

Northcourt Lodge Nursing Home, Reading: a Healthwatch Reading visit report

Where: Northcourt Lodge, 65 Northcourt Road, Reading, RG2 7HF

When: 26 January 2018, for 1 hour in the morning

Who: 6 people - 5 women and 1 man - spoke with trained Healthwatch Reading staff members. One resident was aged 75-84, and the others were all 85 or older. All told us that their ethnicity was white British.

Why: Healthwatch Reading is visiting local care homes to:

- Give older, frail, or unwell people 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 Northcourt Lodge:

- They think that staff are helpful, responsive and kind.
- They like the food that is served for them.
- They enjoy activities and services including bingo, a hairdresser visiting, being able to give small parties, a pamper session once a week, the garden and being able to watch birds, exercise sessions and dancing, being taken out to do Christmas shopping.
- We heard that daily personal care is good, saying that staff do a good job.
- They told us that staff talk with them about how they want or need to be looked after, and listen to their views.
- Some mentioned things that could improve for them, including the food and the quality of the activities on offer.
- Residents reported being able to see a GP, optician and a dentist at the home when needed.
- Only one resident we spoke to had been in hospital in the last 6 months - they commented that the care they received there was good, including the food, and being supported to get to the toilet when necessary.
- Several of the other residents told us that they would want to be treated in the home whenever possible, and only go to hospital if necessary.

Residents' comments: what they like

'I like all the food. They respond quickly if I want a drink.'

'Chef is good - if you request something chef will make it.'

'Visitors can come anytime.'

'Everyone, lunch room and environment.' Can give small parties. Vegetarian-cook on site.

'Warm and comfortable...staff helpful and responsive.'

Enjoys food. 'I like bingo. staff are very good.' Enjoys having her hair done.

'Daily, personal care - they do a good job. I feel fresh. They let you choose your own clothes, clean clothes every day. Food reasonable, more variety. Chef is good, if you request something Chef will make it. Staff treat the residents fair. Cleaner every day, allowed personal belongings in the room.' Pamper session once a week.'

'Looked after very well', likes the garden and looking at the birds. 'Regular drinks, very good. I like all the food. They respond quickly if I want a drink.' Well looked after, family are always welcome. Nails done every week.

'Generally good, staff kind, food good - good cook. Visitors can come any time I enjoy exercises and dancing. Occasionally TV. Get taken out for Christmas shopping.'

'Generally happy, staff all regular. see the same faces'

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

'Help with washing - good. Help when needed.'

'Staff come and talk about tablets if they have changed.'

'Yes, if they change routine they always let you know.'

'We tell the staff what we want, and the staff are good.'

Residents' comments: what they say could be improved

'Food rather poor quality in some cases. Activities - not very exciting.'

'Could we have showers more often?'

Three people said: 'nothing really' (or something similar).

Healthwatch Reading observations

- The home is in a residential street, in a building that was formerly a nurses' home.
- The living room is bright, airy and clean, with doors that can divide the space into three separate areas if required - there were pictures on the wall, and the feeling was homely
- We noticed a piano in the living room, and one resident mentioned hymns being sung on a Sunday
- We interviewed some residents in their bedrooms (with their consent) which we noticed were light, bright and made homely with personal possessions
- We observed outside that the garden was in keeping with the size of the home, with lots of bird tables and feeders, and many of the residents we talked to said that they liked looking at the birds
- We were told that the food is cooked on site and that the residents have a choice but during our visit we were not present at meal times to observe
- We did walk through the building with the manager - we noticed that rooms were labelled in a 'dementia-friendly' style with pictures as well as words (e.g. a picture of a toilet as well as the word 'toilet')
- When we made our first, planning visit, to meet the manager, we were struck by the pleasant and friendly way in which staff greeted us
- We heard residents and staff speaking with each other in the living room in a friendly and respectful manner.

Residents' suggestions for improvement - summary:

- It should be possible to have showers more often (1 person)
- Activities and food could be more exciting (1 person)
- Most people had no suggestions for improvement

Other information

Northcourt Lodge

Northcourt Lodge is run by Excellent Care Homes and can accommodate up to 22 people (8 in rooms with ensuite WC) on a nursing and residential care basis.

Northcourt Lodge was rated 'Good' in its most recent formal inspection report, by the Care Quality Commission, in October 2017.

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:

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

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.

We noted that most residents were not familiar with the idea of a care plan, though several 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 existing good practice at Northcourt Lodge.

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 across Reading, when we have completed our series of visits across the borough

Response from Northcourt Lodge:

Thank you so much for choosing to visit Northcourt Lodge Nursing Home. These are our comments on your report:

- *Regarding the visual aids, we have a talking book which we use for residents who cannot respond verbally and unable to process and converse.*
- *We are glad that the residents were able to communicate with you and your team.*
- *Food: we have changed the menu according to the residents' comments when we sit and speak to them.*
- *Care plans: sorry we couldn't show the care plans to you. We always ask the residents to sign their care plan if they have capacity. Most of the residents who you spoke have capacity and they have signed their care plan. We will make sure in our next residents meeting to will discuss on this.*

Mrs Revathy Jayakumar, Registered manager, Northcourt Lodge Nursing Home

Acknowledgements and further 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.