



Care home life, what it's really like!

St Mark's Nursing 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 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 Pauline was held at St Mark's Nursing Home. 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 12th October 2017 and was carried out by Healthwatch Sunderland staff and volunteers who are trained so that they can effectively capture the resident's experience.

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

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

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

4. Findings - Summary

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

Here is the key which shows the indicator scores



Strongly disagree



Disagree
















Neutral



Agree



Strongly agree

1.	A strong visible management	 Agree				
2.	Staff with time and skills to do their jobs	<table border="0"> <tr> <td> Neutral</td> <td> Agree</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Time</td> <td>Skills</td> </tr> </table>	 Neutral	 Agree	Time	Skills
 Neutral	 Agree					
Time	Skills					
3.	Good knowledge of each resident and their changing needs	 Neutral				
4.	A varied programme of activities	 Strongly agree				
5.	Quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes	 Neutral				
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

St Mark's Nursing Home is a purpose built property located at 145 Hylton Road, Millfield, Sunderland, SR4 7YQ which is close to the city centre with good local facilities. The home is run by Dr Lim Wyn.

It is a care home with capacity to accommodate 35 people with nursing and personal care needs, some of whom may be living with dementia, Parkinson's disease, strokes, diabetes and physical disability. Amenities at the home include: fully wheelchair accessible, specialist beds, including air flow mattresses, wet room with an accessible bath, furniture can be provided or own furniture moved in, TV points in bedrooms and private garden for residents.

See the latest CQC inspection report here:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-110519593>

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 8 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 AGREE this was met.

Some of the residents at St Mark's Nursing Home had difficulty identifying the Manager but this may have been due to their own individual health or capacity. Those who knew her, knew her name and one resident stated that she is kind and helpful. Another resident told us that although she had nothing to compare her with, the Manager seems to be efficient and friendly, she will speak about things, although she is always in a rush.

Two relatives we spoke to stated that they found the manager to be easy to talk to, friendly and helpful most of the time. Another family member stated that they didn't know the Manager, but this could have been because they were from out of the area and didn't visit the home on a regular basis.

Some staff members told us that although the Manager is easy to talk to, she is often very busy. Others stated that they receive excellent support from the Manager and her deputy, who are always available; any questions about clinic practice, advice and queries are dealt with straight way and professionally.

The Manager has been a care home manager for about 28 years. She told us that she loves her role which involves her both completing management tasks and also working directly with the residents. This gives enables her to use her nursing skills and gives her both personal and professional satisfaction. She went on to say that



she enjoys using her skills to help others have a comfortable and normal life as possible.

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 for staff skills and NEUTRAL for staff time.

Residents we spoke to about the staff at the home told us that they found them to be lovely, polite and kind. One resident said “They are marvellous, every one of them!” Another resident went on to say that the staff are all individuals and they vary. When asked about staff having time some of the residents told us that the staff have time to stop and chat, another said that the staff at the home are too busy for this. One resident told us that she would like staff to be less rushed when they are completing her care tasks.

Two relatives asked felt that the staff at St Mark’s had the time, skills and knowledge about their relative to care for them appropriately. One family member reported that this was the case for some of the staff.

Staff told us that although the home is very busy, they felt that they have enough time to care for residents most of the time. One staff member added that she prioritises her work and put the needs of the residents first. Staff went on to say that in house training and reading is available and encouraged to enhance their skills. Those staff members who completed the survey told us they enjoy their job, comments why included: ‘Being able to care for residents and support when they are unable to do themselves’ and another told us that St Mark’s is a ‘lovely place to work, it is pleasant, well run, well organised and is always a happy home.’

The Manager stated that she encourages active participation in care skills and development in all aspects of staff work. She added that staff are trained in the skills to complete their jobs and this is continually discussed at supervision sessions.

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 gave this a NEUTRAL rating which indicates both positive and negative feedback, which when averaged results in a neutral score.

Some of the residents told us that they feel most of the staff know them and their likes and dislikes, although one resident stated that the kitchen staff are not so good with this. During the Healthwatch visit we witnessed staff conversing with



residents whilst refreshments were being serviced. Staff were addressing the residents by name and had knowledge of the resident's preferences of drinks.

Two relatives who completed the survey felt that the staff know their relative well and notice changes in their health and wellbeing. Another family member told us that staff don't know their relatives life history, personality and health and care needs very well. They also added that staff notice and respond to their relatives change in needs, most of the time.

The Manager stated that a detailed history is taken when a new resident arrives into the home and this information is shared with staff at handover meetings. Changes to a resident's needs, health and wellbeing are also accessed at handovers as well as by talking to residents, reading care plans (which are updated monthly), accessed from feedback, risk assessments and Multi-Disciplinary Meetings (meeting of the group of professionals from one or more clinical disciplines who together make decisions regarding recommended treatment of individual). One staff member informed us that there is not always time to read individual care plans thoroughly.

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.



There are a range of indoor and one to one and group activities available at the home. Residents are also taken out for shopping trips and other outings as part of the activities programme. Some of the activities which the residents and staff told us about include: external entertainers, dominoes, films, radio and music, quizzes, seated exercise, TV and film. During our visit the Healthwatch team witnessed and took part in a session of music bingo. Several of the residents in the main lounge were taking part

and the enthusiasm of the Activities Co-ordinator ensured the session was vibrant and engaging, there was plenty of singing and laughter.

Most of the residents we spoke to said that they enjoy the activities which are facilitated by the Activities Co-ordinator. One resident informed us that although the staff ask her if she would like to join in, she doesn't like to as they are not the



sort of things she enjoys. She was unsure if anyone had ever asked her what activities she would like to do.

The relatives asked said that there are a good range of activities available and that their relatives were encouraged to access them.

Staff told us that they encourage residents to take part in activities by telling them what is available each day. One staff member told us that they help residents to take part, but don't force them. Another said that an individual's preferences are found out upon admission to the home and assessments are made as to what they may like to do on a daily basis.

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 gave this a NEUTRAL rating which indicates both positive and negative feedback, which when averaged results in a neutral score.

Most of the residents we spoke to told us that the food at the home is good, that there is plenty of choice, a couple of residents did add that the portion sizes are too large. One resident told us that that some kitchen staff are better at meeting her dietary requirements than others and added that they are encouraged to drink and that plenty of drinks that are available throughout the day. Another resident said that they felt the food offered wasn't to their taste, although they appreciated the rest of the residents enjoyed it. They instead preferred to buy their own food, which included take away food. One other resident told us that they were able to have a kebab every now and again.

All the residents said that mealtimes are an enjoyable time in the home. They told us that they can choose whether they eat in the dining room or their own rooms. One resident who prefers to eat in her room told us that the staff try to encourage her to eat in the dining room every day, but it is her preference not to.

Two relatives stated that they felt the food at the home is good, their relatives were supported by staff to eat and drink and mealtimes were a social time for the residents. One family member told us that their relative complains a lot about the food and would prefer a plainer menu.

Staff and Management informed us that mealtimes at the home are protected (a period of time when activity is reduced including limiting visitors, so staff can be available to help serve and supervise meals and assist residents who need help to eat and drink). They said that resident's food and drink in-take is monitored and recorded, that a daily menu is available, choice is offered and individual



preferences are taken into consideration. They also added that residents are able to choose something else if they don't like what is on the menu and eat at different times to the set mealtimes if they would prefer to.

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 told us about a range of healthcare professionals which they access both inside and outside the home. One resident added that they had a nice new pair of glasses since they came to live at the home and one family member told us that this was also true of their relative. Another family member stated that professionals regularly visits the home.

Management and staff told us that residents receive a dental check up on admission and then a regular six monthly check-up, unless a problem occurs in the meantime. Yearly eye checks are also available and further visits are arranged if necessary. Other healthcare professionals visit the home including a chiropodist, GPs and nurses. Staff also escort residents to appointments outside of the home.

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.**

During our visit the residents told us that a hairdresser visits the home on a regular basis to cut/style their hair. During a tour of the building the Healthwatch team saw a small dedicated room for hairdressing and pampering sessions. One gentleman said that he is able to get a shave and another told us that he doesn't like to be clean shaven, but the staff still check with him if he would like to have one. One lady told us that the Activities Co-ordinator paints her nails in one to one time she spends with her. Residents went on to say that they are able to wear their own clothes, with one resident adding that very occasionally the laundry may lose items of clothing.

One family member believed their relatives catholic faith was respected and accommodated. Some residents spoke about a weekly visits from a local priest who deliver religious services and communion. Another told us that they continue to go to a local church by taxi every week unaided.

The Manager and staff stated that personal, cultural and lifestyle needs are discussed when a resident joins the home. They went on to tell us that several of



the residents are vegan or vegetarian and these needs are respected and met.

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 home have regular resident's meetings and a residents committee, both giving the opportunity to share their views about the home and have their say on how things are ran. Residents and their families are encouraged to attend these meetings. One of the residents we spoke to stated that she goes to the residents meetings when she remembers. The Healthwatch team witnessed a poster on the noticeboard advertising this.

Some of the residents we spoke to told us that they don't get asked what they think of the home, but that they like it and are happy there.

Most of the residents told us that there is nothing they would change about the home although one resident said that their room is too small and there is not enough space when the carers are in there to help them. One resident wished there was more staff, so they weren't as rushed. Another stated that the staff are lovely and would do anything for you and another added that the home is 'nipping clean and the repair man keeps on top of maintenance'. Some residents told us that if they needed to complain about anything they would speak to the Manager, care staff or Activities Co-ordinator.

The three relatives who completed the survey told us that they very much feel like welcome participants in the home. One family member stated that they were unsure of ways their relative could have their say in how the home is run or give feedback. Another said that they would do this by telling a member of staff. All three relatives told us that they know how to make a complaint to the home and that they would feel comfortable doing so and confident that it would be acted upon appropriately.

The Manager told us that the staff are actively encouraged to discuss issues, either personally or in at group meetings. One member of staff told us that staff are always involved in the handovers and that the Manager and Deputy Manager are always approachable. The majority of the staff who completed the survey told us that they didn't always feel they had a say about how things are run.



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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