



Care home life, what it's really like!

Valley View & The Lodge Care Home



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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 so 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 Kim was held at Valley View & The Lodge. 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 13th 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	 Strongly 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	 Strongly agree
8.	An open environment where feedback is actively sought and used	 Strongly agree



Findings

Valley View & The Lodge Care Home is a purpose built property located in, Back Lane, Houghton le Spring, DH4 7ER. The home provides accommodation for people who require residential care. There is accommodation for up to 38 people. The home is divided into two areas: one area providing care for elderly people and the other provided care for young physically disabled people. The home has access to a mini bus for trips and outings.

See the latest CQC inspection report here:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-2034462158>

At the time of our visit there were 34 residents living in the home. Due to the capacity of the majority of the residents, the Healthwatch team were only able to support 10 residents to fully complete the survey. The team received 6 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 STRONGLY AGREE this was met.

Some of the residents when asked did have difficulty identifying the Manager but this may have been due to their own individual health or capacity. Those who did know who she was said that she was nice, approachable, they got on well with her or found her to be very good. For the other residents the Healthwatch team witnessed that they did recognise her by sight and when interacting with her appeared to be very comfortable.

The friends and relatives who completed the surveys all commented that they knew who the Manager was, found her to be very friendly and approachable and added that her door was always open to them.

Staff when asked, all commented that they received all the support they needed from their Manager and were encouraged to go to her with any queries or concerns. They were also provided with the information that they required to do their job to the best of their ability and supported to resolve any issues that they may have.

The Manager told us that she has been working with the organisation since 2001, where she began initially working as a Carer, progressing to Senior Carer, then Deputy Manager and now the home Manager. As a result she felt she had close relationships with both the residents and their families and took on the Manager role knowing she would be able to make improvements to the environment and



ultimately the residents lives. She enjoys her job and the differences her and her team make to the residents.

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 responded positively about the staff commenting that they were all friendly, kind and caring and that they got on well with one another. The Healthwatch team witnessed these positive relationships between the care staff, the chef and the residents. Most residents also commented that staff had time for them, checking in on them in their rooms or stopping to chat and/or supporting them to join in on activities. Occasionally however, when it got very busy staff weren't always able to do this, one resident commented that if they could change anything within the home it would be to have more one to one time with the staff as they really enjoyed this.

All the relatives and friends who responded to the survey all commented positively finding the staff very caring and good at spending time with the residents.

The majority of staff commented that they had enough time to spend with residents, although a few said that there were occasions when things cropped up such unavoidable hospital runs which interrupted this time. Staff commented that the part of the job they enjoyed most was spending time with the residents and seeing them happy.

The Manager informed us that she carries out appraisals with staff every three months, where staff have the chance to discuss personal training and development opportunities. In addition to mandatory training the Manager encourages all staff to take part in additional training of their choice. The staff commented that they were able to carry out in house or online training which helps them continually develop their skills and equips them for their role.

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.

Those residents who answered all said that staff knew them well and understood what they liked and didn't like. Whilst on a visit the Healthwatch team witnessed conversations between care home staff that highlighted their understanding and knowledge about a particular resident's life history and current likes, without having to check on their individual paperwork or care plans.



Friends and family who responded informed us that staff knew their relatives really well, one commented that her mother had been a resident for 9 years and staff were really familiar with her, noticed changes in her needs and were always trying to make her as comfortable as possible.

Both staff and management explained that changing needs were monitored via the care planning process. They went on to say care staff are required to complete life history documentation with residents when they initially move into the home and then this is maintained as changes occur. This information is then cascaded to the care team in handovers and staff meetings.

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.

A range of activities were available to residents throughout the week via a set programme that the Healthwatch team had seen displayed on the walls. The Activities Co-ordinator has set up regular dominos and card games, quizzes, sing-a-longs, pamper sessions, music therapy, walking and arm chair exercise etc. We witnessed a few of these activities on the day of our visit including baking, bingo and a craft/gift fair. Residents who wanted to take part in these activities were supported to do so by the majority of staff on shift at the time, for example approximately 10 residents were playing bingo and were supported to do so by around 5 staff members. The Healthwatch team witnessed a relaxed and fun atmosphere throughout the activities. The Manager also stated that they invite guests and relatives to join them and we observed one relative joining in on various activities.

The home also has access to 2 mini buses which enables the residents to go on trips out. Residents commented that they were involved in making decisions on where to go and regularly went shopping, bowling, to the beach, the pantomime, out for lunch (including a weekly trip to the Salvation Army) and days out to Holy Island etc. The majority of the residents commented on how much they enjoyed these trips and staff also commented that the residents loved them.

Friends and relatives also reiterated that there was a wide range of outdoor and indoor activities available to the residents and that staff are always on hand to help them join 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.

The care home offers a choice and flexibility around mealtimes, where residents have the choice to eat in the dining room or elsewhere if they wish and although it does have set mealtimes for main meals and mid-morning and afternoon snacks, residents can still eat outside of these times and are respected to do so. The kitchen facilities are open at all times and residents can request drinks and snacks at any time.

All residents when asked commented that they enjoyed the food, one stating it was like a hotel and another saying despite being a picky eater they still had a choice at mealtimes. Many also commented that they used the mealtimes to socialise with other residents and enjoyed this part of the day. Staff stated that they try to encourage this socialising aspect by playing background music, encouraging people to sit together and make conversation with one another. Relatives and friends who replied all stated that the home provided a very good quality food and a wide variety with one commenting that since moving into the home her relative had gained weight which was very much needed.

The cook also explained that all the food available is homemade and that residents are provided with a choice of 2 set meals but the home also caters for individual tastes or requirements, such as finger food or other dietary requirements. To help staff manage this they make a note of individual tastes and observe food and fluid intake via care plans. For those who require assistance with meals this is offered with dignity and respect.

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.

The residents the Healthwatch team spoke to all accessed healthcare on a regular basis either annually or when needed. Some accessed all healthcare in the home, whilst others who were able to visited dentists and doctors in the local community and were supported to do so by staff or a family member.

Relatives and friends also stated that health professionals visit on a regular basis and the home is very good at supporting this with one commenting that her relative had recently been visited by an optician and as a result had been issued with a new pair of glasses.

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.**

Some residents told us that they are supported to church when they wish to go and others stated that they received Holy Communion within the care home. One resident did comment that he would like to go to church on a more regular basis. Residents also commented that they regularly have their hair styled and washed by the in house hairdressers and are supported to have a shave by the staff. One lady also commented that the staff help her to dye her hair and paint her nails and she really enjoys and appreciates this. Whilst on the visit the Healthwatch team witnessed the residents having their hair styled in the room allocated for hairdressing. The staff commented that residents cultural, religious and lifestyle needs are always respected and encouraged. The home asks residents, family, social workers etc. about an individual's cultural lifestyle needs to help identify how this can be supported.



(Painted mural in corridors)

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 different methods of collecting feedback mentioned by staff included the Links committee whereby residents and family member sit on a committee that meets every six weeks to discuss how the home is run, upcoming activities and changes required. During their individual reviews staff stated that they speak to residents about what changes they would like to see which would then fed into the Links meeting and there is also a comments box available in the home.



Residents weren't as clear on these methods but did know that should they have a complaint or suggestion that they would either speak to the Manager, one of the care staff and one lady said she would pass a comment or complaint back to staff via a relative.

Relatives and friends stated that they were always made to feel welcome and kept up to date with everything that was going on. They also stated they could take part in residents/relatives meetings where they can have their say and express their views. Staff also felt that they could contribute to changes in the home via meetings and were confident that they were listened to and acted upon.



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 you 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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