

healthwatch Sunderland

Care home life, what it's really like!

Alexandra View Care Centre



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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 Jill was held at Alexandra View Care Centre. 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 15th November 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	 Neutral						
2.	Staff with time and skills to do their jobs	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Time</td> <td>Skills</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Agree</td> </tr> </table>	Time	Skills			Neutral	Agree
Time	Skills							
								
Neutral	Agree							
3.	Good knowledge of each resident and their changing needs	 Agree						
4.	A varied programme of activities	 Neutral						
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

Alexandra View Care Centre is a large three storey purpose-built facility located on Lilburn Place, Southwick, Sunderland, SR5 2AF. It has open plan interiors and garden areas.

The home provides accommodation, nursing care and support to 62 older people, most of whom have physical and/or mental health conditions, including people who live with a form of dementia.

See the latest CQC inspection report here:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-308151266>

At the time of our visit there were 45 residents living in the home. Due to the physical health and capacity of the majority of the residents, the Healthwatch team were only able to support 5 residents to fully complete the survey. The team received 6 staff and 5 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 gave this a NEUTRAL rating which indicates both positive and negative feedback, which when averaged results in a neutral score.**

At the time of the Healthwatch team visit the Manager had been in post for only three weeks. None of the residents we spoke to were able to name her, although the Manager did say that she has met all of the residents. The Deputy Manager showed the Healthwatch team around the home and all the residents we met on the way knew him and seemed relaxed in his company.

When asked if they knew the Manager, friends and relatives gave a mixed response. One stated that they knew the Manager and found her to be friendly and helpful, one knew the Deputy Manager as the Manager, as there had been a period when he had undertaken the role after the last Manager had left her employment. Others described that due to recent changes they had not yet met the new Manager.

Staff who completed the survey process described the Manager as approachable and told us that she has an open door policy. They stated that although she is new she is supportive to the staff.

During the Healthwatch team visit staff shared their frustrations around the regular changes in management which have happened recently and informed us that they hadn't been made aware of why this had been the case.

The Manager wrote that she has been a home Manager since 1996 and was attracted to the role as she enjoys making the lives of residents better and likes to



make a difference.

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 gave this a NEUTRAL rating for time which indicates both positive and negative feedback, which when averaged results in a neutral score. An AGREE rating has been given for staff skills.

All of the residents the team supported to complete the survey told us they liked the staff at the home, with one resident adding “some are better than others” and another saying “They look after me”. One resident went on to say that he found the fact that staff rotated their duties between the different floors difficult, as he built relationships with staff members who he then wouldn’t see for some time as they had been moved onto a different floor. One resident told us that the staff always have time to stop and chat, another resident stated that they didn’t always have time as they are very busy.

All relatives and friends asked stated that the staff at Alexandra View have the time and skills to care for their relatives/friends. One said “Yes, even when very busy”.

A staff member told us that they felt they have the time needed to care for residents. Others stated that this is not always the case and that they were sometimes pushed to time limits when they are short staffed, but that the staff do always try to make time for the residents. “We have enough time to do the basic care, it would be lovely to have more time to give the residents extras and take them out”.

All staff who completed the survey told us that they have regular access to training courses, some of which are online and that completion of training is encouraged. They also went on to say that they enjoy their jobs at Alexandra View for various reasons including: spending time with residents, hearing their stories, making them smile where possible and that every day is different.

The Manager wrote that she believes in regular training to give her staff the knowledge and skills to do their job better. Training is spoken about and encouraged during staff supervision sessions and she also encourages staff to take on roles within the home which interest them and makes them champions within that area.



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.

All of the residents spoken to felt that the staff know them well, with one adding that this was true to an extent.

All but one of the friends and relatives told us that they felt the staff know their friend or relative's life history, personality, health and care needs very well. One person said they knew this information fairly well.

All friends and relatives stated that any changes in needs are noticed and responded to quickly by staff and that families are informed.

The Manager and staff said that they get to know residents life history, personality, health and care needs via pre-assessments which are carried out as part of the admission process. Care plans are then developed around the individuals needs and are evaluated and updated monthly. Information is gathered from residents themselves, their friends and relatives for resident's memory diaries and to discover their individual likes and dislikes. Information is then shared with staff at handover meetings and recorded on paperwork which is stored in the individuals' room. The Manager added that daily 'Huddle' meetings take place, where new resident information is shared with 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 gave this a NEUTRAL rating for time which indicates both positive and negative feedback, which when averaged results in a neutral score.

The home employs a dedicated Activities Co-ordinator and staff stated that there is an activity every day at 2pm and these are displayed on the activities notice board.

The Healthwatch team witnessed one of the ladies, who we later supported to complete the survey, taking part in an arts and crafts session, which she went on to say she had enjoyed. The session was vibrant, with residents, both male and female and several staff members sitting together using various resources to make Christmas themed crafts. At the end of the session everyone involved was covered in glitter and this was a source of fun and laughter.

A couple of the residents stated that although they don't go on particular trips or outings, when the weather is good they make use of the garden areas of the home. One resident had access to an electric wheelchair and told the Healthwatch team that he would like to be supported by staff to go out to the local shops etc.



(The what's coming up board for Christmas 2017 activities)

Friends and relatives told us that they feel there is a good and varied programme of activities available at the home. These include: fancy dress, cooking and social events. All but one (who let the section of the survey blank) felt that their friend/relative is encouraged by staff to take part. "I see my mam take part in varied activities to keep her mind active and she enjoys mixing with people."

The staff and Manager added to the list of available activities: bingo, knit and natter, outside entertainers, pony therapy, games, music therapy and trips to local pubs, shops and parks. They stated that residents are asked which activities they would like to undertake and encouraged and supported to take part.

All but one of the residents the Healthwatch team spoke to said that due to their physical health issues they were no longer able to take part in group activities. Some of these residents stated that they were happy to be in their rooms, watching TV. One staff member felt that the residents in the home do not get enough fresh air and the garden areas are not utilised all year round. She felt that residents who are not able to take part in group activities should have one to one time with staff to ensure that they have company and are stimulated. She reiterated this to the Healthwatch team during the visit.

The ground floor of the home houses an activities room and also a 'bar' area. The bar included several activities such as a dart board, board games, TV and a snooker table. A staff member informs the team that this room was utilised for social evenings and also men's activities.



(The Alexandra View Pub)

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 residents we spoke to had mixed reviews about the food in the home. Two people told us that the food is good some days and not on others, with one adding that her relative brings in her favourite food, which the kitchen staff then cook for her. Another resident told us that being a vegetarian is difficult, that there is not much variety and that the vegetables are over cooked and have lost their flavour. This resident went on to say “I would love a good vegetable curry.” The Healthwatch team were able to pass this request on to the Manager at the end of the visit, who made a note and planned to visit the resident about this. Two residents informed us that they enjoy the food at the home.

One resident told us that the staff would make alternatives if you don’t like the food on the menu.

The Healthwatch team witnessed various jugs of cold drinks in the resident’s rooms. One resident said “I always have cold drinks in my room and they bring lots of tea. They make sure that I’m drinking”.

The majority of the residents supported to complete the survey told us that they eat their meals in their rooms, either through personal choice or due to their physical limitations.



All of the friends and family we asked, bar one stated that they feel the food at the home is good, a varied menu is offered, suitable textures of foods are available to meet residents needs and that mealtimes are sociable. One commented that the choice of food was limited, but satisfactory. All said that their friends/relatives are support to eat and drink as much as is needed with one person adding that this is documented and that the documents are available.

The Manager and staff wrote that mealtimes are protected (a period of time when activity is reduced so staff can be available to help serve and supervise meals and assist residents who need help to eat and drink. This time also include limiting visitors). Residents are offered a choice of meals from the daily menu, with alternative choices being made available if required. Residents are asked what they would like on a morning and they are also asked if they would like to have their meals in the dining area or in their room. To facilitate sociable mealtimes staff sit at the dining tables with residents to encourage conversation and assist those who need it. Pleasant background music is played to help achieve a calm atmosphere. Snacks are available at any time for any resident who is hungry.

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.

Those residents who were able to respond to this question told us that they have access to an optician and GPs are called to the home when required. One of the residents stated that she would like more regular visits by the chiropodist.

One friend/relative did not complete this section of the survey, but the others stated that they are happy that all of the health requirements of the residents are met at the home and that regular visits from various clinicians take place.

The Manager and staff told us that there are regular visits from health professionals to the home, which include; chiropodist visits every 6 weeks, an optician attends regular and a dentist is called if and when required.

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.

There is a weekly visit to the home by a member of a local catholic church, where Holy Communion is offered to those residents who wish to receive it. During the



visit the Healthwatch team spoke to one resident who asked that the church member visit her in her room. This request was passed onto the Manager at the end of the Healthwatch visit, who made a note and informed us she would action this request.

Residents stated that they were able to get their hair cut/styled by a hairdresser who attends the home on a weekly basis and that staff helped with personal care and dressing. Those gentlemen the team spoke to said that staff are available to help them shave if necessary. One lady said that her daughter paints her nails during her visits.

Those friends and relatives who told us that their friends/relatives had specific lifestyle, religious or cultural needs stated that they felt these were respected at the home.

The Manager was able to share an example of how the kitchen provided food to accommodate a resident's culture.

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.

The residents who were asked said that they were happy at the home, one added "My family tried to move me to a home closer to them, but I have told them I am happy here." When asked if there is anything they would like to change about the home one resident said "The meals, I would have curry every day if I could" and another said "not really". Residents said if they ever needed to complain they would either tell their relatives or staff.

All friends and relatives who completed the survey told us that they feel welcome participants in the life of the home. "I always join in with all aspects of the home." All who completed this section of the form told us that they can give feedback about the home through residents meetings or by approaching staff. One relative added that she feels she has a good relationship with staff and open discussion is freely achieved from both sides. All knew who to take complaints to and felt confident that these would be acted upon.

The Manager and staff told us about the range of mechanisms utilised by residents and staff to give feedback about the home and how it is run. These include; feedback can be given on an online review system via an external website: www.carehome.org.uk, the Manager has an open door policy, regular residents meetings and a residents committee is in the process of being set up. Feedback has influenced changes in the activity schedule, the homes menus and which rooms residents have been placed in.



The Manager and some staff told us that they get to have a say on how the home is run during both staff and huddle meetings. One staff member wrote “Staff should have more of a say as they know the residents better than anyone.”

The Manager stated that all complaints are dealt with and treated as important, investigations are undertaken and any actions are completed and feedback is given to staff.



(Complaints policy is displayed in picture form in the main foyer area.)



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 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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