

The Boltons Home, Reading: a Healthwatch Reading visit report

Where: The Boltons Care Home, 2-4 College Road Reading RG6 1QD

When: 18/05/2018, for 3 hours in the afternoon.

Who: 10 people spoke with trained Healthwatch Reading staff members. We spoke to 8 women and 2 men. Of these, 6 were aged 75-84 and 3 were 85 or older. The 10 residents who wanted to tell us about their characteristics were all white British.

Why: Healthwatch Reading is visiting local care homes to:

- Give older, frail, unwell people, and people with a disability requiring nursing care, a chance to have their say about their care
- Make observations about the general 'feel' of homes, how they meet individual needs and how their staff interact with residents
- Understand residents' access to health professionals
- Collect any experiences about residents being admitted to hospital from the care home, and/or discharged from hospital to the care homes.

How: Healthwatch Reading has statutory 'Enter and View' powers to visit care homes but arranged all visits with care homes in advance on a pre-agreed date, to allow staff to plan and understand the visits.

How residents describe living at The Boltons:

- All the residents said that the food was good and there was choice in what they could have.
- More than half of those we talked positively described the care they receive in the home.
- Most felt that they were usually included in planning their care and positive comments included help with dressing, being able to wash and dress oneself, and a feeling of being included.
- All residents said they were able see a GP when they needed to, and the home arranged for an optician to come and visit residents in the home.
- Most of the residents told us how lovely and caring the two deputy managers are.
- One person told us that they had to go into hospital, but the staff arranged and it all went smoothly.
- Two people told us that they were not sure if they had choices at meal times.
- All the residents told us that there is nothing they would change about the care home.
- One resident told us that a carer goes with them to local charity shops on a regular basis to 'find a good bargain'.

Residents' comments: what they like

'Went on river trip in taxi to Caversham (10 residents) and carers, can do my own things as want, feels safe. No complaints at all. Food very nice/choose on the day and very versatile, carers and staff all good, can visit anytime. Join in some activities like keep fit and quizzes.'

'Everything, the food is lovely would like to play bingo, the staff look after me, family visit when they can. I wash and dress myself and make my bed. Go to the charity shops - staff attend with me.'

'I like the casual way they operate, you can do what you want, how you want. The food is good, and carers do a really good job. Never left alone - they keep an eye out for me.'

'Food is up to scratch. I like everything.'

'Content, [food] quite tasty. All friendly staff - looked after well.'

'Plenty of room, staff helpful, staff very good. Good food. Home does laundry. Activities on board Arts and crafts, Exercise and Salvation Army.'

'Look after me well, staff good. Food variable but recently much better, do get choice. Bible classes, regular service.'

'Happy, good food, good staff. Visitors can come anytime. Sometimes go out. Nice garden can go out on own.'

'Since I started here I have been pleased from the beginning.'

Residents' comments: What is care like? Is it discussed with residents? Are they listened to about their care?

'When I have changed medication, staff have told me'

'They come and talk to me sometime.'

'Have help with walking and dressing, carers do medication.'

'They came and talk to me'

Residents' comments: what they say could be improved

'Not enough activities'

'Don't know, not sure I would change anything'

'Quite happy, can't think of change. I get happy with everyone'

'This is no rock-bottom place. That little bit of extra kindness means a lot.'

Healthwatch Reading observations

- The home is a detached building in a residential estate close to shops and amenities of Reading.
- The main reception area has a sign-in book for visitors.
- We observed that the residents' doors were personalised with a picture of either them, a family member or a pet that they might have had.
- In the communal spaces they had a white board that had activities written on it and also the day's menu.
- The outside space reflects and is in keeping of the home, with nice seating area and plenty of shaded areas for the residents.
- We noted that in the communal spaces there were armchairs and dining table and chairs for residents to sit or do activities.
- There are many items to stimulate the residents in the home - arts and crafts materials, playing cards, games and puzzles.
- The residents told us that they can get a drink and a biscuit whenever they like and can help themselves, from stations in the communal areas.
- We found that in the corridors there were big signs and visual direction for residents if they got confused about where the lounge was.
- As we looked around there was a dressing table with costume jewellery and hair brushes for the residents to use.

Residents' suggestions for improvement - summary:

- Based on comments about the food, residents were happy with the variety they receive, all meals are cooked on the premises.
- One resident told us that they would like to see a list of the medication they are on.
- Seven residents had no suggestions, one saying 'I don't think I would change anything'.

Other information

The Boltons

The Boltons is owned by Mr & Mrs V Juggurnauth and can accommodate up to 27 people - 4 rooms have an ensuite WC.

The Boltons was last inspected by the Care Quality Commission on 17th March 2016 and was rated 'good' - the report can be read [here](#).

The CQC checks if care homes are: safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led.

The CQC has legal powers to order improvements at any NHS or care service, when needed. The CQC usually asks the local Healthwatch for any public feedback it has collected on care homes it is due to visit.

A CQC survey carried out in early 2018 showed that the top three most important factors for the public when deciding on a care home, are:

- the care home's ability to meet the needs of the person
- the feel of the home
- staff being caring.

A care home's quality rating is also important and 65% of people read the CQC's report on the home before they choose.

Hearing from care home residents about quality of care

Healthwatch Reading launched its care homes project to ensure that the voices of older Reading people who live in care homes are heard. This group includes people who are vulnerable because of the effect of aging or illness on health.

Residents in care homes have views that they wish to make known, as our interviews illustrate. They wish to be kept involved in and informed about matters that affect their wellbeing and health, including how their home is run.

Reading organisations responsible for planning, funding or running NHS or social services, have launched a variety of care home initiatives in recent years. These will be summarised in the further report drawing together themes about the care home sector across Reading that we mention below.

The following organisations highlight the need to listen to care home residents:

- Healthwatch England - [‘what it’s like to live in a care home’](#)
- NHS England [People and Communities Board](#) (working with National Voices)
- Social Care Institute for Excellence, in their practical [‘how to guide’](#) introduction to co-production with service users and a [link to 12 short films](#))

- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), see box, below:

'...service providers should consider using a range of approaches to gather views and experiences (for example, focus groups, interviews or observation in addition to surveys), and use evidence from a range of sources. This could include:

- *the lived experiences of people who use services*
- *information from voluntary organisations that represent people who use social care services - for example, Healthwatch*
- *existing sources of information, such as complaints.'*

'Service providers should seek the views of people who use services about the extent to which the things that are important to them are being addressed. This should be done in such a way that the person feels safe to express their views, even if these are critical (for example, a care home resident may not want to give feedback directly to the manager).'

NICE, Guideline NG86, February 2018 (1.6.4 and 1.6.7)

Healthwatch Reading visit conclusion:

Residents told us they are happy with the way staff care for them. We observed an environment that was homely, stimulating and made a range of activities available.

We were not able to identify themes in suggestions for improvement. We suggest that the home continues to make residents and families aware of ways to share feedback about the experience of care - by speaking to staff at the home, or by speaking directly to us or by contacting the Care Quality Commission helpline, if appropriate.

The use of visual cues and prompts throughout the home particularly in communal areas may help towards enhancing the home as a dementia friendly environment.

Healthwatch Reading will produce a separate report in the future, drawing together themes about the care home sector in Reading, when we have completed our series of visits across the borough.

Response from The Boltons:

It was lovely to have Healthwatch visit on the 18th of May, this gave our residents a chance to voice their opinions regarding the home to outside professionals, we are always trying to improve the quality of life for our residents so it is nice to hear it from them via another source, the team were very professional and friendly on their visit and the residents enjoyed the visit.

Acknowledgements and other information

Healthwatch Reading thanks residents for giving their time to share their views. We also thank the home's staff for their assistance. Enter and View findings are only a 'snapshot' of services on a day/s, so they are not a comprehensive judgement on the overall quality of the service. Healthwatch Reading is an independent charity with some statutory powers. We can take your feedback in confidence, help you make complaints, and refer serious concerns to other agencies.

Phone us 0118 937 2295, email info@healthwatchreading.co.uk, visit our website www.healthwatchreading.co.uk or visit us on the 3rd floor, Reading Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ.

Contact Healthwatch Reading on 0118 937 2295 if you do not have internet access and would like help accessing any online information referenced in this report.