make the time more sociable and they enjoy this.

Relatives and friends who completed the survey all responded positively about the food explaining it is very good and varied. Many also stated that dietary requirements were catered for, including those who require a soft diet. Most relatives agreed that the correct support is given by staff who will sit with those residents who require it and encourage them to eat and drink enough throughout the day. One relative commented there is an ongoing problem with drinking fluids with their relative. They felt that he doesn't always drink enough, as he sometimes has periods of refusal but due to his health conditions it is important that he drinks plenty. They added that most of the time staff do look after this issue. Another relative also commented that they think that the evening meal is served too early.

Staff and Managers stated that the home documents all residents' dislikes, likes and support requirements etc. which all care staff are made aware of. Residents can choose from the menu or eat meals and snacks at later times if they choose. They also have options of where to eat including, communal areas, in own rooms or in lounge areas. The Manager also commented that they have recently moved the more independent residents to a separate dining area so that they are able to enjoy their mealtime experiences and this has added to their friendship group. The home has also started "foods of the world", where residents get to sample different cultural foods together and this is used to encourage residents to discuss likes, dislikes and memories. One relative commented how much her father had



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enjoyed this experience and was tasting new food for the first time.

### **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.**

Residents commented that all their health needs are catered for in the home. One resident commented that she receives treatment in the home and another stated she goes into the community to her own doctors etc. and is supported by family or staff to do so.

All relatives and friends agreed that all health needs of residents were met and were happy with level of provision. Staff and Managers informed us that an optician and a dentist who visit the home. If residents wish to use their own dentist or optician then staff will support this to happen and include relatives in this process.

### **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 STRONGLY AGREE this was met.**

Two residents that we spoke to commented that that both go to their own church and that staff support them to do this. Others that we spoke to commented that they have regular visits from hairdressers at the home and that staff help with painting their nails and picking out their clothes.

The Healthwatch team witnessed a local nun who was visiting the home at the time. She was engaging with the residents who all seemed pleased to be in her company.

Management and staff added that cultural, lifestyle, religion and choices are discussed at preadmission and then this is built upon via care plans, risk assessment and monthly reviews. One of the Managers gave an example of this, explaining that they recently had a male resident who came into the home who loved to play piano. The home had a keyboard stored in the loft and this was brought down for him to use, which he still does on a daily basis.



## 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 STRONGLY AGREE this was met.**

The home provides a monthly meeting for residents, family and staff. This is an opportunity for people to come together to discuss choices/wishes/suggestions and ideas. Whilst on the visit the Healthwatch team saw a poster advertising the upcoming meeting.

Residents we spoke to mentioned that they are regularly asked what they think about the home and currently don't have anything they would like to change. They also knew how to make a complaint should they need to.

All relatives and friends who responded informed us that they felt welcome in the home. They also commented that staff were approachable and reassuring to their relatives and felt that they could approach management with any issues and felt confident that they would work with the family to resolve their worries.



All staff who responded informed us that staff can have an input into the home with one stating that some points are taken on board. Managers added that staff input via meetings and supervisions and suggestions are taken on board if people agree, these are trialled.

Managers also stated that they have an open door policy for staff and relatives, who recognize this and regularly pop in to discuss suggestions. Any complaints that they receive are welcome and seen as a positive to allow them to learn and grow.

(Poster displaying monthly meetings for residents and family)



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## 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?



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## 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?



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## 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?



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## 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?



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**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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