

Findings of a dementia audit: St Luke's Care Home (The Oaks unit), Reading

Where: St Luke's Care Home, Marshland Square, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8RP

When: April 3, 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. The care home has three parts: St Luke's (residential), Lilac Unit (low-level dementia) and The Oaks (dementia). The care home's development manager, Kim Franks, joined Healthwatch Reading for the audit 'walkaround' of mainly The Oaks, and answered any questions as they came up.

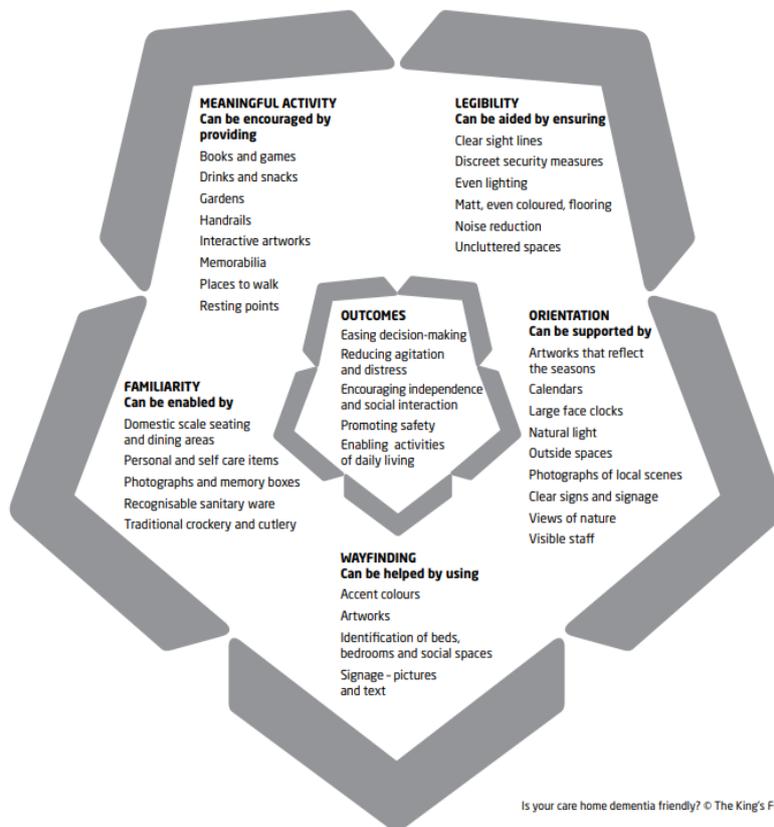
Main findings*: Overall, we concluded that The Oaks unit at St Luke's is a dementia-friendly environment, which could be even better if added extra visual clues such as clocks, to aid residents' orientation.

**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.

The Oaks Unit at St Luke's: 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:

- was welcoming and easy to access with a doorbell intercom
- very well maintained and tidy and clean
- had a number of communal areas with a variety of seating options including dedicated areas where residents can engage in group work and arts and crafts
- had an activities calendar on display in the communal areas and in residents' rooms
- had wide corridors that allow easy use of wheelchairs
- had activities on daily and the range includes poetry reading, singing, bingo, indoor bowls, craft/painting, as well as special celebration days such as a cream team during Wimbledon and a Commonwealth games quiz

2. Does the environment promote well-being?

We found:

- good use of natural light in communal area, including full windows on patio doors so residents can see the garden from any height
- there were no dimmer switches but all rooms have lamps
- the home has just purchased light switch surrounds for the unit
- blackout curtains are available on request
- residents are encouraged to join in with home life - for example, one woman likes to clean her own room, some residents join in with washing up, and there is a small kitchenette where residents can make sandwiches
- there is a shopping trolley that goes around the home for residents to make small purchases of things like toiletries and chocolate
- there is also a 'bar' area with lounge in the residential area of the care home, where residents from all parts of the home can gather to together for a drink before lunch
- the home is about to set up a 'café' for residents and visitors.

3. Does the environment encourage eating and drinking?

We found:

- There was a good supply of cold drinks available throughout the home
- There are a variety of tables around the home with snacks to encourage /prompt residents to eat
- The dining room is set up with tables that seat four people, but residents can also choose to have their meals in their room

- The tableware such as plates are white with patterned edges and staff often watch to see what clients are eating and may change the plates to a different coloured one to see if there is an improvement.

4. Does the environment promote mobility?

We found:

- There is lots of space for independent walking (with the use of aids) both inside and outside
- There are a variety of chairs of various heights
- The walls are covered with wallpaper, while the floor and handrails are wood, to give a contrasting effect
- In all the corridors there are numerous tactile pictures or fixtures such as locks to turn, an indoor 'garden wall' with false branches and birds that make sounds and a garden bench looking out onto a courtyard, and hat stands with mirrors for residents to dress us
- The garden is well set out with very colourful, non-toxic plants, handrails and seating areas, and various sections of interest including a bird aviary, a life-size plastic cow that makes a mooing noise and a life-size horse, an old car, and a post box, which give opportunities for residents to reminisce.

Does the environment promote continence and personal hygiene?

We found:

- The toilets are clearly signed and have cistern flush handles
- At present the toilet seats are white but coloured seats are being investigated.
- There are clear signs for hot and cold water
- All rooms are ensuite which allow access for disabled users and staff and there is also a separate disabled toilet.

6. Does the environment promote orientation?

We found:

- There are lots of visual prompts and signs throughout the home
- All residents are able to personalise their rooms with pictures, furniture and photos
- There is a 'day board' in the lounge area that shows day, date and weather and if it is a special day such as Valentine's Day
- All communal lounge doors have a transparent vision panel

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

We found:

- The spaces are clutter free and have wide corridors to allow easy manoeuvre when using walking aids

- The residents decide together what they watch on the communal television and also have their own TV in their rooms
- All 'exit' and 'staff only' doors are clearly marked as such
- The garden is secure with various rails to aid those with limited mobility
- When asked if provision could be made for a relative to stay for a resident's end-of-life period, a member of staff told us they can facilitate the relative staying either in the resident's room or a vacant room if possible
- The different wings of the care home are accessed by key pin code, maintaining safety and security within the home
- 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

- Signage outside the home could be improved to be bigger and closer to the road; however, St Luke's has previously requested council permission to do this but has been turned down
- Blackout curtains are not installed in all bedrooms, though will be put in if residents request them
- Clocks are not visible in all areas, including bedrooms
- Toilet seats are not in a colour contrast but there are plans to review this
- Hot and cold drinks are not available for residents independently to make but they can request them and there is a plan to set up a tea room in the near future

The King's Fund tool states: 'Providing visual clues and prompts, including accent colours ...and clocks...will help with orientation'.

The tool adds: 'Appropriate light levels can help promote normal patterns of waking and sleeping.'

Response from St Luke's

'The visit and audit were extremely useful. There are always benefits to having a 'fresh pair of eyes' who can offer new perspectives, fresh ideas and ways of thinking. Listening to new ideas and taking them on board can lead to a better, more effective environment for our residents and ensure the use of good practice.'

The home continuously strives to make improvements and in particular to the dementia environment. Coloured toilet seats have been ordered for communal toilets in the dementia units and we have started to use black out lining on all new curtain purchases. The management are looking into specialist dementia clocks, as 'large face' clocks have been tried but not been entirely successful. However, we would not look to put a clock in every resident's bedroom as it would be their own choice whether to have one or not. The tea shop is now open and the residents are enjoying visiting daily to sample the daily specials.'

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.

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