

Findings of a dementia audit: River View Care Home, Reading

Where: River View, Rodway Road, off Oxford Rd, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6TP

When: 11 September 2018

Why: Healthwatch Reading is visiting all care homes in Reading and gathering residents' views. In addition, we are using a national audit tool during a separate 'walk-around' of six care homes to see how the environment has been adapted to specifically support people with dementia.

How: Healthwatch Reading visited at a pre-agreed time with the care home and then made observations for each of the seven themes used in the audit tool. River View's manager, Lizzy Gondo, joined Healthwatch Reading for the audit 'walkaround', of the dementia section of the home, and answered any questions as they came up.

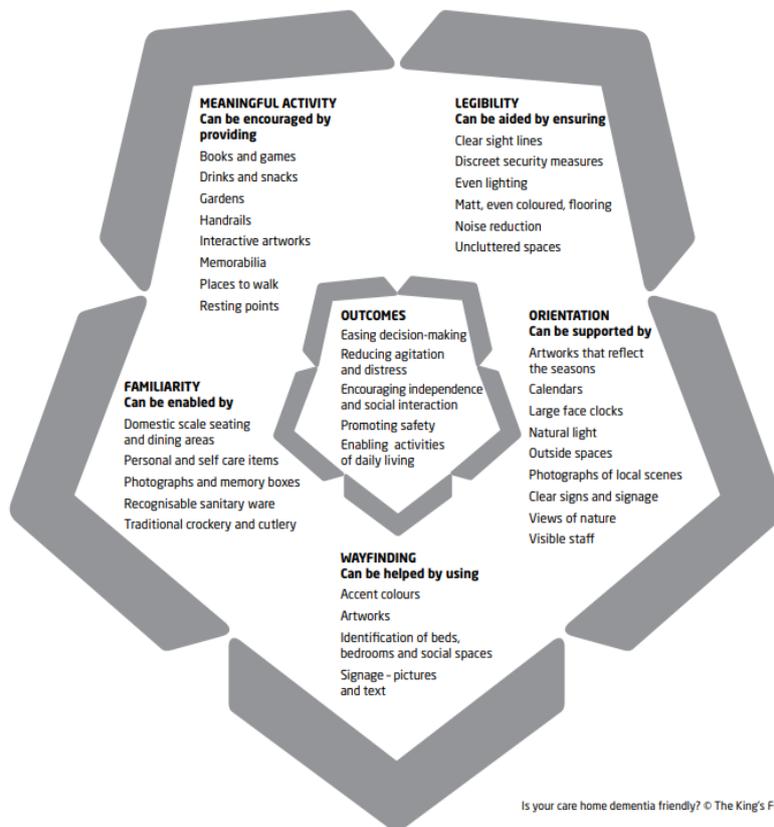
Main findings*: Overall, we concluded that River View is a dementia-friendly environment, which could be even better if colour contrast, toilet signage and clock and date information were introduced in some areas of the care home.

**Our findings relate only to the date of the visit and changes may have happened since then. Prospective clients (and/or relatives) are advised to carry out their own visit to a care home before making final decisions on whether they feel the care home is suitable for their needs.*



About the audit tool

Healthwatch Reading used an assessment tool called [*Is Your Care Home Dementia Friendly?*](#) It was developed by the national charity and research body, The King's Fund, as part of its Enhancing the Healing Environment programme, in 2014.



The tool is designed to be used during a walkaround of a care home. It is split into seven sections that ask up to 10 questions each, which should be scored from 1 (barely met) to 5 (totally met). A person can carry out the audit alone, but the King's Fund recommends it is done jointly with others involved in the person's care and/or life to ensure various views are considered and discussed.

Scores can be added up at the end of the exercise and used by

care homes to identify areas for improvement and/or make a case for extra investment, or by commissioners to compare different care homes in an area, according to the King's Fund.

How we used the audit tool

The audit visits are the second stage of a Healthwatch Reading project on the experience of care home residents across Reading. This firstly involved visiting all residential and nursing homes across the borough to collect residents' views about their daily life. Individual visit reports with care home managers' responses have been published on our website.

This second part of our project aims to look in more detail at the environment of dementia-specialist care homes. This would help us to understand if Reading is 'a place where people can live well with dementia' - one of the priorities of the *Reading Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2020*.

Care homes voluntarily agreed to let us visit and carry out the audit and, in many cases, managers joined us for the exercise. We focused on observations and discussions about the seven themes rather than on scoring by numbers.

River View audit findings:

1. Does the environment promote meaningful interaction and purposeful activity between people who live in the care home, their families and staff?

We found the care home:

- Has a spacious entrance and gives a good first impression of looking clean and well maintained
- there are social areas where the residents can sit, with a mixture of seating including single chairs and bright coloured sofas where residents can sit and interact with each other
- since our previous visit we noticed the corridor walls now have artwork and memorabilia for residents to look at, with books on bookshelves for residents to help themselves in some communal areas. Staff told us that residents and carers had been involved in choosing wall decorations and pictures.

2. Does the environment promote well-being?

We found:

- in the bedrooms there is good natural light for residents, but they do not have blackout curtains and the light switches do not contrast with the surrounding walls - we were told the home is looking into making that adaptation.
- lots of natural light comes in through windows onto the communal spaces
- the residents can be supported to outdoor space if they want to go out.

3. Does the environment encourage eating and drinking?

We found:

- the residents and their family can make their own hot and cold drinks
- residents have access to snacks and finger food, and will be supported by a member of staff if needed.
- residents can also choose whether to take their meals in the dining room or in their bedrooms
- relatives can use the kitchen to prepare food for their loved ones
- crockery and beakers are bright colours to help residents can see them
- relatives can sit and eat with residents if they choose to
- the dining room is big enough for staff to assist residents with eating and drinking.

4. Does the environment promote mobility?

We found:

- there is enough space in the corridors and communal walls for residents to walk
- flooring is matt, with no speckles or shiny surface and is in a contrast colour to the walls

- there are handrails that can be seen if residents need support while walking
- there are single chairs for residents to sit and pause, while moving around the home and artwork on the walls, as points of interest, that was chosen with the input of the families of the residents
- the residents can access the lift only with staff support.

• 5. Does the environment promote continence and personal hygiene?

We found:

- the communal toilets in the corridor have written signs,
- taps are clearly marked as hot and cold and basin and baths are in familiar designs
- there is enough space in the toilets for a wheelchair and staff to assist if needed
- the residents' toilet doors have no signage or pictures of toilets to help residents identify which room it is
- toilet doors are not painted in a distinctive colour
- there are no sensor lights in the bathroom or corridors.

6. Does the environment promote orientation?

We found:

- the communal spaces have clear vision panels to show the residents in which room they are entering
- day room toilets do have signs but no pictures on them to show that it is a toilet. When asked if pictures support the resident to navigate the home the staff told us not all the time as it is different for each resident
- since our previous visit, bedroom spaces have been personalised with the residents' picture and a biography of themselves on their door, and we noticed that one room was painted in a different colour, that the resident had wanted; inside the rooms some residents had personal furniture and photographs
- strong patterns have been avoided for soft furnishing and the walls
- there were clocks in communal rooms but we are unsure if there were clocks in the residents' own room as we only observed into rooms from the corridor
- no calendar in the communal rooms
- no mirrors were in the communal areas of the home.

7. Does the environment promote calm, safety and security?

We found:

- the spaces are clutter free
- noises are kept low to avoid any distraction, the noise of alarm bells and buzzers are kept at a normal range
- residents have ownership over what they watch on the television, and some have their own TV in their rooms
- exit and 'staff only' doors are clearly marked as such

- the different wings of the care home are accessed by key pin code, maintaining safety and security within the home
- when we asked if provision could be made for a relative to stay with a resident at the end of life, a member of staff told us they can facilitate the relative staying but that this would be unusual, as most residents would die in hospital
- staff told us that all hazardous liquids and solids are locked away from residents and we saw none while we were walking around the home.

Areas for improvement

- toilet doors could be painted in a single, distinctive colour
- add signage and pictures to residents' own toilet doors
- ensure toilet seats and lids are in a contrasting colour
- ensure people with dementia can see the time and date

The toilet doors of the care home are not painted in a single distinctive colour, good use of colour and contrast can facilitate independent living. In addition, have signage and pictures on the toilet doors in residents' rooms, this will support residents instead of causing anxiety. The toilet seat and lid should be in a contrasting colour to the rest of the toilet. It is important that Dementia sufferers also see what the time and date, this supports them with knowing the time of day and which day it is.

The King's Fund tool states: 'Not being able to find the toilet provokes anxiety and using the same signs and door colours to denote all toilets will help people find them more easily.' It adds that 'providing visual clues...including accent colours...will help with orientation'.

It adds: 'providing clocks and calendars will help with orientation'.

Response from River View:

'The audit was very useful and we are going to make improvements based on the report. Thank you for your support.'

Acknowledgements and other information

Healthwatch Reading thanks the manager for welcoming us for an additional visit to carry out this dementia audit. Our findings relate to how we observed the care home on the date of the visit and the care home may have made changes/improvements since this date. Good practice guidance suggests that prospective residents and/or families carry out their own visits to a care home before making a final decision.

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