

HEALTHWATCH HERTFORDSHIRE

Care Home Enter and View Visits

Gold Care Homes Ltd

Summary Report

With reference to:

Heath Lodge Care Home

Halycon Days Care Home

Autumn Vale Care Centre

This report is presented by the:

Quality Improvement Sub Committee (QISC) on behalf of Healthwatch Hertfordshire

Healthwatch Hertfordshire Enter and View Summary Report: Gold Care Homes Ltd

● Introduction

Healthwatch Hertfordshire (HWH) is the independent health and social care champion. Local Healthwatch is in place to gather the views and experiences of people accessing services, to use this information to influence decisions and to provide information and advice to the local community about health and social care services.

Legislation allows HWH authorised representatives to 'Enter and View' health and social care premises to see and hear for themselves how services are provided.

● Purpose of Report

- To provide an overview of Enter and View Visits to three care homes owned by Gold Care Homes.
- To highlight findings and recommendations (as outlined in the Report of each visit) that appear common to the three care homes.
- To invite Gold Care Homes to comment on the findings and recommendations and to confirm steps taken to improve and develop services.

● Premises and Dates of Visits

1. Heath Lodge:

12 June 2014 and 26 May 2015

2. Autumn Vale:

4 November 2015

3. Halcyon Days:

14 January 2016

The visits to Heath Lodge, Autumn Vale and Halcyon Days have been carried out as part of a rolling programme of Enter and View visits to care homes/nursing homes in Hertfordshire. These visits are carried out in groups of between 8 and 12 homes. Each visit has a common focus and methodology.

This report assumes that the reader has read the detailed report(s) of the Enter and View visits to the three homes. Each report is available on the Healthwatch Hertfordshire website: <http://www.healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk/enter-and-view/enter-and-view-reports/>

Findings

Monitors recorded points of *good* practice for each care home and these are recorded in Section 5 of each Report.

Monitors have reported that the residents in *the three care homes* appeared cared for, their basic needs met and treated with dignity and respect. On a one to one basis staff interaction with residents appeared comfortable and relaxed.

That said the purpose of the visits was to look beyond the level of basic care to consider the quality of life for residents on a day to day basis and the extent to which NICE guidelines (Quality Standard 50) are met. The standard require that

‘older people in care homes have opportunities during their day to take part in activities of their choice that help them stay well and feel satisfied with life.....’

Within this frame of reference the monitors reported a number of concerns common to the three care homes and it is the presence of the *common themes* that prompts this Exception Report to the Care Home Proprietor. These can be summarised under four headings.

1. Lack of continuity in the appointment of a Registered / Permanent Manager

The visits took place at intervals during the period June 2014 until January 2016. A picture emerged of several changes of registered manager in all three care homes with recent history of interim managers being in post for short periods.

At Heath Lodge and Autumn Vale the monitors met an Interim Manager (Michelle Bladen and Sam Ndlovu respectively) both of whom described frequent changes of management.

A follow up visit was made to Heath Lodge in May 2015 and by then a permanent manager had been appointed (Olga Richardson)

At Halcyon Days the monitors met the newly appointed Manager (Laura Adams) who said she had been in post for two weeks, having been transferred from another home, following the resignation of the previous manager who had been in post for a few

weeks. We understand that there have been four changes of manager at Halcyon Days during the years 2014 - 2016. The managers and interim managers present during the four visits acknowledged that the care homes had experienced a lack of continuity and effective leadership over a period of time.

2. The Environment

Heath Lodge and Autumn Vale share the same site, the former being an older building and in a poor state of repair. Similarly Halcyon Days is an older building, also in need of some external repairs and refurbishment.

The monitors recommended that signage at Heath Lodge and Halcyon Days is improved in order to present a more welcoming image. Signage at Halcyon Days was particularly confusing with broken and /or poorly directed misleading signs. At Autumn Vale the monitors had difficulty locating the main entrance, albeit signage to the individual units was clear.

The older buildings present as buildings in decline and lacking attention over a period of time. This contrasts with the newer resource, Autumn Vale.

3. Leisure and Services

There is evidence of an ad hoc approach to offering residents a varied and interesting range of activities. *On the day of the visits there was no evidence of structured activity taking place at Autumn Vale and Halcyon Days and no evidence of an activities schedule.* Seating arrangements in the living room areas were not conducive to residents interacting with each other. Several residents appeared to be sitting in a row, relying on some contact with staff on a one to one basis and/or the TV for stimulation.

At Heath Lodge an activities schedule was available and an activities coordinator was available and engaged with a few residents, while a number were sitting in chairs, appeared tired and sleepy and with no activities being offered. Again seating arrangements offered little opportunity for homely interaction.

At both Autumn Vale and Halcyon Days the monitors met newly appointed activity coordinators who acknowledged a deficit in planned and varied activities over a long period of time. Both were clear as to steps to be taken and time needed to remedy this.

The managers described opportunities for residents' outings, with the use of a company minibus. The monitors were advised that currently no members of staff were

qualified to drive it (Autumn Vale) Monitors visiting Halcyon Days saw the mini bus parked and observed it looked shabby and dirty and were unsure if it is in use.

The monitors have recommended that the managers for each home work with the Hertfordshire Care Providers Association (HCPA) Smile scheme to support staff in developing a meaningful and well informed activity programme.

QISC endorses the recommendation that HCPA is a key resource for the three homes and the potential for their support should be fully explored.

At the same time the monitors found evidence that the needs of residents living with dementia are not well met either in respect of the environment or the activity programme. Gold Care are asked to ensure the appointment of a *trained* dementia champion at each resource. Again this can be done in conjunction with HCPA.

4. Food and Drink

A detailed account is given in each Report as to how meals are provided and served at each care home. Shared areas of concern in respect of mealtimes centre upon the limited extent to which mealtimes are organised as an opportunity for social interaction and the ad hoc support offered to residents who need help with feeding. Residents in one room at Halcyon Days had their lunch presented to them while sitting in their armchairs, all seemed reluctant to start eating until the meal was getting cold.

A number of residents in each home remained seated in their armchairs to eat their lunch. This may be a personal choice for some residents but staff did not appear to be encouraging residents to eat in the dining area. Heath Lodge has limited space for a dining area on the second floor.

Conclusions

In considering the Enter and View Reports QISC finds the lack of continuity in management at the three care homes over a lengthy period of time to be of particular concern representing as it does an absence of trusted and effective leadership. Managers in post, interim or otherwise at the time of the visits all described a recent history of staff changes, lack of consistent approach to care and a consequent drop in standards in a number of areas.

The monitors were informed that staffing levels and staff morale had been affected by the frequent changes in senior management. A resident's relative referred to disaffected staff groups that developed with a change of management. There has

been an increase in dependency on agency staff in the three homes. The interim manager (Heath Lodge) said she had been able to recruit new staff albeit pending the appointment of the permanent manager.

The impact of this in practical terms for residents and a quality of care as anticipated by the NICE Guidelines has been shown in the summary of shared concerns outlined in this report.

Both managers and many of the staff speak with determination to ‘put things right’ and the majority of recommendations made following the Enter and View have been accepted and an Action Plan drawn up.

● Recommendations

Healthwatch Hertfordshire asks Gold Care Homes Ltd to respond to the following recommendations:

1. Provide assurance that steps have been taken to ensure the continuity of senior management and staffing at the three care homes. This to include a briefing on the Company’s recruitment and retention policy.
2. Confirm acceptance and implementation of the recommendations arising from the Enter and View visits and endorse the Action Plan presented by the local managers.
3. Support the care home management in implementing the action plan, with an appropriate investment of time and resources.

This report was sent to Gold Care Homes in June 2016 with no response received. Since then, HwH has shared the report with commissioners at Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to seek reassurance that the concerns we have identified are being addressed. We have received confirmation from both HCC and CQC and are being kept informed of the comprehensive actions being taken on a regular basis.