

## St Luke's Care Home, Reading: a Healthwatch Reading visit report

**Where:** St. Luke's Care Home, Marshland Square, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8RP, a care home for up to 78 people

**When:** 14 February 2018 for two hours in the afternoon and 15 February 2018 for hours in the morning

**Who:** 24 people, mostly women, aged 85 and over, spoke with a trained Healthwatch Reading staff member. Most people described themselves as White British. Around half had lived at St Luke's for one year or longer.

**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 St Luke's:

- They think staff are friendly, helpful and responsive
- They generally feel involved in discussions about their care needs (though see our comments below about care plans)
- They get the care and help they need
- They can always see a GP when they need to (and some said a GP visits the home twice a week) and can usually access an optician or dentist when required
- Some people want a better choice of food
- Two people mentioned that it could be noisy
- One person raised an issue about care during the night
- Several people said they would prefer to be treated at the care home rather than have to go to hospital if they experienced serious health problems

## Residents' comments: what they like

*'I like living here very much - they are helpful & kind.'*

*'Looked after well - very good.'*

*'Friendly staff.'*

*'Plenty going on - food is good.'*

*'Staff are observant, they spotted that my cough was a sign of a chest infection.'*

*'During the day care is very good'*

*'Always someone about to talk to, all staff help, staff help if needed.'*

*'Quite homely...staff generally good.'*

*'Food good, staff friendly, singing sometimes, taken for walks.'*

*Carers are 'top'. Able to walk around on own. Needs small amount of help in moving. Likes having a bath and carer's help. 'Food - not very nice' but staff will give alternatives. Visitor can come anytime, can get washing done here. Activities - every Tuesday bingo, lovely lady - same lady delivers newspaper every morning. Taken outside, play skittles, bingo, very good activities, cleaner lovely, taken to Waitrose.*

*Likes being here, relatives visit. 'They feed me well. The carer washes and dress me well. I rest up odd days as can't stand up but would like to get up every day.' Likes bingo, singing, would like to go outside.*

*'Like it here, good company with other residents'. Carers 'very good'. Meals 'can have a choice'. Taken out for singing. Daughter visits and a friend.*

*'Looked after well, very good.' Likes singing most, had a brass band visiting and children singing. 'Really nice garden.' Daughter visits.*

*People: 'kind, friendly'. Food: 'good food - have a choice.'*

*'Very friendly staff, happy here'. Likes singing. Sometimes 'difficult to help others' but has made some friends.*

*'I like living here very much. I will be moving to a new home in [place] near [person]. The staff who have been here a long time have been splendid, the new staff have a lot to learn, they are helpful and kind. The food could be better. Mobile library service is good.'*

*'It's been fine, my health has got better, my [spouse] died I had a big house. I felt muddled. The food is fine, the staff do a good job. The staff help me with a bath. My [children] come and visit me and [I like] going out with my [children].'*

*'Yes, the food is OK. The staff look after me.'*

*'...like everything. Staff are good, I have made lots friends'*

*'People are friendly, plenty going on, food is good. I eat and don't put any weight on. If you need help the staff are always around. Like doing activities with [activity coordinator].'*

*'Food is quite nice, I like [the] food...[I'm] not a fuss pot. I get on really well, I don't play up - not a naughty girl, very good. Some things I can't do, they help me. Have not been out for a while. When I was younger I use to stroll by the river.'*

*'They are kind, the carers OK, and I find them very nice. They are friendly. seems to be some flexibility in the rules. They are friendly. The food very nice and plenty of tea.'*

*'Food is alright. I try to be sociable. Staff so far very good.'*

*'Very nice, food is good. Staff are great... Visitors can come and go. Well looked after. Not under pressure to join in with activities - nice atmosphere.'*

*'Safe, provide entertainment. Nice bedroom, I can have my book. I like reading.'*

*'Food is good.'*

*'Staff are good, food is good'.*

*'Food is good, care is very good - doctors called out as soon as they are any problems.' Friendliness of staff. 'Always treated kindly with respect.' Visitors welcome at any time.*

*'...everything gets done and even if I wanted something different it would happen.' Gets hair done - 'very handy'*

*'The garden is well kept, lots of wildlife to see. I saw a woodpecker.'*

*'I would recommend this place, it is a good place.'*

*'Sometimes we have an entertainer, we all like the change.'*

*'No smell.'*

*'Nice place, clean and tidy'*

*'I am happy here and always have been.'*

*[Activities coordinator] - 'very good' - activities, 'very organized', likes crosswords.*

*'Very good food, you can say what you want - amounts are good.'*

## Residents' comments: what they say could be improved

*'[would like different] food, like fish pie.'*

*'[would like] 'More variety of vegetables e.g. sprouts' though 'good choice, can have something different if wanted'.*

*'Would like to be taken out of my room more often'*

*No suggestions for improvement - likes singing, likes reading the paper - gets it delivered. Would like to go out if the weather is good.*

*'There is not much variety in the food, roast potatoes are burnt, cannot see the point. The pancakes were like leather.'*

*'I can't really think of anything.'*

*'Not really, everything goes really smoothly.'*

*'No, because I go along with what's going on, I can't think of anything,'*

*'A bit scary, not much they could change - St Luke's is like your own home, when you lived on your own home independently.'*

*'Regimented, rather not be here'.*

*'Lots of people are deaf, a bit noisy.'*

*'Reporting - if something has happened - an incident - then to let us know what has happened.'*

*'Not really, staff need to introduce themselves.'*

*'Dining room is too noisy.'*

*'Improve choice of biscuits/cake at tea and coffee time.'*

*'Not at all - really positive - like this place.'*

*'Mail comes mid-morning but is not distributed until last thing at night. Also people need to be changed sooner.'*

*'Quite a nice place, if the staff could take us for walks when the weather gets better.'*

## Healthwatch Reading observations

- The care home's reception area was bright and airy, and provided many leaflets for family and cares to look through, as well as a book with pictures of all the events/activities that the residents have taken part in. There was also a suggestion box in reception.
- The care home had an overall homely feel, with pictures on the wall, background music playing and fresh flowers in vases dotted around.
- Each residents' room door was personalised with their name, a picture or a photo of a family pet. Some doors were also brightly coloured (the home told us that there are plans to decorate more in this way in future).
- There were many 3-dimensional displays on the corridor walls, to provide a tactile experience for residents with dementia.
- In one corridor area there was a dressing-up area for residents, with a variety of hats to try on, a table laid with hair brushes and costume jewellery.
- Another corridor area simulated a garden area, with fake grass on the walls and plastic flowers decorated on the walls
- The communal lounge areas were open and spacious with various sitting areas
- The outside area included lots of chairs, bird feeders, and a life-size cow and horse.
- We heard residents and staff speaking with each other in a friendly and respectful manner.
- We observed the activities coordinator taking time to speak to residents, remind them to eat and drink, and offering hand massages to residents.
- Staff also greeted Healthwatch in a pleasant and friendly way.
- The home has a relatives' forum which meets approximately every other month and often has a speaker attend. A Healthwatch Reading staff member attended one of these meetings, with 20 relatives or friends of residents, where a consultant talked about dementia. This was very well received. (We have subsequently piloted a tool from the research organisation, the King's Fund, called 'Is your care home dementia friendly?' to look at the home's dementia unit - known as The Oaks - and this will be reported in our forthcoming report on the care home sector across Reading, to be published later in 2018).
- The activities programme we saw includes armchair exercises, pampering sessions, arts and crafts and trips out, and residents mentioned some of the activities to us.

## Residents' suggestions for improvement - summary:

- Better food choices for main meals such as a variety of vegetables and better choice of biscuits and cake at coffee and tea time (mentioned by five people)
- Improve the way staff respond to people (mentioned by four residents) - one resident felt that the care home could be more consistent about how it had responded to residents' feedback using the 'you said, we did' format

- Two people called for better communication about what had been done following an incident
- One person suggested that the home should arrange for hearing tests to take place at the home or organise transport to the hospital's hearing clinic

## Other information

### St Luke's Care Home

St Luke's is run by B&M Care and can accommodate up to 75 people on a residential (non-nursing) basis, in rooms which are all en suite. The home also includes The Oaks, which is a dementia unit.

St Luke's was rated 'Good' in its most recent formal inspection report, by the Care Quality Commission, in October 2016.

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 any 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 a care home they are considering, 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 of their relatives overwhelmingly told us they are happy with the way staff care for them at St Luke's. We observed an environment that was homely and stimulating, with a range of activities inside and outdoors.

The main improvement suggested was that some residents felt that food choices could be better (although others praised the food.)

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 St Luke's.

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 St Luke's:

*Thank you for visiting St Luke's & The Oaks Care Home, the residents and staff enjoyed chatting to you and telling you about our home.*

*It is lovely to know that residents and relatives are happy with the care we provide. All staff work very hard to ensure that the home provides an environment where residents can feel at home, safe and cared for.*

*It is very difficult to please everybody with the daily menu. However, we offer a variety of choice and the chef attends the residents' meetings every three months to ensure that residents' views are taken on board and menus changed accordingly.*

*In the last six months the home has changed over to an electronic care plan system. The residents are not yet familiar with this system as it is very different to the paper care plans they were used to. The home is still working to ensure that all care plans are on the new system, evaluated with residents and signed.*

Kim Franks, Manager

### 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](mailto:info@healthwatchreading.co.uk), visit our website [www.healthwatchreading.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchreading.co.uk) or visit us on the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.