

Life Care Home, Reading: a Healthwatch Reading visit report

Where: Life Care Home, 29-31 Cressingham Road, Reading RG2 7RU

When: 27 February 2018, for 2 hours in the morning and 2 March 2018, for 2 hours in the afternoon.

Who: 16 people spoke with trained Healthwatch Reading staff members. We spoke to 11 women and 5 men. Of these, 2 residents were aged 55-65, 6 were aged 75-84 and 7 were 85 or older. 15 people chose to describe their ethnicity to us, all as White British.

Why: Healthwatch Reading is visiting local care homes to:

- Give older, frail, or 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 Life Care:

- Most enjoyed the food at the home
- More than half of those we talked to mentioned positively about how carers responds to their needs
- Some felt they were included in planning their personal care and that if they needed support it was available
- Half of the residents said they able see a GP when they needed to or that the carers would arrange a dentist and optician
- Ten residents told us that they have not been in hospital for the last six months, but two residents who had gone in as inpatients, told us they were well looked after in hospital
- Eight residents had no suggestions for any improvements
- Some residents told us that they would like more activities and have more outings
- One person told us that they came straight from hospital to the home and is not used to the food, likes Indian and Thai food so daughter brings food in *

Residents' comments: what they like

'Food is good, carers look after me.' Occasionally joins in activities, likes having nails painted.

'Staff are quite nice, management good, food good.'

'Food good, fish and chips best. Help from carers with washing and dressing.'

'Very nice and quiet, not many residents - food very good.'

'Carers look after me well. Food is alright - edible. Can go to the garden whenever I like. My son and daughter-in-law come anytime they want.'

'Everything, everyone is nice. Get time to read. Someone from church comes and takes me to church every week. Food has been lovely- never been given a choice but always lovely. Relatives and friends visit.'

'Get on well here/comfortable - been in other care homes. Visitors three, four times a week. Carers get on well with [me], nice friends, [I find] food good.' Likes when singers come in, daughters visit.'

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

'They talk to me and my daughter visits and I am happy here.'

'The staff normally tell me my son and if my son is not happy with my care then he will talk to them, makes them stand to attention.'

'Carers help me.'

'Staff wash dress me, [and I] pay for hairdressers and chiropodist.'

Residents' comments: what they say could be improved

'Would like to have a key and lock own room. Prefer to stay in own room. Not been on any outings, lots of banging on doors.'

'Hardly no activities.'

'Don't do many activities here.'

'More hot drinks.'

'Liked [organised activity of] making fruit salad. [Have] not been on outings.'

'[I] came from hospital to home, not used to western food.' Likes Thai/Indian, daughters visit and bring in preferred food.'

‘Activities not very good - needs more response to people’s needs. Outside activities don’t happen, very limited, once a year only. [It would be better] if they can arrange trips, have not seen anyone go out.’

‘I tell them if I am unhappy, they try to fix the problem.’

‘Would like more activities. Would really like to go on out on trips.’

‘Not going out.’ [Resident would like to go out more]

Healthwatch Reading observations

- The home is a large detached property. It is divided into two units, each arranged over two floors.
- The main reception area is small but has a signing in book for visitors and some leaflets.
- There was no personalisation on the doors of residents’ rooms.
- We noted that there were drinks and fruit available for residents to help themselves.
- We observed that there were no wall displays and no information for residents to look at in the communal areas.
- The communal spaces appeared empty and sparse, with few resources for residents
- We were told that there is an activities coordinator who works Monday-Friday, but no timetable was given when we asked to see it.

Residents’ suggestions for improvement - summary:

- Some residents could would like to be given choice about the food menu
- Some residents want more activities and/or trips outside the home
- Personalisation on doors with residents’ pictures, rather than all plain doors, could help people with dementia to find their room more easily.

Other information

Life Care Home

Life Care Home is run by Life Care Corporation Ltd (which also runs Mulberry House Care Home in Reading) and can accommodate up to 41 people. Life Care was last inspected by the Care Quality Commission on 7 June 2018 and was rated overall as ‘good’, according to a [report](#) published 10 July 2018.

The CQC checks if care homes are: safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led. It 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'
- 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 mostly told us that they like the staff and find them responsive to their needs and care. We noted that residents' comments to us about a lack of activities seemed to fit with our observation that there was no timetable on display for regular activities.

The other suggestion was around residents not going out and having trips: mostly they wanted to go to the shops to do shopping.

We also noted that the home could easily be made more dementia friendly, with pictures on doors, visual cues and prompts, including accent colours and artwork on walls for residents. This could be one area for development by Life Care.

We noted that most residents were not familiar with care plans, but residents told us that staff do talk to them about their medication and health. It is a right under the NHS Constitution for people to be involved in planning their NHS healthcare and good practice in residential care to involve in planning their care. Helping residents to have access to an understand care plans could be another area of development for Life care.

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 Life Care Corporation

The care home did not provide a written response to the Healthwatch Reading report.

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.

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