

Care home life, what it's really like!

# Ashton Grange



Date of Healthwatch Sunderland visit:  
12<sup>th</sup> April 2018





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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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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
2. Background and rationale .....	4
3. Methodology .....	5
4. Findings - Summary.....	6
5. Appendices.....	18
Appendix 1 - Questions for residents .....	18
Appendix 2 - Questions for Managers .....	19
Appendix 3 - Questions for staff.....	20
Appendix 4 - Questions for friends and relatives .....	21



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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, 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, Lesley was held at Ashton Grange. This was to explain the reason for the ‘Care home life - What 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 it’s really like!’ visit took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and was carried out by Healthwatch Sunderland staff and volunteer 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	 Strongly 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	 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	 Strongly agree



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## Findings

Ashton Grange is a purpose-built two storey home that provides residential care and residential dementia care and support for up to 39 people.

The home has a choice of lounge areas with specially designed furnishings for residents to enjoy and well-equipped bedrooms, most of which are en-suite.

The chefs at the home are experienced in providing a wide range of fresh and nutritiously balanced home-cooked meals, which have been created to take into account each resident's individual requirements and preferences.

See the latest CQC inspection report here:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-319143056>

At the time of our visit there were 38 residents living in the home. Due to the capacity of the majority of the residents, the Healthwatch team were only able to support 4 residents to fully complete the survey. The team received 4 staff and 5 friends, relatives and another respondent 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 who the Manager of the home was, some of the residents supported to complete the survey at Ashton Grange had difficulty identifying her, but this may have been due to their own individual health or capacity. Other residents knew the Manager by sight but did not know her name.

All relatives and another respondent who completed the survey agreed that the home has a strong visible Manager who is very approachable, her door is always open, she is a good listener and is very involved in the home.

All staff respondents agreed that the Manager and Deputy Manager gave them full support at all times, are approachable and the Manager's door is always open if staff have any issues or concerns. Staff comments included;

“Our Manager is very approachable, during staff handover she will always ask if we have any concerns or ideas on how to improve the standard of care we provide and any ideas to help enrich the residents’ daily activities.”

“If I have raised an issue I have always had a good experience when talking to my Manager. She listens to what I have to say then does her best to resolve it.”

When the Healthwatch team asked the Manager and Deputy Manager what attracted them to the role of Care Home Manager, the Manager commented; “To





further my career, to provide kind care and quality of life for residents and support staff”.

The Deputy Manager informed us; “To further my career and use the knowledge I have gained from my Manager.”

They added further comments on what they enjoyed about their role, the Manager said, “I enjoy learning new skills and working with residents.”

The Deputy Manager said, “I enjoy learning new things every day, and seeing the residents happy.”

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



When asked what they think of the staff, residents responded positively saying they are good and are well looked after by staff.

Residents also told the Healthwatch team that staff have time to stop and chat with them. Comments included;

“Anything I want and they are here.”

“Yes, they are always talking to me.”

Friends, relatives and another respondent agreed that staff have the time to chat and added that they have the skills to care for the residents. One relative commented;

“They are very knowledgeable if I ask anything.”

During the visit the Healthwatch team observed staff having positive interactions with residents, they appeared to know each resident well, addressed them by name, took time with each resident and were attentive and understanding of their needs.

All staff who completed the survey agreed that they do have enough time to care for residents and are encouraged to develop their skills in several ways, including;



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through a mentoring process, by undertaking National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and in house training including ‘e-learning’.

Staff went on to tell the Healthwatch team what they enjoy about their job, comments included;

“The most enjoyable part of my job is seeing a resident smile because I have done something that has made a difference to their day.”

“I enjoy interacting with the residents and their families and providing care.”

“I enjoy ensuring residents are given foods that they like and that diets are catered for.”

When Management were asked how they encourage staff to develop their skills the Manager and Deputy Manager agreed that staff are encouraged to undertake training including; e-learning, training from outside agencies and by offering managerial support.

They added that they ensure staff have enough time to care for residents by having mechanisms in place. These include ensuring a correct skills mix, making sure the home is fully staffed and the Deputy Manager stated that she helps staff on the floor when needed.

### **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.**

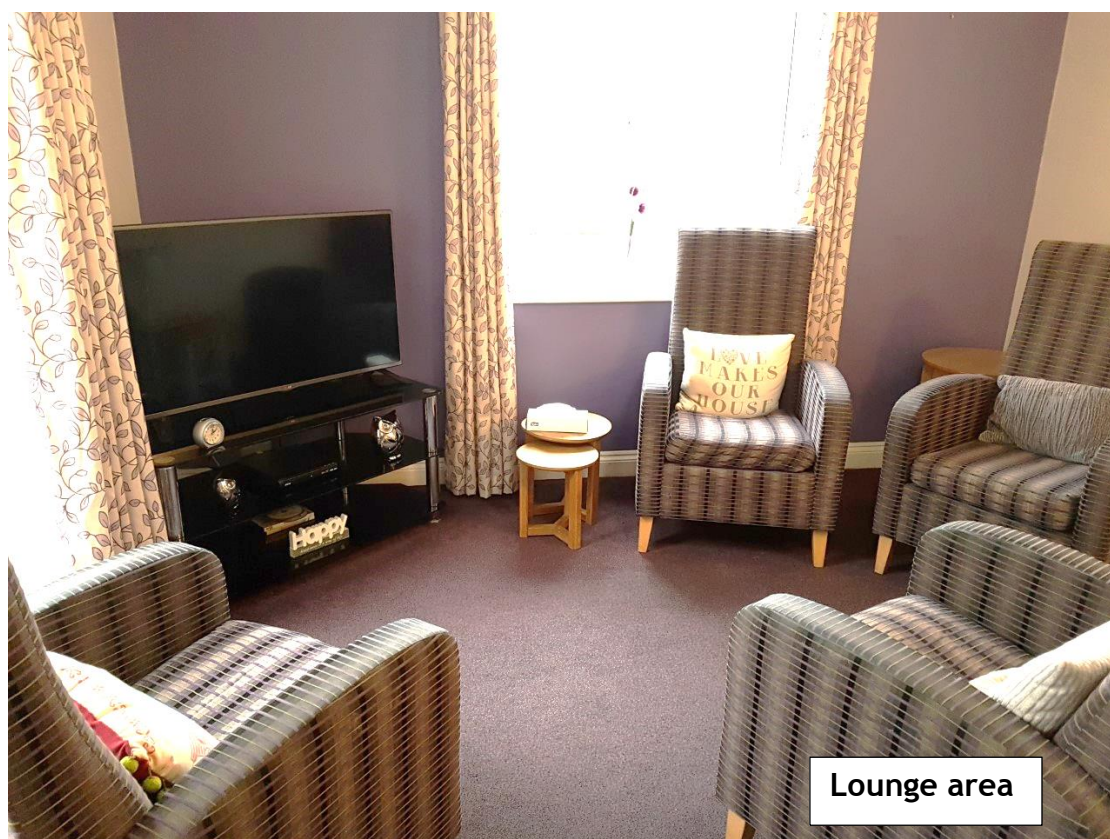
When residents were asked if the staff know what they need and what they like and don’t like, all of the residents supported to complete the survey agreed that staff know them well. Comments included;

“Staff know my daily routine and I choose my own clothes.”

“Everything I need is here, I am happier here than at sheltered accommodation.”

The majority of friends, relatives and another respondent who completed the survey stated that staff know residents very well or quite well and notice their changing needs. All friends and relatives and other respondent agreed that they are informed on any change in needs when visiting the home, by phone or at resident reviews.

Staff and the management stated that good knowledge of each resident is gained by undertaking pre-admission meetings, ‘getting to know you’ booklet, reading care plans, daily flash meetings, at staff handovers, by spending time with the residents and speaking with friends and relatives regarding the residents life history.



When asked, staff and the management stated that good knowledge of residents changing needs is maintained by various methods including, updating care plans, discussion at staff meetings, carrying out reviews, from updated diet notification sheets and by maintaining good communication between staff members, residents and their friends and relatives.

#### **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.**

When asked about activities at Ashton Grange and if they were able to maintain any previous hobbies since coming into the home, the residents the Healthwatch team supported to complete the survey stated that they do try to join in with activities, but due to ill health this is not always possible. Comments included;

“Activities are usually in the dining room and I am always invited to take part. We have the bus but I have not been out in it yet - when the weather gets better I will.”



“I like to stay in my room and play the organ or watch the soaps. I do go out on the bus sometimes. I have played the organ all my life this one was a Christmas present from my family - my record is out next week!”

A staff member informed the Healthwatch team that they have made a CD recording of this resident playing the organ and she was ‘over the moon’ with it!

Another resident who had only been at the home for one week explained;

“I can’t go out at the moment as I am waiting for delivery of a wheelchair, my family will take me out once I get it. I used to enjoy playing bowls but I cannot do that now.”

Whilst visiting the home the Healthwatch team observed residents and their friends and relatives enjoying an afternoon of entertainment - a performer playing guitar and singing. The Activities Co-ordinator was rallying the audience, alcoholic beverages and snacks were available and the residents appeared to be enjoying it.

Friends, relatives and another respondent who completed the survey agreed that there is a good range of activities at the home that residents are encouraged to join in and are supported to do so. Friends and relatives comments included; “The residents are always encouraged and there is plenty going on.”

When asked if their friend or relative is still able to do the things they used to enjoy, for example hobbies, interests, have pets, responses included;

“No, due to physical health my relative cannot join in with activities, but they do have one to one support.”

“Yes staff support my mother to do things.”

“Yes, she enjoys going out on the minibus and bingo, she goes to St Luke’s Church.”



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When asked about activities, Ashton Grange staff and management advised the Healthwatch team that residents have a choice of varied activities, both in and out of the home. Inside the home these typically include; bingo, board games, painting, football exercise, film afternoons, cake making, reminiscence sessions, and entertainment, including singers.

Outside activities include minibus trips to the seaside, visits to museums and places of historic interest, pub lunches, arts and crafts and visits to fetes and local churches. Staff and management went on to say that residents are encouraged to participate by offering one to one support and by ensuring venues are fully accessible. Staff also give their time on a voluntary basis to ensure residents are fully supported to join in with activities.

### **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.**

When asked about the food at the home all the residents the Healthwatch team spoke to stated that it is very good or good. All residents agreed that there is a good choice of food and they can either eat either in the dining room or in their own room. Residents' comments included;

“The menu can be slightly repetitious but breakfasts are good - except the porridge which is too thick!”

“Sometimes I eat in my room, I like everything they give me, I drink milk, juice or water and on a Tuesday I get chips from the fish shop - get me a bag now and I will scoff them!”

Friends, relatives and another respondent agreed and their comments included;

“Lovely food and good choice.”

“Food is very good, I am confident that my relative is supported to eat and drink as much as needed.”

“Staff offer choice and talk to residents to ensure mealtimes are sociable.”



When asked about the quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes, staff and management all agreed that the food at Ashton Grange is good. Residents are offered a multiple choice menu but if they don't like what is on the menu an alternative can be made. Residents choose where they eat their meals with the majority choosing to eat in the dining room, where they socialise together along with staff and ambient music is played. Some residents prefer to eat in the lounge or in their own room.

When asked how they ensure that residents are able to eat and drink at mealtimes as well as outside of mealtimes, staff and management added that staff are aware of individual residents needs and offer full assistance at mealtimes and snacks and drinks are offered throughout the day.

### **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.**

When asked if residents have regular access to health professionals, residents stated that there is good access to health professionals, including the GPs, opticians, dentists and chiropodists. A couple of residents informed us that they



had recently had a doctor come out to visit them in the home and if they need to go to the hospital a staff member will accompany them.

Friends, relatives and another respondent also reiterated that the home provides access to all necessary health professionals and has good links.

Staff and management at the home agreed that residents have full access to health professionals and have scheduled visits and regular check-ups as and when needed.



## 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.**

When asked if residents cultural, religious and lifestyle needs are met, all of the residents, relatives and another respondent agreed that these needs are met at Ashton Grange.

The majority of residents we spoke to stated that they do not follow a religion. One resident commented, "I am a protestant, the Salvation Army comes in at Christmas."



Garden with seating area

When the friends, relatives and another respondent were asked by the Healthwatch team if resident's personal, cultural and lifestyle needs are accommodated by the home, comments included;

“My relative has her hair cut and styled weekly, the laundry service is good and my friend is always appropriately dressed.”

“The laundry service is good, if something goes missing they will find it.”

Staff and the management team agreed that as part of the pre-admission and admission processes information is gathered and sourced to meet the needs of the resident. This information would then be passed onto staff, including any religious or dietary

requirements.

Staff comments included;

“If a resident has a specific cultural or religious need, staff are advised on what the resident requires to fulfil their beliefs. Residents may be taken to their place of worship.”

“By getting to know a resident, their likes and dislikes and providing the kitchen with information.”

“Hairdresser visits the home every week, also staff style residents' hair during the week.”

The management team went on to say that all residents' clothes are tagged with their name or room number to ensure that they have the correct laundry returned to them.





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## 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 Healthwatch team asked residents if they are happy at the home and if anyone ever asks if they are happy, all residents except one, who were supported to complete the survey stated that they are happy at Ashton Grange, resident comments included;

“Yes I am happy, there is nothing wrong with this home.”

“I have enjoyed every minute since I came here, it is like a five star hotel.”

“I am quite happy here, we try to help each other and if I am unhappy I just play my organ.” The resident in question gave the Healthwatch team a rendition of ‘Away in a Manger’ on the organ which was much enjoyed by all!

When asked if they would you like to change anything about the home, none of the residents who were supported to complete the survey said they wanted to change anything.

The Healthwatch team went on to ask residents if they needed to make a complaint who they would speak to. Comments included;

“I would complain to staff - shy bairns get nowt!”

“I would tell them - the head one.”

“Someone would have to come and ask me, I would not complain.”

Friends, relatives and another respondent stated that they have a say in how the home is run by attending residents and relatives meetings and reviews where any issues can be discussed, also the Manager, staff and carers can be approached at any time and keep relatives up to date when they visit. Respondents also agreed that they know how to make a complaint and feel it would be acted on appropriately, comments included;

“If I needed to make a complaint I would go to the person in charge and I have seen the complaints policy.”

“To make a complaint I would follow the complaints process, I have complained before and followed it up actively.”

“Yes, I would feel confident to make a complaint, I would see the person in charge.”



All staff who completed the survey agreed that they have a say in how the home is run by being able to offer suggestions, hold discussions with the Manager and by attending monthly meetings.

Staff and the Manager stated that residents, their friends, relatives and visitors can have a say on how the home is run by making suggestions at the monthly resident's meeting, the Manager has an open door policy and encourages everyone to speak to her. There is also a suggestion box in the foyer and a touch screen computer where residents and their visitors can offer suggestions on how the home is run.

Staff gave examples of how a resident or friend/relative has influenced how the home is run, including; "One of the residents suggested a gazebo for the garden and it was put in place, also a family members suggested a kitchenette to allow families to make a cup of tea/coffee and snacks, this was approved by HC-One and a new kitchenette is now in place."



"The residents chose the colour scheme, wallpaper and chairs for the upstairs refurbishment."

The Manager and staff who completed the survey agreed that staff have a say in how the home is run at staff meetings, supervisions, the Manager asks for staff input and always listens to thoughts and opinions of staff members.



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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. What activities are there outside the home?
8. Is it easy to join in the activities?
9. Do you get a chance to do any of the things you used to enjoy before you came here?
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. What happens if you need to see a doctor or have an appointment at the hospital?
15. Is there respect for your religion or your culture here in your home?
16. Do you get asked what you think about the home or if you are happy?
17. Would you like to change anything about the home? Have you told anyone about this and what happened?
18. 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?  
  
How 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?  
  
How do you support residents to continue to do the things they used to enjoy before coming into the home i.e. hobbies/interests/pets
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**  
Please tell us about visits from health professionals such as GPs, nurses, dentists, opticians, chiropodists or other health care support mechanisms.
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?  
  
What provision is there for residents to regularly get their hair cut/styled?  
  
How do you ensure that the laundry staff getting the residents own clothes back to them?  
  
What mechanisms are in place to ensure that residents are always clean and appropriately dressed?
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 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?



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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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