

Care home life, what it's really like!

## Princess House



Date of Healthwatch Sunderland visit:  
Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> 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.





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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, 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.



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### 3. Methodology

An initial pre-visit meeting with the home Manager Lynne was held at Princess House. 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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	 Agree
2.	Staff with time and skills to do their jobs	 Agree
3.	Good knowledge of each resident and their changing needs	 Agree
4.	A varied programme of activities	 Agree
5.	Quality, choice and flexibility around food and mealtimes	 Strong 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

Princess House is a converted residence located on Seaburn sea front at 19 Cliffe Park, Sunderland, SR6 9NS.

The home provides accommodation and personal care for up to 26 people, some of whom may be living with dementia. Nursing care is not provided. Accommodation is over 3 floors of this three storey detached house with gardens. All bedrooms are en-suite, some having toilets and some have bathing facilities.

See the latest CQC inspection report here:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-123592702>

At the time of our visit there were 23 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 6 staff and 2 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 AGREE this was met.**

All of the residents supported to complete the surveys knew the Manager by name and gave her a range of positive comments; “She’s very good and very helpful” and “The Manager is first class”.

The friends/relatives who completed the survey told us that they knew the Manager. One stated that she is friendly and helpful and the other said this is the case most of the time.

All staff who took part in the survey process told us that they feel very supported by both the Manager and the Director of the home and that it is very easy to speak to either of them.

“As soon as I ask for a minute she’s either there, or there within an hour.”

“It is very easy to talk to the Director or Manager and I feel sure any issues will be dealt with.”

The Manager has been working at Princess House since 2003, where she started as a Care Assistant. She achieved various qualifications and worked her way up to the position of Manager in 2008. She stated that she enjoys being ‘hands on’, ensuring that the residents are provided with the best care possible and supporting her staff team.





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

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

The Healthwatch team **AGREE** this was met.



When asked what they thought of the staff, the residents gave us positive comments, such as; “They are wonderful, I have no complaints” and “They are all brilliant. I didn’t want to come in here at first, but I love it now.” The residents told us that the staff at the home are busy, but chat to them when they have the time. One resident added “They have a good sense of humour.”

One friend/relative said that they found the majority of the staff to be attentive and that those who work closely with their friend/relative know them well. The other said that the staff take excellent care of their mother.

“I am confident that the best love, care and attention is given to all of the residents.”

During the Healthwatch visit the team witnessed various positive interactions between staff and residents of the home. These included; one staff member for comforting a resident who was seated in the foyer area, they were also enjoying a shared joke and laughing together. Another staff member, who showed the team around the home, knew all of the residents by name and both she and the residents seemed to be very relaxed in each other’s company. One resident was relaxed enough to be lying, sleeping on a sofa which was situated in a sunny bay window of one of the communal rooms.

All staff respondents told us that they feel they have enough time to care for the residents. One staff member stated “No resident has a time limit, we take it at the residents pace.” Staff went on to say that they all feel encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge through training and refresher courses. This is discussed during appraisals and that the Director of the home is very passionate about the team undergoing training. One staff member told us “I am always encouraged to develop my skills - my employer is funding my post-graduate degree around people with dementia.” All staff respondents told us that they enjoy their jobs for the following range of reasons which included these examples; “I love learning about each person and seeing their enjoyment when doing activities.”

“Listening to each individual’s life stories and being able to support them the best I can.”



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The Manager stated that she and the Director work together to identify a variety of learning opportunities for staff to support their personal development plans, which are tailored to the individual. She went on to say that various courses, conferences and events are accessed through the Tyne and Wear Care Alliance, who support workforce development throughout the independent care sector across the region.

### **Indicator 3 - Good knowledge of each resident and changing needs**

The indicator states that staff should be familiar with resident's histories and preferences and have processes in place for how to monitor changes in health and wellbeing.

**The Healthwatch team AGREE this was met.**

All residents who completed the survey process stated that they felt the staff know what they need and know their likes and dislikes. The friends and relatives said that staff notice and respond to changes in the needs of their friend or relative.

The Manager and staff commented that all new residents admitted into Princess House undergo an assessment process which includes gaining as much information as possible about the resident. This information is used in the individual care plans which are discussed with staff and assessed through the care document system which is in place. Changes to a resident's tastes and health and care needs are updated on a daily basis, reviewed monthly and added to the individual care plan. Full reviews are carried out at least every 6 months.

### **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.**

All but one of the residents stated that the activities at the home are easy to access. The one person who answered no to this question was new to the home and said that he liked to fill his own time. "I have lived alone for 30 years, so will always find something to do. I go for daily walks along the coast by myself".

Another of the residents which the Healthwatch team spoke to said that there is always something going on at Princess House. "I take part as much as I can and the best thing about living here is the view of the coast - there is always something to see".

When we asked the residents if they are able to do the things they liked to enjoy before they came to the home, here are some of the comments we received; "I used to like going out dancing and I go to the Tea Dance with other residents now".



“No, but I like the garden.”

“I used to enjoy doing odd jobs about the house, but there is no need for that now.”

One resident told us that there are organised outings for ice cream, the panto and for local walks. Two of the residents were unaware of the outings which are available. Another resident added “I may be interested in Christmas meals out, although I am a bit of a loner and not particularly interested in going out with others.”

One of the friends/relatives who completed the survey said that although they felt their friend/relative is encouraged to take part in activities there could be more going on at the home. The other said “My mother enjoys all of the activities.”

The staff and Manager told us about the range of in-house activities, which are facilitated by visiting professionals, which include; arts and crafts, music and keep fit. The Princess House Activities Coordinator organises a monthly schedule of indoor and outdoor activities including; bingo, beauty, films and music sessions. Residents are taken out weekly to a local tea dance and there are also regular outings to the supermarkets, cafes, restaurants and pubs. The home also take part in local community activities such as the International Airshow, The Sunderland Illuminations, carols at the Minster and various other local performances.

They went on to say that residents are encouraged to take part in activities by a range of methods, such as; making sure that residents are aware that activities are taking place and invite them to take part. Transport is paid for by the home to enable attendance at events. The home also ensure that there are enough staff available to assist people who need it, to explain the activity and offering one to one support for activities such as bingo, arts and crafts etc.



(Residents taking part in a range of 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 **STRONGLY AGREE** this was met.



The residents asked spoke positively about the food at Princess House. One resident commented that some days the food is better than other days. All but one of the respondents stated that there is a choice of food and alternatives will be made available if there is nothing residents like on the menu. They all said that they look forward to mealtimes. One resident added “It depends on who you sit with, although you can eat in the conservatory, where it is quieter if you wish.”

(The dining room)

One of the friends/relatives stated that the quality and choice of food available seems to be good and varied and the other said “I think the food choice is excellent.” Both felt that their friend/relative is encouraged to eat and drink as much as is needed and that mealtimes at the home are a sociable time for residents.

The staff and Manager stated that they feel the menu at the home is both varied and nutritious. They are all aware of individual likes, dislikes, dietary requirements and preferences of each resident. Residents can eat and drink whenever and wherever they prefer (their own rooms, dining room, conservatory or lounge) and are encouraged to request snacks and drinks at any time throughout the day and night.

The cook takes a menu around to all residents each morning, showing them two options and alternatives will be made available if these choices are not suitable. There is a menu board displayed in the dining room, which is updated each day.





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The dining room is set out in groups of four to encourage a social atmosphere. Staff interact with residents to facilitate conversations.

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

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

**The Healthwatch team AGREE this was met.**

Residents gave a mixed response to this question on the survey. One resident who had not lived at the home for long said “I assume there will be access to these professionals. Staff did accompany me to see my doctor. We travelled by taxi which I paid for.”

“I got my new glasses here and my daughter takes me to see my GP.”

“No, but if I wanted an appointment, they would arrange it for me.”

One of the friends/relatives believes that it is the case that there is regular access to health professionals. The other said that professionals are accessed if there is a problem.

The staff and Manager told us that regular visits to a local dentists are arranged when required by either staff or family members. ‘Vision Call’ attend the home on a regular basis. Some residents opt to visit an optician in town. Other medical professionals are accessed if and when required by senior staff members. Residents can either be accompanied by relatives or staff members to their appointments.

### **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.**

Residents stated that there is a church service at the home once a week. One resident added that they would like to visit a local church to worship with a congregation. Options to make this viable were discussed between the resident, Healthwatch team member and a Princess House staff member. Some of the possible options spoken about were; contacting the local church to see if they have volunteers who could collect the resident and take them along, or see if there are other residents who would like to go too, so the cost of the taxi could be shared.

Some of the residents supported to complete the survey said that they get their hair cut/styled by the in-house hairdresser and one stated that they go to a local salon with their daughter. One resident told us that they have a choice of which



of their clothes to wear and another said their daughter takes their clothes home with her to wash.

Both of the friends/relatives stated that their friend/relative has no specific lifestyle, religious or cultural needs.

The Manager and staff said that information about specific lifestyle, religious or cultural needs are accessed at a resident's admission into the home. There are regular visits from St Andrew's Church, which is located near to Princess House. The home caters for the needs of a resident who is a Jehovah's Witness, ensuring that they can attend services and that their beliefs were respected in the homes celebrations eg. Christmas. Halal meat is made available if required.

### **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.**

Two of the residents stated that they don't get asked what they think about the home. The two other residents said "I am perfectly happy here" and "When I first came here the staff asked me if I liked it - you couldn't not like living here, the views are amazing and the staff are brilliant." When asked if there was anything about living at Princess House that they would change, all of the residents supported to complete the survey said there is nothing.

All of the residents asked stated that they would speak to either the Manager or other staff members if they wanted to make a complaint.

Both of the friends/relatives stated that they feel welcome participants in the life of Princess House. They added that their friend/relative can speak to the Manager or care staff to have their say on how the home is run or give feedback. They know how to make a complaint if necessary and would feel confident that it would be acted upon.

The staff and Manager all commented that feedback from residents, their friends and relatives is encouraged to help better the service. There is a feedback box at the front door and feedback forms are accessible to all. Individual family meetings can be arranged as well as regular resident and family meetings taking place. The office door is always open for residents and their friends and relatives to express themselves to management and offer suggestions and feedback. One staff member added "We ask residents if they are happy." Another said "Feedback is valued, appreciated and mostly acted upon, where possible."

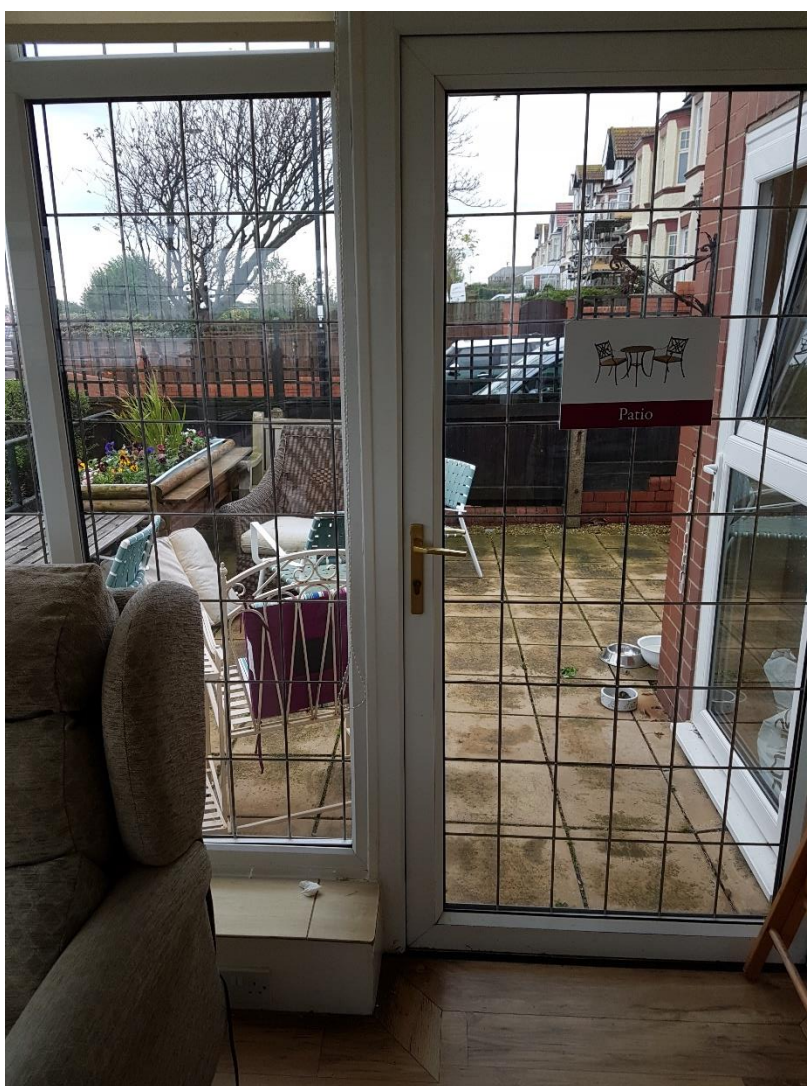
One staff member gave us an example of how feedback was acted upon "The layout of the dining room was discussed at a residents meeting and it has now been



changed to facilitate better conversation and interaction.” Another added “A resident asked if the evening meal could be half an hour earlier and all of the residents have found this better.”

All staff told us that they feel very involved with the running of Princess House and that both the Manager and Director of the home are always open to suggestions. The Manager said that staff ideas are shared through one to one meetings, handovers, supervisions and staff meetings.

The Manager stated that the home responds to complaints immediately to rectify the problem or improve practice.





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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. 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?





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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?
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?



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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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