



## Details of visit

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| <b>Service address:</b>            | <b>Allison House, Swan Lane, Sandy, SG19 1NE</b>  |
| <b>Service Provider:</b>           | <b>Central Bedfordshire Council</b>   |
| <b>Date and Time:</b>              | <b>4<sup>th</sup> February 2015 10:00 – 12:00</b>   |
| <b>Authorized Representatives:</b> | <b>Nicola King, Den Fensome, Linda Harrison</b>   |
| <b>Contact details:</b>            | <b>Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire<br/>Capability House, Wrest Park, Silsoe,<br/>Bedfordshire, MK45 4HR<br/>Tel: 0300 303 8554</b> |

## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) would like to thank the service provider, service users, visitors and staff for their contribution to the Enter and View visit.

## Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.



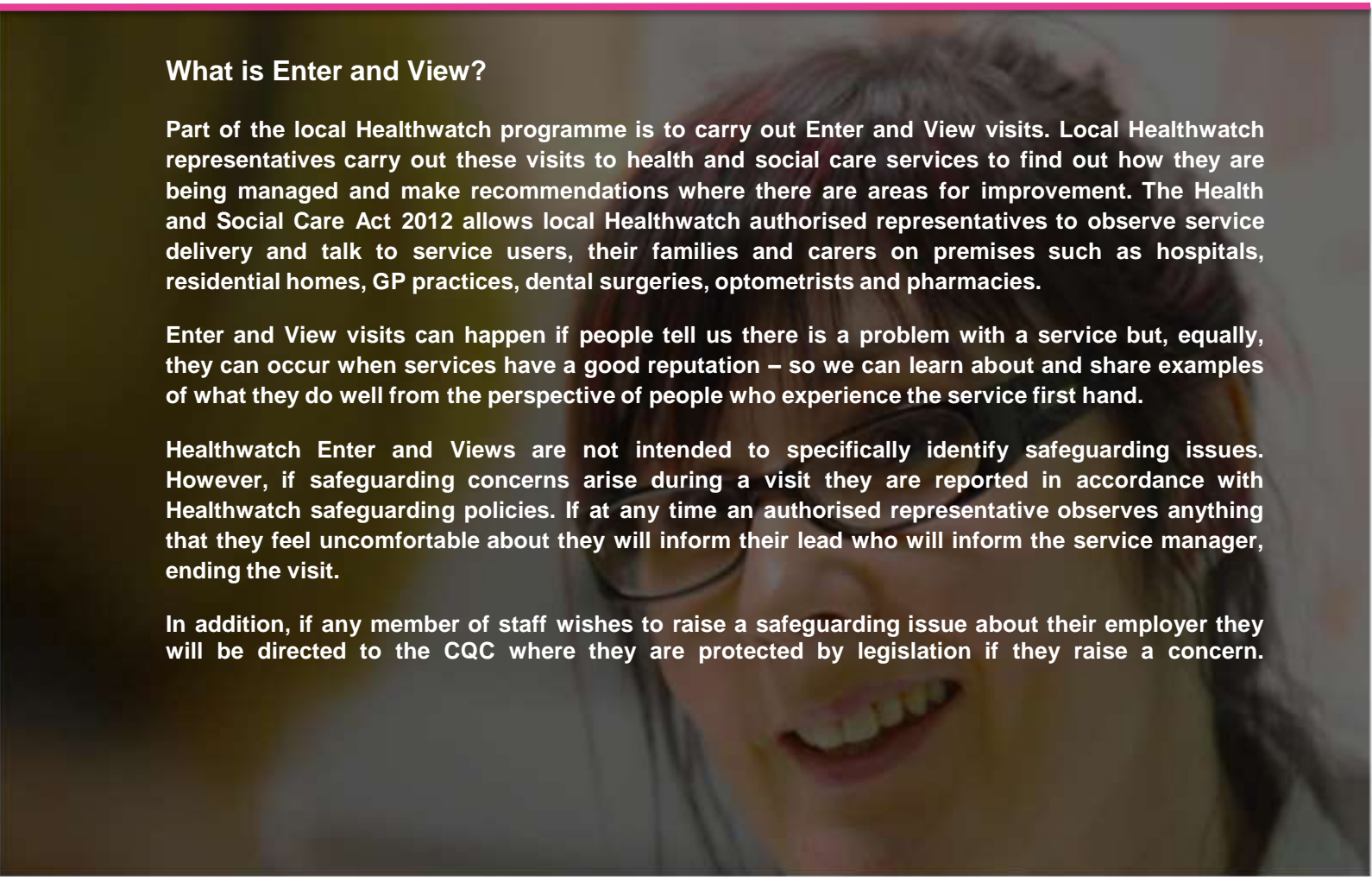
## What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being managed and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies.

Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation – so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Healthwatch Enter and Views are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies. If at any time an authorised representative observes anything that they feel uncomfortable about they will inform their lead who will inform the service manager, ending the visit.

In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer they will be directed to the CQC where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.



## Purpose of the visit

- To engage with service users of care homes and understand how dignity is being respected in a care home environment;
- Identify examples of good working practice;
- Observe residents and relatives engaging with the staff and their surroundings;
- Consult with residents, relatives and staff about their experiences of the environment within the home and how care is delivered.



## Strategic drivers

- Care Quality Commission dignity and wellbeing strategy
- Care homes are a Local Healthwatch priority

## Methodology

### **This was an announced Enter and View visit.**

HWCB representatives were met by the interim Manager; the home Manager is currently managing another care home.

HWCB representatives were pleased to see the HWCB poster, previously sent to the home to advise of our visit, clearly displayed on the inside window of the foyer and on the relatives / residents notice board.

The interim Manager gave a verbal introduction regarding the home, its history, the number of beds and residents, staff etc. The interim Manager explained that Allison House was previously managed by BUPA until the latter half of 2014. Central Bedfordshire Council subsequently took over management of the home and the majority of care staff was TUPE transferred to the local authority.

Authorised representatives approached residents at the care home to informally ask them about their experience of the home. Relatives and staff were also spoken to. The authorised representatives explained to everyone spoken to why they were there and took notes.

After speaking with the residents, relatives and staff, on leaving, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire leaflets were given to the Manager for distribution and display in the home.



## Summary of findings

At the time of the visit a good standard of care was observed by HWCB representatives with regard to dignity and respect:

- Residents looked tidy, clean and well cared for, representatives saw no evidence of dignity not being respected.
- Representatives saw evidence of staff positively interacting with residents.
- Residents spoken to were generally happy with the meals; the menu appeared balanced and nutritious and mealtimes were suitable for the residents. Residents could also choose where to take their meals.
- Clear evidence of social activities was evident and the residents spoken to were given the option of taking part in organised activities along with their relatives.

The interim Manager advised representatives that the current capacity of the home is as follows:

- 42 beds which includes 18 beds on the first floor for Dementia residents.
- All beds were occupied at the time of the visit.
- Single bedrooms for residents are without en-suite.
- Bathrooms varied from wet rooms, bath and shower.
- A total of 38 staff is employed with approx. 25% agency staff on a daily basis.
- During the day the ratio of residents to staff is 3:3.
- Six staff are responsible for administering medication to the residents.
- One part time activities co coordinator attends on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- Reminiscent sessions were available.
- There is no provision for a relative's room at the home.

Residents spoken to generally liked the staff at the home but felt that there was insufficient care staff for the amount of residents and more staff should be recruited. They were also concerned with the amount of agency staff being used who did not understand their needs.



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## Results of Visit

### Environment

The foyer area included a computer for residents to use and a table with leaflets and information. HWCB representatives also noticed a slight odour of urine in the foyer area which disappeared on entry to the main corridors.

HWCB Representatives observed noticeboards in the main corridor with photos of resident's activities and thank you cards. The Allison House mascot is a giant teddy called 'George' which was placed next to a table selling craft items that the residents have made to raise funds for activities.

The building is set over two levels; the ground floor for elderly care and the first floor for Dementia residents. The corridors were in a circular route around the home. There was good access through the corridors for wheelchairs and walking frames. Access to bedrooms, bathrooms and toilets was off each corridor.

The large communal room was previously used as the main dining area but is now used as a film and social activity meeting room. The room was tidy with various games stacked at the side available for residents to use.

The ground floor was divided into a number of small lounges and dining areas close to resident's rooms.

Doors to each resident's room featured a personalised name and picture, apart from the first floor dementia unit where representatives were advised that some of the residents have been known to remove name plaques from doors.

The bathrooms / toilets in the dementia unit are spacious and have different coloured seats and accessories to help residents identify where they are going.

Representatives also noticed an inside garden with a small seating area that has trees and flowers painted on the walls to create a garden affect.

There were clear fire instructions and procedures displayed on the walls and also first aid information.

### **Promotion of Privacy, Dignity and Respect**

All residents have their own room with name and picture plaques on the doors. Residents have the choice of locking their doors from the inside if they feel they need to.

HWCB representatives were advised that bedding is changed weekly. Good standards of cleanliness around the home were observed by representatives.

All residents receive an induction pack on admission to the home which they keep in their rooms. Residents care plans are kept in the main office and are accessible by staff, residents and relatives on request.

Representatives were advised that the home also provides the following visiting services:

- Hairdresser – 3 days per week
- Manicurist – once every 4 weeks
- Chiropodist – every 6 weeks
- Mobile Dentist - on request
- Optician – monthly
- Doctors Surgery onsite
- Church service – once a month
- Advocacy Service - as requested

### **Promotion of Independence**

HWCB representatives were advised by the interim manager that all residents are offered the opportunity to be involved in social activities organised by the home. Residents and their relatives are encouraged to be a part of planning the activities, for example, craft, knitting, and decoupage.

Residents are also able to prepare hot or cold drinks if required with assistance from staff where needed.

Representatives were also advised that residents who are more able bodied like to go out into the town to visit the local shops and one resident has purchased a mobility scooter.

### **Interaction between Residents and Staff**

HWCB representatives observed a positive, good rapport with residents and staff. The residents and relatives spoken to admire the care staff and the amount of work they do for the residents.

### **Residents**

HWCB representatives also asked residents about the most important aspects of the home. Common themes were that staff are kind and friendly. Residents also commented on feeling safe and secure at Allison House both during the day and at night.

### **Food**

Daily food menus were provided and displayed on the tables of each dining area. All dietary requirements are catered for including diabetic and/or religious needs.

Representatives were advised that there is not a set time for breakfast; residents are able to make toast or cereal at any time in the morning after rising. At lunchtime a cooked meal is provided with sandwiches in the evening. Residents can request food at any time of the day. Representatives were also advised that relatives are encouraged not to visit during meal times.

### **Recreational activities/Social Inclusion/Pastoral needs**

A member of staff organises events and activities for the residents, and relatives are also encouraged to take part. Each resident has a one to one with the activity coordinator to establish the types of activities they would like to do. A lifestyle plan is created and after each activity a feedback sheet is completed. The activity coordinator advised HWCB representatives that residents are encouraged to take part in an activity but not instructed to do so.

HWCB representatives observed a sing a long session in one of the dementia lounges; five residents took part and appeared to be having a good time singing and dancing.

Residents are encouraged to use the garden area in the spring and summer months. Some of the residents feed the birds and one resident painted all the garden furniture.

Allison House holds two small fetes open to the public each year and a Christmas Bazar to raise funds for activities for the residents.

One recent Christmas Bazar raised sufficient money for the residents to have a flat screen TV and DVD system in the large communal area. This provides a weekly film night activity where residents are able to choose the film and eat popcorn. All residents were consulted on how to use the money and made a joint decision to buy the TV.

### **Involvement in Key Decisions**

The interim manager advised HWCB representatives that meetings with relatives and relatives are held every two to three months to give both residents and relatives an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns with the manager and staff.

### **Concerns/Complaints Procedure**

HWCB representatives were advised that residents, relatives and staff are encouraged to talk about any issues and/or concerns direct with the interim manager. It is also open to residents, relatives and staff to put their complaints and/or concerns in writing.

### **Staff**

All staff seen during the visit were friendly and helpful. HWCB representatives observed staff interacting with residents, using their first names and clearly knew them well. The interim manager confirmed that all staff speak English.

HWCB representatives were informed by the staff they spoke with that they have access to regular training provided by the home, e.g. Safeguarding and moving and handling.

One member of staff advised representatives that it was generally felt that care staff was undervalued both financially and socially, compared to other staff employed by the local authority.

Two members of staff were on duty in the kitchen who prepare food daily. Both were happy to show HWCB representatives around the kitchen and discuss the daily menus. Health and safety information was clearly displayed in the kitchen.

### **Visitors and Relatives**

A relative of one of the residents spoken to advised representatives that his role includes taking a sweet trolley around to both the ground and first floor selling small bags of sweets. He also assists with events and activities at the home.

Another relative, HWCB representatives spoke with, stated that she was pleased with the level of care provided at the home, how positive and supportive the staff are at all times and that she is able to visit at any time.

A box called the 'wishing well' is situated on the ground floor in the corridor for residents and relatives to post a comment or request. The box is checked each week by the interim manager.

### **Additional Findings**

- HWCB representatives observed a wheelchair placed in front of a ground floor fire door creating a potential hazard in the event of a fire.
- A resident commented on difficulty opening the heavy fire doors sited in the corridors when they are closed.
- Representatives noted that security is good at the home; the home has an alarmed and buzzer entry system.
- A common theme emerged from talking with staff and residents; more permanent staff is needed with less reliance on agency staff.

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### **Recommendations**

- Representatives observed that ceiling tiles outside of the Managers office need replacing due to damp patches. HWCB would therefore recommend that redecoration is planned for the future to maintain the welcoming environment of the home.
- In recognition of comments made by residents and staff relating to insufficient permanent staff in the home and the high percentage of agency staff, HWCB would recommend staffing issues are addressed as a matter of urgency.
- From observations within the home, HWCB would also recommend that staff should be attentive to potential hazards, such as abandoned wheelchairs blocking a fire exit.
- HWCB recommend that this report is shared with residents of Allison House and their family members with encouragement to contribute any additional comments or concerns, about the report or care in the home to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire direct on 0300 303 8554 or via email to [info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk)



## **Service Provider response**

Firstly I would like to say thank you for your very positive feedback on Allison House although there was a few details that we need to address such as the use of Agency staff in the home and employing our own care staff which is now in progress; we are recruiting and have started interviewing and have selected two new carers at present but this is an ongoing process to select suitable carers who will help to deliver a high standard of care to our residents and promote their wellbeing.

Regarding the matter of a wheelchair blocking a fire exit I was very disappointed to hear this and have been very vigilant since this was discovered and fortunately this has not happened since this discovery but will continue to monitor this.

The ceiling tiles above the manager's office that were seen to be damp has been noted and hopefully will be addressed in the near future.

Also the Odour that was smelt at the front entrance was from our downstairs sluice which we need to pay attention to by ensuring that the commodes are emptied and rinsed when going to the sluice.

**Geraldine Smith**  
**Deputy Manager**

**Allison House, Swan Lane, Sandy, Beds SG19 1NE**

