

Care home life, what it's really like!

Falstone Court 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.



Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Background and rationale	4
3. Methodology	5
4. Findings - Summary.....	6
5. Appendices.....	17
Appendix 1 - Questions for residents	17
Appendix 2 - Questions for Managers	18
Appendix 3 - Questions for staff.....	19
Appendix 4 - Questions for friends and relatives	20



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, 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, Alison was held at Falstone Court Care Home. 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 20th February 2018 and was carried out by Healthwatch Sunderland staff and volunteers who are trained so that they can effectively capture the resident’s experience.

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

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

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

4. Findings - Summary

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

Here is the key which shows the indicator scores



Strongly disagree



Disagree
















Neutral



Agree



Strongly agree

1.	A strong visible management	 Strongly agree				
2.	Staff with time and skills to do their jobs	<table border="0"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Time Neutral</td> <td>Skills Strongly agree</td> </tr> </table>			Time Neutral	Skills Strongly agree
						
Time Neutral	Skills 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	 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

Falstone Court Care Home is a purpose-built two storey home located on Cliffe Park, Whitburn Road, Roker, Sunderland, SR6 9NQ, which is positioned on the seafront at Roker.

The recently refurbished home provides nursing or personal care for up to 40 people, all of whom are living with dementia. There are a range of well-equipped bedrooms; some with sea views and views across the garden. Residents have access to the garden area and home-cooked meals are tailored to dietary and cultural requirements.

See the latest CQC inspection report here:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-320338366>

At the time of our visit there were 40 residents living in the home. Due to their capacity, the Healthwatch team were only able to support 7 residents to fully complete the survey. The team received 11 staff and 3 friends/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.

Due to the level of their health and capacity most of the residents at Falstone Court found it difficult to name the Manager, two knew she was a lady, with one person saying that the home was well run.

The majority of friends and relatives knew the Manager and Deputy Manager by name, most stated that they are busy but are on hand continually to see to residents welfare and needs.

The Healthwatch team witnessed several positive interactions between the Deputy Manager and residents. Residents were all addressed by name and entered into conversations as they were introduced to the team.

When asked about support offered by management all staff at the home said that the management run an open door policy, are very approachable, will always listen and offer encouragement and advice.

One staff member commented;

“The Manager is excellent, very approachable, always responds in a positive way and is attentive and thorough.”



The Deputy Manager informed us that she is dedicated to the home, the staff and the residents and that she enjoys ensuring good quality care is provided.

On our tour of Falstone Court, the Healthwatch team visited the new bistro which opens onto the garden, here residents can meet their friends and relatives. (See below).



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 staff time, which indicates both positive and negative feedback, which when averaged results in a neutral score and a STRONGLY AGREE rating for staff skills.

Most of the residents, friends and relatives agreed that the staff are caring, lovely and dedicated, saying that residents are well looked after, feel safe and that staff have the time to talk with them.

One friend likened certain carers as; “Being like Florence Nightingale.”

The Healthwatch team observed a significant staff presence in communal areas. Staff members were interacting, holding conversations and treating residents with dignity and respect.

When asked, seven of the staff at Falstone Court commented that they do not have enough time to care for residents as they also have other tasks to undertake, citing the volume of paperwork as overwhelming.

Two staff members commented:



“Yes, but there are times when it feels you don’t have enough time - but there is great team work.”

“Yes, although I feel like there is not enough time during the day.”

The Deputy Manager commented that she ensures staff have the time to care for residents by a process of inductions, supernumerary hours (working extra hours) and by staff being well acquainted with residents and routines.

Both the Deputy Manager and staff informed us that staff are encouraged to participate in ongoing training to both update and develop their skills. All staff said they really enjoyed their job adding that spending time with residents and their relatives and friends is very rewarding.

Staff comments about their skills included;

“We are encouraged to develop skills by working as a team, attending mandatory courses and undertaking online training.”

“Job satisfaction - I work with a great team of people, I love helping others and providing the best level of care.”

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.

Of the residents spoken to some stated that staff do take the time to get to know them. One resident said that staff always like the clothes she wears.

When asked, friends and relatives agreed that staff are aware of the resident’s personality and needs, one commenting that his friend fits in well and is part of the family.

Due to her health and capacity one resident was not able to communicate her history and needs to the staff at the home, so on arrival to this country her friend informed Falstone Court of these details; also informing the Manager that the chairs at the home were not suitable to her friend’s needs. Those needs were then accommodated when a new chair was sourced. The staff at the home now know this resident very well and respond to her changing needs accordingly.

The Healthwatch team witnessed positive interactions between residents and staff, who were attentive and aware of the needs of each resident. An example of this included one resident who had shown an interest in having a cake but was unable to pick it up herself. Kitchen staff alerted a carer, who immediately sat her down, gave her a cake and a cup of tea.

All staff and the Deputy Manager informed the Healthwatch team that they do have good knowledge of each resident and their changing needs; explaining that



this is accomplished by perusing care plans and life history books, by talking to residents, their friends and relatives and by sharing information with co-workers. Staff also informed us that care plans are reviewed every month but are updated as and when necessary; any changes would also be discussed at handover meetings where a nurse would also give updates on residents.

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.

The home provides a range of diverse activities, outings and day trips, including; reminiscence sessions, movies, cookery, cards games, keep fit, bingo and sing-a-long sessions as shown on the notice board (shown on page 11).

Residents informed the Healthwatch team that they are well advised on available activities, one saying that she likes to walk out in the garden with help from staff and another resident adding that they are made welcome to join in. One resident also saying that pets are made welcome to visit the home.

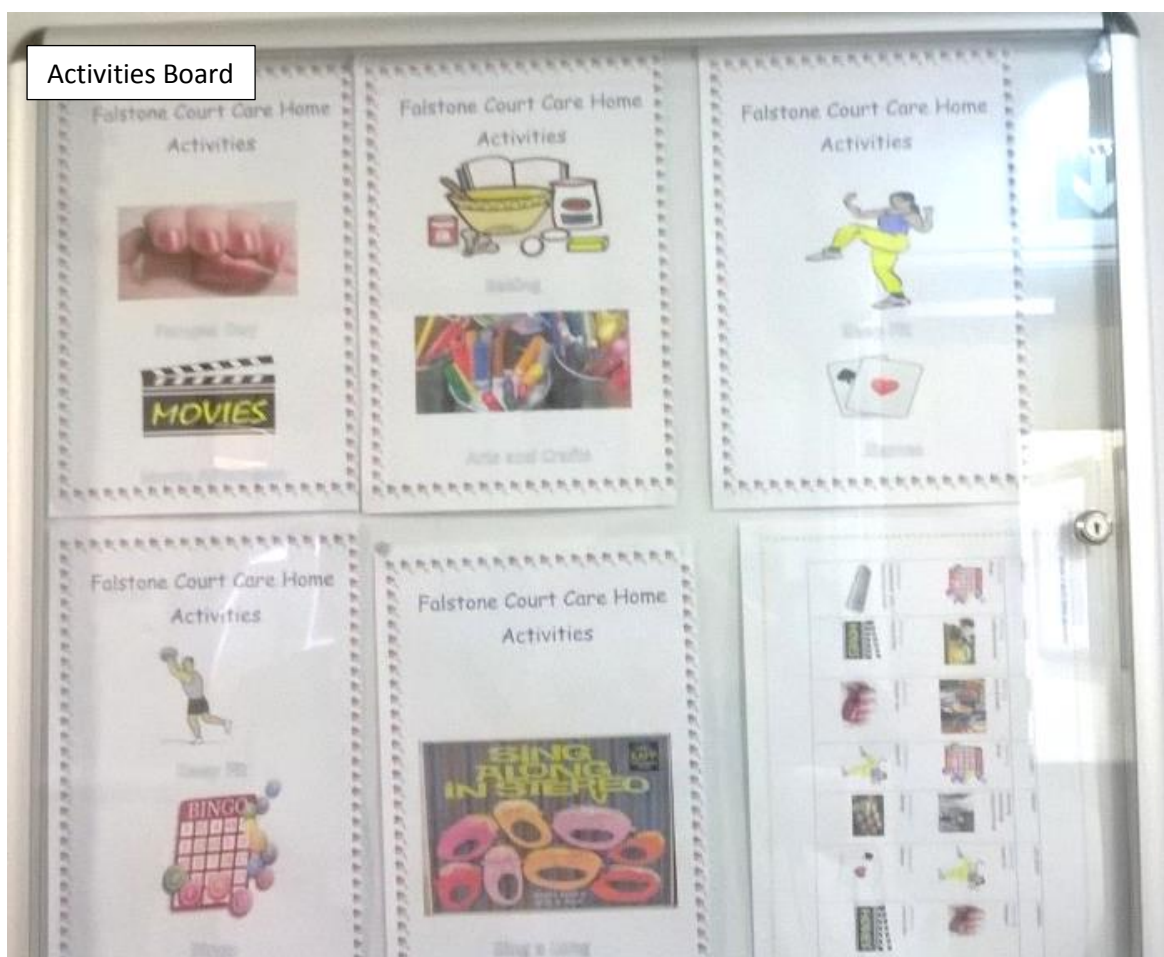
The Healthwatch team viewed the central secure courtyard which is available for outside activities, including Sunderland Air Show, barbeques, fresh air and alfresco dining (weather permitting) the area was bright, clean and inviting.





Most friends and relatives commented that there are a lot of activities available, residents are encouraged to participate and those who are unable to do so are encouraged to watch.

On speaking with the Activities Coordinator who was spending time with residents in one of the communal TV/sitting rooms, the Healthwatch team were advised that there was going to be a cinema session that afternoon showing old movies on the large screen projector.



When asked, all staff and the Deputy Manager informed the Healthwatch team that there is a varied programme of activities available at Falstone Court. Some of the activities available include: hand therapy, pony therapy, one to one bingo, singalongs/singers, entertainers, movie afternoon, sightseeing trips to familiar places, local theatre performances, restaurants, garden centres and coffee mornings in other care homes.

Staff and the Deputy Manager informed the Healthwatch team that they encourage residents to take part in the wide range of activities available through discussions around what each resident enjoys and by looking at their life history and interests. Staff also informed the Healthwatch team that residents are encouraged to take part in activities, especially those they have a particular interest 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 gave this a **NEUTRAL** rating for staff time, which indicates both positive and negative feedback, which when averaged results in a neutral score.

The majority of residents chatted with commented that the food is good at the home, there is always a choice and there is plenty of it! Residents stated that they either eat in the dining room or sometimes in their own room and tea, coffee and biscuits are available throughout the day.



One resident commented “I like the food, apple pie and custard, Get In!”

When asked, the majority of friends and relatives agreed that the food at Falstone Court is of a very high standard, healthy, plentiful and enjoyable. Desserts and treats are readily available, there is a friendly atmosphere in the dining room and residents are encouraged to socialise. One relative pointed out that their family member’s weight had increased since living at the home! One friend commented that Christmas time at the home is outstanding!

Most staff informed the Healthwatch team that there is a wide of choice of food, alternatives are always available and menus are changed regularly, however, the quality of food could be better. Seven out of eleven staff respondents stated that the quality of food is not good. Three members of staff informed the Healthwatch team that there is a good choice of food which is also of good quality. One staff member did not answer the question.



Negative comments included;

“Overall there is a good choice of food, however, quality could be better.”

“Sometimes the quality and choice can be poor, more so the pureed options.”

Positive comments included;

“Food is varied and of good quality.”

“Food is very good with a wide choice.”



Staff and the Deputy Manager stated that residents make their own choice of food and where they eat, but that they are encouraged to eat in the dining room as this is a sociable occasion, with familiar background music playing and staff and residents chatting together.

The Deputy Manager informed the Healthwatch team that if a resident is not hungry at mealtimes they can eat later.

Falstone Court operates protected mealtimes (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 includes limiting visitors).



Indicator 6 - Regular access to health professionals (GPs, dentists, opticians, chiropodists etc)

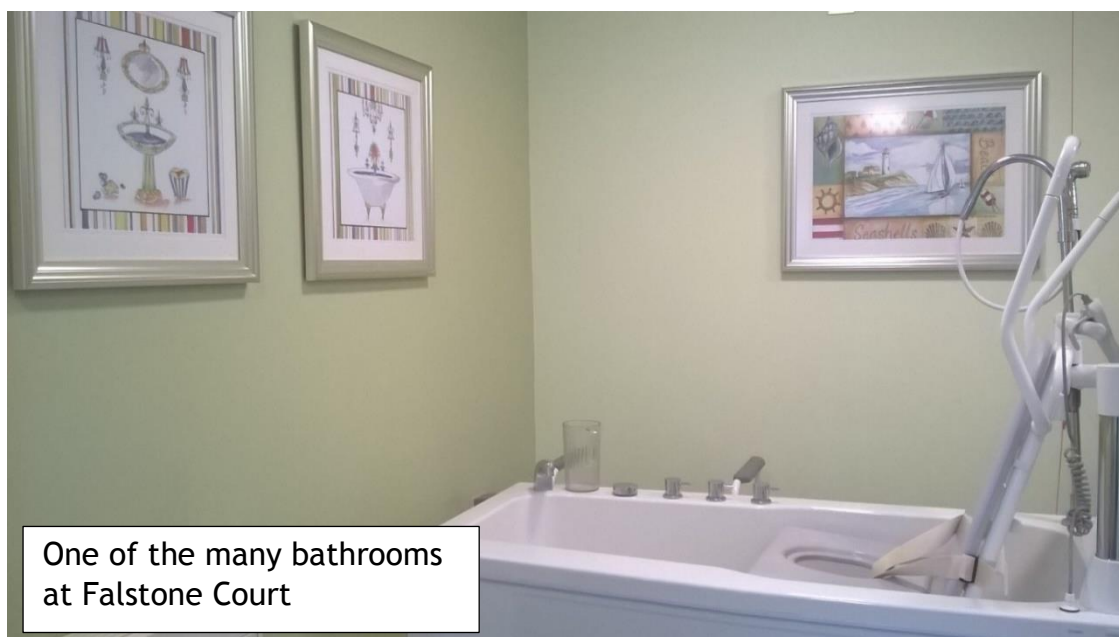
The indicator states that residents should have the same expectation to be able to promptly see a health professional as they would have when living in their own home.

The Healthwatch team AGREE this was met.

When asked, the majority of residents, friends and relatives stated that there are regular visits by health professionals including, doctors, dentists and opticians. One resident advised that;

“If I have a hospital appointment one of my family or a carer will come with me.”

Staff and the Deputy Manager informed the Healthwatch team that residents do have regular checks by health professionals. Staff also reported residents are also escorted by staff to outside services, including hospital appointments and added that hospital transport can be arranged if necessary.



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 most residents, friends and relatives said that they have regular haircuts and styling at the home's salon, they are happy with the laundry service and they usually get their own clothes returned to them.



One resident commented that she is religious and if she wanted to go to church someone will take her.

Staff reported that a member of the local clergy visits the home on a regular basis, some residents attend church with a family member and that cultural differences in diet are adhered to by offering alternative food choices.

The Deputy Manager informed us that the home accommodates each resident's personal, cultural and lifestyle needs through the process of information gathering and putting this into practice. She added that this ensures that the laundry staff return the correct clothes to residents by each resident having name buttons on their clothing.

The Healthwatch team observed that residents appeared happy, well dressed, the men were clean shaven and the ladies hair was neat and tidy.

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.

When asked, the majority of residents stated that they are happy at Falstone Court. Comments included;

“I like the girls, they are friendly and nice and there is plenty of space here.”





Most residents spoken to advised that if they wanted to make a comment or complaint they would speak to the Manager, staff or a family member.

Friends and relatives indicated that they can give feedback by attending monthly residents meetings, a suggestion box is available in the home and all agreed that they feel confident to make a complaint and that it would be acted upon appropriately.

When asked by the Healthwatch team most staff reiterated that friends and relatives can offer suggestions and feedback by attending the residents and family meetings, by using the suggestion box which is readily available or by using the electronic Tablet which is located near to the main entrance, also by speaking to a member of staff or to the Manager.

Staff gave examples of how a resident or relative has influenced how the home is run, including, by giving fundraising ideas and ideas for outside activities. Some staff members reported that they feel they do not have a say in how the home is run, others stated they can express their views and opinions by attending staff meetings and through discussions with the management.

The Deputy Manager stated that an open environment is actively sought by the use of 'Your Say Tablet' and by responding appropriately to any feedback or complaints from residents and relatives.





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?



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?



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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