

Mulberry House Care Home, Reading: a Healthwatch Reading visit report

Where: Mulberry House, 155a Wokingham Road Reading RG6 1LP

When: 19 June 2018, for 2 hours in the morning.

Who: 15 people spoke with trained Healthwatch Reading staff members. We spoke to 9 women and 6 men. Of these, two residents were aged 55-65, four were aged 75-84 and seven were 85 or older. When asked to describe their ethnicity, 11 said they were White British and the other four were from ethnic minority groups.

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 Mulberry Care:

- More than half of those we talked to mentioned positively the care they received at the home.
- We heard that daily personal care is good, saying that staff do a good job.
- The residents told us that the staff talk to them about their care and listen to their concerns.
- All the residents told us they can see a GP when they needed to, and the carers arrange the appointments, but also that a GP visits every Thursday.
- Care home staff will help residents to go outside the home, such as accompanying to an optician appointment or going on small shopping trips.
- Residents gave mixed views about the quality and quantity of food.
- Some residents said they wanted to go out more and/or have more activities.

Residents' comments: what they like

'The food is alright, no activities. I can wash myself. Visitors can come but all my relatives live far away. Staff treat you well, everything is ok.'

'Good food, I eat anything. They do activities. I watch exercise. I get my hair done, she is a good hairdresser. The staff are good people. Good carers.'

'Food good, I like dancing and listening to music. My family come and visit. The staff look after [me] well.'

'Food is variable. Carers nice. Enjoy cards, drawing. Not many activities where we all join in. Like garden.'

'Food good choice, staff are ok. Likes playing cards, dominoes.'

'Food good, staff good, likes sitting in garden, never been on outings, likes playing, doesn't know about other activities.'

'Sometime the food is ok, sometime not. You get a choice. There are activities, but I need help. Sometimes...I go to Asda with my carer.'

'Food not bad, you don't get a lot of it. The portion could be bigger, no choices. Activities now and again, I do not join in. Visitors can come. The staff are good, I play about with them.'

'Nice people, food good, enjoys having visitors.'

'Improved since I came, seemed a bit messy. Food not bad, get a choice, meat and get sweet. Have visitors come - not many activities just sit here, sometimes given a puzzle. Get on well with staff.'

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

'Have a shower once a week, staff help me.'

'Get help from carers with washing and dressing, sometimes too fast but good. Staff give me tablets, don't talk to me about them'

'Carers help to wash and dress, staff give me tablets, I have to ask about them.'

'Carers help me to wash and dress, they are good. Staff give me tablets, staff don't talk to me about them or any changes.'

'Mainly do it myself but carers would help [if needed].'

'If anything is wrong the carers come and talk to me.'

Residents' comments: what they say could be improved

'Would like to go out.'

'Would like to go out, would like music and singing.'

'Would like to have a shower, would like to go out more.'

'Would like some word searches book, may need help as hand hurt.'

'Would like to go to bed later.'

Healthwatch Reading observations

- The home is a converted building and is located on a busy road.
- The main reception area is bright, with information and leaflets on display.
- We observed that the communal area had a snack station with drinks at which the residents could help themselves.
- We observed that the home does not cook on site but use a company that provides readymade meals, chosen according to residents' dietary requirements.
- We noticed that the communal spaces for the residents were bright and spacious, with books and puzzles on the shelves for residents to use.
- We observed how bare the garden looked - there were no flowers and suitable seating area for the residents.
- We saw residents' pictures on the doors of their rooms.

Residents' suggestions for improvement - summary:

- The main suggestion from residents was for more activities, including singing and listening to music.
- Some residents told us that they would like to go out more, especially in the summer months.
- Some also mentioned wanting bigger food portions, or greater choice of foods.

Other information

Mulberry Care Home

Mulberry Care is run by Mulberry Care Ltd and can accommodate up to 35 people (17 rooms have an en-suite WC). The home specialises in dementia care - residents with dementia and those without use all of the facilities (there is no separate dementia unit). We spoke to residents who we believed were well enough to both understand and respond to our questions.

Mulberry Care was last inspected by the Care Quality Commission on 19 June 2018. It was rated Good - the report is available [here](#)

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’](#)
- 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:

Most of the residents told us that they like the staff and find them responsive to their needs and care.

We noted from resident's comments that they would like more activities such as singing and having trips outside the care home.

One area that the home could improve on is the garden: it's a good space for residents to use, to have a suitable seating area and carefully chosen plants and flowers to attract local wildlife. Sensory gardens can support the wellbeing of care home residents by encouraging care home residents to spend more time outside.

We also suggest that the shelves we observed in the corridors leading to the residents' rooms could be used as 'memory shelves' by putting a postcard of their favourite holiday, a family picture or an object that has a significant meaning to them on the shelf. Residents might also enjoy having a 'memory box' in their room containing significant items to prompt memories and conversation. According to research by The King's Fund, a multisensory approach to interacting is particularly important with someone who has advanced dementia.

We noted that most residents were not familiar with the idea of a care plan, though most residents told us that staff do talk to them about medicines and their 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 people in their care plan. We concluded that communicating this in a way that residents can understand and relate to, and involving them more, could be one area for developing practice at Mulberry 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 Mulberry Care

The care home did not provide a written response to be included in this 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.

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.