

Care home life, what it's really like!

Highcliffe Care Centre



Date of Healthwatch Sunderland visit:
25th October 2017





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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 Lesley was held at Highcliffe 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 25th 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 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> 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	 Strongly agree				
4.	A varied programme of activities	 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	 Strongly agree				
8.	An open environment where feedback is actively sought and used	 Agree				



Findings

Highcliffe Care Centre is a purpose built property set in its own grounds in the mainly residential location of Whitchurch Road, Witherwack, Sunderland, SR5 5SX.

The home has two floors with a shared reception area and provides care for up to 60 older people who have either dementia or general care needs. Resident's rooms have showers, DVD players and flat screen TVs. The home has its own garden with seating and raised flower beds.

See the latest CQC inspection report here:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-135570407>

At the time of our visit there were 56 residents living in the home. Due to the capacity of the majority of the residents, the Healthwatch team were only able to support 11 residents to fully complete the survey. The team received 13 staff and 8 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.**

All but one of the residents who the Healthwatch team spoke to at Highcliffe Care Centre had difficulty identifying the Manager but this may have been due to their own individual health and capacity. The resident who knew her, knew her name and said she is friendly and helpful.

All of the friends/relatives who completed the survey stated that they know the Manager. All but one of them found her to be friendly and helpful, with one person adding that this is not the case sometimes. Another friend/relative went on to say "The Manager gives you confidence in the home. She is hands on in the delivery of a first class care home."

Most of the staff who responded to the survey stated that the Manager at Highcliffe House is supportive, operates an open door policy and is easy to talk to. "Full support is given from the Manager both with work and personal issues."

"I am always able to speak to the Manager when support is needed."

Some staff said that they find the Deputy Manager especially supportive "I always seek support from the Deputy Manager with any issues I have."

Other comments included; "Management support our decisions, but don't always follow through with certain things. Management want things done their way."



“Not always easy to talk to the Manager, but the Deputy is easy to talk to, ask questions and raise issues with.”

At the time of the survey process the Manager of Highcliffe Care Centre was on long term sick leave.

The Deputy Manager stated that he had worked at the home for two and a half years and in health and social care since leaving school. He went on to say that he loves his job as it gives him the opportunity to lead his team and give the best possible care to residents.

Indicator 2 - Staff with time and skills to do their jobs

The indicator states that staff should be well trained, motivated and feel they have the resources to do their job properly.

The Healthwatch team 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.

Most of the residents the team spoke to stated that the staff at the home are good or nice, with one resident adding “They are all lovely, including the cleaners” and another saying “The staff here are nice, they look after me.” One resident told us that “The staff are alright” and another stated that they are “Sometimes helpful”.

When asked if the staff have time to stop and chat, we had a mixed response from residents, some told us that the staff do, some said they don’t and others said sometimes.

Most of the friends/relatives who completed the survey told us that the staff at Highcliffe Care Centre do have the time and skills to care for their relatives/friends. Although one responded by saying “Some days there are not enough staff to give my relative care”. Others added “Staff run a first class facility, respond to the needs of the individual - my mother is safe in their care” and “As always in care, more time would be welcome and improve care”. One relative commented on the staff to resident ratio as being four staff to every 30 residents with different needs.

Although the majority of the staff said there is enough time to care for the residents, one staff member felt there was not enough time, with another saying that this is the case some of the time. One staff member did not complete this question on the survey.

Staff told us that training is always available and discussed at their supervisions and appraisals. “There are continuous learning opportunities, including in-house and outsourced training.”



(One of the homes areas of interest to assist with reminiscence)

“I have been encouraged to advance in my diploma, currently working towards Level 5, which I would not have done personally but was encouraged by the Manager.”

All of the staff who completed the surveys told us reasons why they enjoy their jobs, which include:

- Making sure residents clothing is clean and fresh
- Providing the best care possible
- Interacting with the residents and getting to know more about them
- Learning new ways to make someone's quality of life better
- Providing support and the best service I can
- When I do deep-cleans and it's ready for residents

The Deputy Manager said that he actively promotes training and development as “knowledge is power”. He holds regular workshops around the areas which staff feel they need more knowledge and to also meet the needs of the homes comprehensive training plan. The home also utilises the training provided by the Tyne and Wear Care Alliance who support workforce development throughout the independent care sector in the North East.



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.

Most of the residents we spoke to told us that they believe the staff at the home know them, their likes and dislikes, while some were unsure, this may have been due to their own individual health and capacity.

All who responded to the survey told us that they feel the staff know their friend/relative's life history, personality and health care needs and notice and respond to changes in their need. One relative whose family member is new to the home said "My relative has only lived at the home for five months and the staff are getting to know his needs." Another stated "The same staff work on each floor so they know the residents - they know my mam and she knows them." One relative gave an example of this "Mum lost weight, so staff monitored her diet, encouraged her to eat a little more and gave more regular check-ups until weight improved, which happened very quickly."

During the visit to Highcliffe Care Centre the Healthwatch team saw staff chatting with residents, joking with them and simply acknowledging them as they passed by. Staff were addressing the residents by name and both seemed happy and relaxed in each other's company.

It was one of the resident's birthday and the Healthwatch team were informed of this by the member of staff who showed us around the home. The lady was sitting in the main foyer with other residents opening her birthday cards. The staff were congratulating and making a fuss of her. There was a display on a notice board with the birthdays of each resident highlighted on it.

We were informed that residents undergo a pre-assessment prior to their admission into Highcliffe Care Centre, where information is gathered and passed on to all staff and entered into the individual's person centred Care Plan. Most staff stated that they find it invaluable to spend time with residents and their friends and relatives, getting to know them and building relationships, looking through memorable photographs and developing individual memory boxes.

The staff and the Deputy Manager stated that residents are continually assessed and changes to their tastes, health and care needs are reported to senior members of staff, who update Care Plans and share with all staff in handover meetings. Referrals to appropriate professionals are also made when required.



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 AGREE this was met.

The majority of residents informed us that there are a range of activities available in the home and that they found it easy to take part. During the visit the Healthwatch team witnessed several activities taking place on both the ground floor and upstairs lounge areas and adjacent seating area. The atmosphere was vibrant, with an enthusiastic Activities Co-ordinator facilitating various seated activities to encourage hand and eye co-ordination. Music was being played and residents and staff were singing along and dancing with one another. The Healthwatch team witnessed a lot of smiles and laughter from both residents and staff.

The majority of friends and relatives spoke very positively about the range of activities inside and outside of Highcliffe Care Centre. They highlighted the difficulties of offering a range of activities to suit residents with different variations of needs and abilities. One person didn't think that their friend/relative is encouraged to take part and went on to say that they feel that not all residents are given the opportunity to take part in outdoor activities.

Staff told us about the range of in-house and external activities available to residents at Highcliffe Care Centre, which included; bingo, days out, flower arranging, crafts, in-house entertainers, visits by local community groups (eg dance troops), gardening, cooking, Singing for the Brain, coffee mornings, reminiscence sessions, Gentlemen's Club et

Staff went on to say that they encourage residents to take part in activities by finding out what the residents interests are, telling them when activities are taking place and invite them to take part, showing and explaining the activity and encouraging residents to help facilitate the session. Staff are available to support residents who need it to ensure they enjoy the activity to its fullest in the safest way possible.

The Deputy Manager added that all residents are given a copy of the activities planner and if they do not wish to take part in group activities, they are given one to one time with staff to ensure they don't miss out.



(Notice board displaying activity schedule)



(A quiet reading area)

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.

We asked the residents what they think of the food at the home and most of them answered this question telling us that the food is good and that mealtimes are an enjoyable time. One resident added “We are well fed, I really enjoy breakfast”. They went on to tell us that they can make choices about the meals they eat and the kitchen staff will prepare sandwiches and toasties as alternatives upon request.

Friends and relatives gave a mixed response to the quality and choice of food available at the home. Some felt it is excellent or good, one relative stated that the choice of food had improved over the last three months, whilst others felt the food was not of a high standard. All who responded felt confident that the residents are supported to eat and drink as much as needed with one person



stating that this is an area which is improving. All recognised that mealtimes at Highcliffe Care Centre are a sociable time.

During the Healthwatch team visit we witnessed a range of hot and cold drinks, cakes and biscuits being served to the residents.

The Deputy Manager and staff stated that Highcliffe Care Centre has an on-site chef from 7am - 5.30pm and the kitchen is manned from 6.45am - 6.30pm. Snacks, which include sandwiches, fruit etc. are available 24 hours a day. The chef prepares enough of each option on the menu to ensure that all residents have a choice and special dietary requirements are met as much as possible. If a resident would like something which is not available the home tries to facilitate a visit to the shops to purchase the requested item.

Fresh juice or water is available to residents in their own rooms. A range of both hot and cold drinks are offered to residents throughout the day.

Residents can eat in the foyer, their own rooms or in the quiet lounge area, although sitting in the dining room it encouraged for social interaction. Social mealtimes are encouraged by sitting in friendship groups with a staff member present to facilitate conversations.

One staff member said “Mealtimes are treated like a restaurant experience. There is low music, small clusters of tables and table service.”

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.

Some of the residents were unsure about this question but this may have been due to their own individual health and capacity. Those who did answer told us that they have access to healthcare professionals such as opticians and dentists and that staff call GPs when required.

Several relatives told us that their relatives have regular access to health professionals as appropriate. One added “I have no concerns in this area”. Staff also accompany residents to appointments in the community. One relative said that her mam has advanced dementia and sometimes refuses to see the clinicians when they arrive at the home, but staff try to encourage her to see them.

The Deputy Manager and staff members told us that senior staff members arrange appointments at the home either when check-ups are due or if and when required. Regular appointments are made for dentistry and optometry check-ups and also annual GP reviews if a resident has not been seen by a GP earlier than this. Some residents are escorted by staff to dentists within the local community.



Indicator 7 - Accommodate resident's personal, cultural and lifestyle needs

The indicator states that care homes should be set up to meet residents cultural, religious and lifestyle needs as well as their care needs and shouldn't make people feel uncomfortable if they are different or do things differently to other residents. **The Healthwatch team STRONGLY AGREE this was met.**

Some of the residents were unsure about this question but this may have been due to their own individual health and capacity. All of those who answered this section of the survey informed us that they feel their religion and culture are respected in the home. One resident added that she is able to attend a religious service which takes place in the home and another said that she gets her hair done by the care home's hairdresser.

Most of the relatives and friends informed us that their friends/relatives do not have any specific lifestyle or religious or cultural needs. One however, told us that her mum does like to watch Songs of Praise and be involved in any religious service, both of which she has informed the home's staff about. Another relative told us that her mam likes to receive Holy Communion and does so every Wednesday in the home.

Staff reiterated that Holy Communion is offered at the home by local members of the clergy, who deliver prayer services and also visit residents individually. A Eucharistic Minister visits the home and the Activities Co-ordinators take residents out to religious festivals. All religious and other dietary requirements are known and met by the kitchen staff.

The Deputy Manager said "We have a resident who is a Buddhist and his special dietary requirements are met and a Buddhist Monk visits him at the home."

One staff member added "Residents can decorate their own rooms how they wish."

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.

Most of the residents who gave feedback on this section of the survey informed us that they don't get asked for their thoughts on the home. A couple of the residents stated that they do and one added "The girls know I'm happy". When asked if there was anything they would change about the home all the residents we spoke to said there is nothing they would change. If they needed to complain about any aspect of the home the residents told us they would tell either their family, a member of staff or the Manager.



All but one of the friends/relatives who took part in the survey stated that they feel a welcome participant in the home with one adding “I always feel welcome here” and another stating “My late father would have been so comforted each time he visited Highcliffe to see mam so content”. They told us that there are regular meetings held at the home, where information is shared and suggestions can be put forward. One relative highlighted the importance of friends and relatives fully participating in the home. All of the respondents told us that they are fully aware of how to make a complaint to the home and they would feel confident that their complaint would be acted upon.

The staff who completed the surveys and the Deputy Manager told us about the range of ways that feedback is actively sourced from residents and their friends and relatives including; regular resident and relative meetings, feedback forms are available, there are suggestion cards in the reception area, comments books which are in the dining areas and the Manager has an open door policy.

Here are some of the examples they gave us on how feedback has been used to change things in the home:

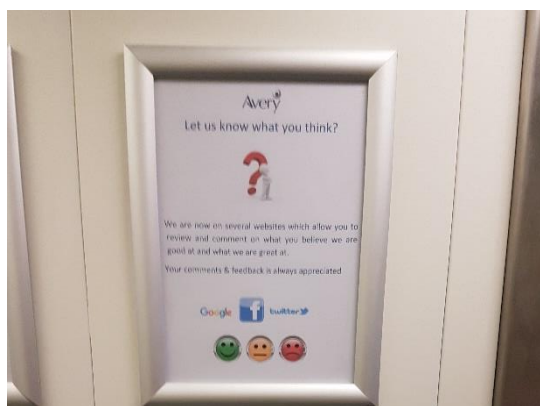
“A male resident’s family asked for a Gentlemen’s Club and it is now happening once a week.”

“Residents families suggested rubber feet on the bottom of furniture to stop the chair and tables from sliding on the wood flooring, which was a great, successful suggestion.”

Staff stated that they have regular meetings where they can air their views, opinions, solutions, open discussions are held and their opinions are sort. Staff supervisions and appraisals are also a time for this and the management operate an open door policy.

“Staff can make suggestions, just like residents and families can.”

One staff member said “It’s either the Manager’s way or nothing. Management (home Manager) wanted it done her way. She took ideas, but didn’t do anything with them.”



(Feedback is also encouraged online)



5. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Questions for residents

1. Do you know the Manager of the home?
2. What do you think of the Manager?
3. What do you think about the staff here?
4. Do the staff have the time to stop and chat with you?
5. Do the staff know what you need and what you like and don't like?
6. What activities are there for you in the home?
7. Is it easy to join in the activities?
8. Do you get a chance to do any of the things you used to enjoy before you came here?
9. Do you go on trips outside?
10. What do you think of the food here?
11. Is there enough choice of what you eat and when you eat?
12. Do you enjoy mealtimes?
13. Have you seen a dentist to check your teeth or an optician to check your eyes recently?
14. Is there respect for your religion or your culture here in your home?
15. Do you get asked what you think about the home?
16. Would you like to change anything about the home? Have you told anyone about this and what happened?
17. What would you do if you wanted to make a complaint about the home?



Appendix 2 - Questions for Managers

1. **Have strong, visible management**
What attracted you to the role of care home manager?

What do you enjoy about the role?
2. **Have staff with time and skills to do their jobs**
In what ways do you encourage staff to develop their skills?
3. **Have good knowledge of each individual resident and how their needs may be changing**
How do you ensure that staff get to know a resident's life history, personality and health and care needs when the resident first arrives?

How is information about a resident's tastes and their health and care needs updated as these change?
4. **Offer a varied programme of activities**
What activities are available for residents inside and outside the home?

What encouragement and assistance do you give to residents so that they can take part in activities?
5. **Offer quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes**
What systems are in place to support residents to eat and drink at mealtimes and outside of mealtimes?

What choices do residents get about what they eat and drink and when and how they eat and drink?

In what ways do you try to make mealtimes sociable?
6. **Ensure residents can regularly see health professionals such as GPs, dentists, opticians or chiropodists**
Do residents have regular, preventative dental and optometry (eye-care) appointments?
7. **Accommodate residents' personal, cultural and lifestyle needs**
How does the home find out about and cater to residents' cultural, religious and lifestyle needs? Can you give an example?
8. **Be an open environment where feedback is actively sought and used**
In what ways can residents and their family have a say in how the home is run?

Are staff able to have a say in how the home is run?

How do you make use of feedback or complaints from residents and relatives?



Appendix 3 - Questions for staff

- 1. Have strong, visible management**
What support do you receive from the manager?

How easy is it to talk to the manager when you want to ask a question or raise an issue?
- 2. Have staff with time and skills to do their jobs**
Do you feel you have enough time to care for residents?

Are you encouraged to continue to develop your skills? In what ways?

What do you enjoy about your job?
- 3. Have good knowledge of each individual resident and how their needs may be changing**
How do you ensure that staff get to know a resident's life history, personality and health and care needs when the resident first arrives?

How is information about a resident's tastes and their health and care needs updated as these change?
- 4. Offer a varied programme of activities**
What activities are available for residents inside and outside the home?

What encouragement and assistance do you give to residents so that they can take part in activities?
- 5. Offer quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes**
How do you make sure residents are able to eat and drink at mealtimes as well as outside of mealtimes?

What choices do residents get about what they eat and drink and when and how they eat and drink?

In what ways do you try to make mealtimes sociable?
- 6. Ensure residents can regularly see health professionals such as GPs, dentists, opticians or chiropodists**
Do residents have regular, preventative dental and optometry (eye-care) appointments?
- 7. Accommodate residents' personal, cultural and lifestyle needs**
Can you give an example of how the home caters for religious and cultural needs?
- 8. Be an open environment where feedback is actively sought and used**
In what ways can residents and their family have a say in how the home is run?

Can you provide an example of how a resident or their family member has influenced how the home is run?
Do you feel staff can have a say in how the home is run?



Appendix 4 - Questions for friends and relatives

1. **Strong visible management**
Do you know who the Manager of the home is?

Is the Manager friendly and helpful?
2. **Have staff with time and skills to do their jobs**
Do you think the staff have the time and skills to care for your friend/relative?
3. **Have good knowledge of each individual resident and how their needs may be changing**
How well do you think the staff know your friend/relative's life history, personality and health and care needs?

Does the home notice and respond when your friends/relative's needs change?
4. **Offer a varied programme of activities**
What do you think of the activities available for residents inside and outside the home?

Is your friend/relative properly encouraged and supported to take part in the activities?
5. **Offer quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes**
What do you think of the quality and choice of food?

Are you confident that your friend/relative is supported to eat and drink as much as needed?

Do you think that mealtimes are sociable?
6. **Ensure residents can regularly see health professionals such as GPs, dentists, opticians or chiropodists**
Does a dentist and an optometrist (optician) come to see your friend/relative regularly or only if there is a problem?
7. **Accommodate residents' personal, cultural and lifestyle needs**
Does your friend/relative have any specific lifestyle or religious or cultural needs? Are these respected and accommodated?
8. **Be an open environment where feedback is actively sought and used**
Do you feel that you are a welcome participant in the life of the home?

In what ways can you and your friend/relative have a say in how the home is run or give feedback?

Would you know how to make a complaint if you wanted to?

Would you feel confident to make a complaint and do you think it would be acted on appropriately?



DISCLAIMER:

- The observations made in this report relate only to the visits carried out.
- This report is not representative of all residents' views; it only represents the views of those who were able to contribute within the time available.

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