



# Care Home Experience Report

November 2017/January 2018

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## Introduction

Healthwatch Darlington Ltd (HWD) is a strong independent community champion giving local people a voice that improves and enhances health and social care provision on behalf of the people of Darlington. HWD believe that no matter who you are, where you live or what age you are, you do have a voice and you have the right for that voice to be heard.

## Our Strategic Duties include:

### Information Gathering

- Gathering views, experiences and needs of local people about their health and social care, focusing on those who are under-represented in decision making or face barriers to influencing the system.
- Gathering and monitoring other key information that tells us how the local health and social care system is working for people.

### Influencing

- Influencing services and their commissioners to consider and act upon the views, experiences and needs we present.
- Championing the involvement of Darlington residents in the development and evaluation of services.

### Informing

- Enabling people to get the most out of the current system by providing information about service provision, the rights people have in relation to their care, and opportunities they have to influence what care looks like.

## Enter & View

In order to enable Healthwatch Darlington to gather the information it needs about services, there are times when it is appropriate for Healthwatch Volunteers to see and hear for themselves how those services are provided. That is why the Government has introduced duties on certain commissioners and providers of health and social care services (with some exceptions) to allow authorised Healthwatch representatives to enter premises that service providers own or control to observe the nature and quality of those services.

Healthwatch Enter and Views are not part of a formal inspection process, neither are they any form of audit. Rather, they are a way for Healthwatch Darlington to gain a better understanding of local health and social care services by seeing them in operation. Healthwatch Enter and View Authorised Representatives are not required to have any prior in-depth knowledge about a service before they Enter and View it. Their role is simply to observe the service, talk to service users, family/friends and staff if appropriate, and make comments and recommendations based on their subjective observations and impressions in the form of a report.

This Enter and View Report is aimed at outlining what they saw and making any suitable suggestions for improvement to the service concerned. The reports may also make recommendations for commissioners, regulators or for Healthwatch to explore particular issues in more detail. Unless stated otherwise, the visits are not designed to pursue the rectification of issues previously identified by other regulatory agencies. Any serious issues that are identified during a Healthwatch Enter and View visit are referred to the service provider and appropriate regulatory agencies for their rectification.

Legislation allows 'Enter and View' activity to be undertaken with regard to the following organisations or persons:

- NHS Trusts.
- NHS Foundation Trusts.
- Local Authorities.

- a person providing primary medical services (e.g. GPs).
- a person providing primary dental services (i.e. dentists).
- a person providing primary ophthalmic services (i.e. opticians).
- a person providing pharmaceutical services (e.g. community pharmacists).
- a person who owns or controls premises where ophthalmic and pharmaceutical services are provided.
- Bodies or institutions which are contracted by Local Authorities or the NHS to provide health or care services (e.g. adult social care homes and day-care centres).

## Key Benefits of Enter & View

To encourage, support, recommend and influence service improvement - by:

- Capturing and reflecting the views of service users who often go unheard, e.g. care home residents.
- Offering service users an independent, trusted party (lay person) with whom they feel comfortable sharing experiences.
- Engaging carers and relatives.
- Identifying and sharing 'best practice', e.g. activities that work well.
- Keeping 'quality of life' matters firmly on the agenda.
- Encouraging providers to engage with local Healthwatch as a 'critical friend', outside of formal inspection.
- Gathering evidence at the point of service delivery, to add to a wider understanding of how services are delivered to local people.
- Supporting the local Healthwatch remit to help ensure that the views and feedback from service users and carers play an integral part in local commissioning.
- Spreading-the-word about local Healthwatch.

## Details of the Visit

Name of premises visited	Middleton Hall Wilton House Springfield Willow Green Eden Cottage
Type of Service	Care Homes
Registered Manager	Debby Lamont Emma Hardy Gail Carter Clare Staddon Helen Reeves
Date and time of visit	24/11/17 28/11/17 30/11/17 10/01/18 17/01/18
Authorised representatives undertaking the visit	Gill Waite Pat Martin Terry Taylor Bill Burrows
Support Staff	Diane Lax

## Purpose of the visit

Healthwatch Darlington is carrying out a series of visits across premises throughout Darlington to ascertain the quality of life and choices offered to Darlington residents living in a Care Home and how staff and relatives feel about working or having their friend/relative living in a care home.

## How the visit was conducted

This was an announced visit with the Manager being given a 4-week notice sending out posters and surveys in advance for residents, family/friends and staff to complete at their leisure. Dates were agreed for each visit where we observed the condition of the premises, and interaction between the staff and residents. In

addition, we talked with residents, talked with family/friends and with staff about how they felt about living and working in a care home. This was with the exception on Eden Cottage where surveys were completed and handed to Healthwatch representatives when we arrived.

Information gathered varied from care home to care home with some homes just having a few responses from residents and others just a few from staff.

Five care homes were visited, these were chosen at random after Diane Lax attended a Care Home provider meeting. The option to post surveys was also given providing freepost envelopes and some of those received were none identifiable to any individual care home.

The following pages incorporate the questions asked and an overview of the responses received from residents, family, friends and staff.

## Overview of Responses and Observations

### Residents

#### **Do you feel safe in the home?**

- The majority of residents felt safe in the respective homes they lived in: *“feel very safe”, “there is always someone looking after me”, “couldn’t be happier”.*  
*“to an extent, I find the open door policy difficult, would like a locked door”.*

#### **Are there enough staff?**

- The majority of residents thought there was enough staff: *“Yes no faults”, “absolutely”, “I think so, there is for me”, “yes there appears to be”*
- There was a few who commented on there not being enough: *“mostly, except holidays, sickness and nights”, “could do with some more” “not really”*

#### **Do staff know you and how to care for you?**

- Most of the residents felt that staff knew them, giving some very positive comments about staff:

*“very friendly”, “helpful”, “Know name, marvellous staff”, “No better place”, “they look after me well”, “they are very good”, “of course they do”.*

- There were just a few negative comments:  
*“yes, sometimes they can’t be bothered”, “usually”, “yes, not always”.*

**What do you think about the food? What are the meals like?**

- Majority of residents liked the food and the choices they got:  
*“sometimes vegetables are over cooked”, “more variety for pudding”, “I’m fussy”, “if I had to moan I would say you get too much”, “we always seem to be eating and they are very tasty”, “lovely meals”, “you get choice, get something else if you don’t like it”.*

**Do you get to see healthcare professionals such as GP’s, nurses, dentist?**

- All residents were happy that if they need to see a professional then this was arranged:  
*“Yes, coming today”, “they do but they always give me advice if I’m not feeling too good”, “better now they come in”*

**Do they allow you to make decisions about your care and respect these?**

- Majority of residents were happy that they are able to make own decisions although some had negative comments: *“Yes, I often like to stay in my room”, “very respectful and they do respect my decisions”, “Yes, I’m always asked but sometimes I would ask staff to speak with my family”.*
- *“have to follow guidelines, where possibly wouldn’t at home”, “the younger staff not as good”, “older ones have more patience”, “today couldn’t get what I wanted to wear so they picked a top for me, I don’t like it”*

**Have you ever complained and what was the outcome?**

- Most felt that complaints were handled effectively at the time, with many people saying they had not complained or had reason to complain:  
*“Not had anything to complain about”, “I have never complained no need to”, “Listened to, always get to go to resident’s meetings, said about green veg and it was sorted”*
- *“Sometimes I complain my coffee is cold but the staff always get me a warmer one”, “yes and it was dealt with”, “try not to but leave notes, go through wardrobe as cloths have been given to others”, “family deal with complaints”, “need more staff after 6pm”.*

**What is the atmosphere like in the home?**

- All comments were very positive:  
*“lovely”, “very happy”, “wouldn’t live anywhere else”, “friendly, welcoming, have no complaints”, “very good staff always happy”, “like*



*living here”, “very good nice atmosphere”, “friendly, but do not like the noise”.*

**Tell me one good thing about living here?**

- Very positive comments:  
*“visitors at any time”, “very good”, “I can be lazy”, “get care, food, company, good staff”, “it’s very homely”, “I get well looked after and feel safe”, “it’s very clean and grateful for what everyone has done for me”, “owner here knows what’s going on, important to him”, “allow children, carers very friendly”.*

**Tell me one thing you would like to see improved?**

- The majority of residents felt everything was good and couldn’t think of any improvements, improvements from others included:  
*“more seats to sit on, the room is always full”, “I would like to be taken out on more occasions”, “like to play dominoes, would like someone to have a game with”, “for staff to get better routines with myself”, “food so good I’ve put weight on, more staff after 6pm”*

**Observations/Comments**

- *“TV difference of opinion of what to watch”.*
- *“Lack of continuity always courteous but sometimes lack respect”.*
- *“Involved with interviewing staff, didn’t take staff if they weren’t up for the job, its well-run now”.*
- *“Used to work in a care home and didn’t want to live in one, like this one very much, it has eased my mind”.*
- *“Fab place, lovely atmosphere”*

**Family/Friends/Visitors**

**Are you happy that your relative is safe?**

- Most were happy:  
*“my wife is well looked after”, “I do feel he is kept safe”, “yes, very much so”.*
- One said they felt it reasonably safe.

**What are staff like? Is there enough?**

- The majority of family members felt that staff were very good, although most would like to see more staff on duty:  
*“staff are lovely, and yes there is enough”, “staff are cheerful, kind and caring”, “Staff are fantastic in every way, the home could probably do with a few more staff at times”, “very good”, “Caring and understanding,*

*I wonder if there are enough at weekends and nights", "very good, not enough staff", "kind, occasionally there are staff shortages".*

**Do staff know you and how to care for your relative?**

- The majority of family members felt that staff knew them and cared well for their relatives:  
*"staff recognise us when we visit", "Yes, so friendly, feels just like home, extended family", "yes, they know exactly what is required", "yes, they always keep us updated", "mostly, he will never be looked after to my exact standards", "yes, not always, depends who is on duty".*

**Have you ever visited during meal times? What do you and your relative think of the food?**

- Most comments were complimentary of the food with just a couple of negative remarks:  
*"the food is always 1<sup>st</sup> class and always second helpings if needed by residents", " yes, been asked to stay for lunch, very tasty, service is excellent", "food looks fresh and home cooked", "food appears adequate and varied, the fish and chips are disappointing", "odd occasions, sometimes repetitive, need more choice, or to ask if something special they enjoy".*

**Are you involved with the care planning? GP, nurse or care manager visits?**

- There seemed to be good involvement all round although some were not involved at all:  
*"yes, asked if we are happy, read care plans, always informed if any changes", "they occasionally seek my advice", "the staff always tell us if somebody is coming to visit medical", "no, my mum deals with that", "most of the time but depending who is on shift, lot of lack of communication sometimes".*

**Complaints and compliments how are they dealt with?**

- Many had not made any complaints but the majority who had said complaints were dealt with effectively:  
*"don't have any but I know it would be prompt", "any complaints are dealt with straight away", "can be a bit defensive but if you persevere we work through", "any contact made regarding concerns have been actioned and dealt with to our satisfaction".*
- Compliments were gratefully accepted:  
*"professional", "I have given complemented to care staff many times, never had need to complain", "Compliments are appreciated", "very professional".*

**Do you feel the home are honest and open with you?**

- All respondents felt the home was open and honest:  
*"yes, I believe they are", "we trust the staff implicitly and know they communicate with us openly, keeping us well informed", "no real difficulties in this area, contact is constant".*

**Tell me one good thing about your relative/friend living here?**

- A lot of the comments were about family and friends felt that relatives were safe and had good care:  
*"Very safe, in a safe environment", "safe and sound", "happy and content", "caring staff and cleanliness", "staff have become friends of my mother", "well looked after knowing my sister is OK".*

**Tell me one thing you would like to see improved?**

- Generally, answers were about 1-1 care and activities, some thought the home didn't need to change:  
*"residents could be taken out into the gardens for some sunshine and fresh air", "more one to one contact", "We would like to see more staff so they can spend time with the residents", "spills a lot of food and drink, perhaps more supervision with this", "nothing" "doing ok", "care staff to receive training in dementia care above basic level", "visible name badges", "housekeeping, laundry getting lost or mixed up".*

**Observations/Comments**

- *"All the staff are wonderful and very caring and always approachable if I have any worries about dad".*
- *"Mum has lived here for two and a half years during which time she has been happy and content. During this time her needs have become more demanding and these have been met at all times. Since Mum is funding her care herself, we feel she is getting good value for money. On a few occasions we know staff have gone the extra distance to ensure mum is cared for appropriately, particularly when accompanying mum on hospital visits".*
- *"Staff are polite and have given good care and respect to mum".*
- *"There is a nice atmosphere".*
- *"All staff are great with the residents and have a good sense of humour. Mum likes a good laugh".*
- *"Everything is good, she seems generally settled and in good spirits when I visit. She asks about when she is going home but soon gets on to something else when she is diverted. The only one comment I would like to see is a towel in the toilet for her to dry her hands after using the bathroom".*
- *"Would definitely recommend this home to friends and family".*

- *“Very happy with this care home”.*
- *“Very friendly and homely staff work together and there is always something going on”.*
- *“Highly delighted my husband is safe and well looked after”.*
- *“Mum likes her privacy in her room and sometimes grumbles if other residents walk in. Don't know if anything can be done to improve this. A special thank you to Val for the superb effort put into organising events and activities”.*
- *“This care home is a very good care home. The staff are friendly, food good and the home is clean, tidy and well maintained. I am glad we found this home for my mam”.*
- *“The staff do not change. They are an established long serving team who understand my wife's needs”.*
- *“Courses to make staff more aware of Parkinson's with dementia. There is a delay in his brain from him being told or asked to do something and him actually doing it. I'd like to thank the staff for being patient with him”.*
- *“Very clean, staff friendly but need more time for one to one helpful”*
- *“Interesting to observe the results of this Healthwatch visit”.*
- *“The level of care produced depends on staff on duty. Communication levels are poor. The care plan is not always followed, reason: relative's behaviour communication. As a relative I appreciate the staff who do better and there are a few”.*
- *“Washing can be fraught. I now wash his socks and check shirts and bedding. Some shifts work much better than others, particularly the night staff. The staff are very friendly and caring”.*

## Staff

### **What is the process for raising concerns/safeguarding issue?**

- There was a good knowledge among staff on how to address concerns: *“speak to senior member of staff, contact management, contact safeguarding”, “report to senior/manager”, “take issue to member of staff in charge, report to manager if issue not dealt with”, “speak to line manager”, “tell senior, the management, inform safeguarding, document in black pen, date it, photo copy”.*

### **Do you think there are enough staff, are they all trained to the right level?**

- The response for this question seemed to be split with some staff members thinking there was enough staff and others having concerns about staffing levels:

<p><i>"yes, we have a good ratio of staff to residents and we are all fully trained", "the staff appear very caring and training is on-going. We are prompted if training is outstanding", "we have good training, good level".</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"not enough staff on residential unit on a morning, staff really struggle on a morning", "no, due to constantly getting pulled from your current task to do others, which causes setbacks in the daily routine", "the staff are trained well but unfortunately there are not always enough staff especially if there are shifts to cover",</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Do you involve people in decisions about their care? How do you do this?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most staff said they would ask residents and/or family and friends about how they may be involved, what they like: <i>"yes, if they have capacity staff will sit with residents and explain, otherwise a best interest care plan will be put in place", "the residents are involved in decisions about their care whenever possible", "wherever possible yes, communications or flash cards if needed".</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>How do you ensure people eat and drink healthily? How is it recorded?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most homes keep charts about food and liquid intake and a choice in the menus. Residents are weighed regularly: <i>"monitor meals and support residents", "we are all trained to focus on under-nutrition and we fill in food diaries in each individual daily record every meal time", " we use food and fluid chart".</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>How do you promote peoples independence?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was done mostly by asking the residents what they would like and in the use of individua care plans: <i>"by encouraging people to do as much for themselves as they can" "work with each person", "we encourage people to do as much for themselves as is possible".</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>How are people able to give their opinions on the service?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is done by having regular meetings with residents and families and using communication books. Staff also listen to residents and relatives: <i>"residents and their families can speak to any of the staff and we also have a suggestion box", "residents and relative's meetings", "we conduct surveys for staff, residents and family at least annually".</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>What is the atmosphere like in the home? Do you enjoy working here?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most enjoyed the team work and the atmosphere in the home: <i>"it is very relaxed, like a home from home", "mix of personalities can sometimes cause an atmosphere", "I love working here", "nice and friendly people, yes I enjoy working here", "caring happy atmosphere, yes enjoy working here", "happy, friendly, residents get on well with staff and</i></li> </ul>

*come to them at any time”, “for most part I do enjoy working here, unfortunately some of the staff can be difficult to work with. They don’t listen”.*

**Tell me 1 good thing about the service?**

- Most were positive comments about listening to people and caring for residents. Staff support was much appreciated:  
*“we really care about our residents”, “I feel the service is very homely and run in a person centred way”, “staff genuinely care and are nice to work with”, “we are like a family”, “residents are well looked after”, “we can give residents the help they need to improve their life”, “everyone puts in 100% into their duties”.*

**Tell me 1 thing you would like to see improved?**

- Most responses commented about improving things for the residents:  
*“improved décor”, “more 1-1 time with residents”, “improved activities”, “some of the areas need decorating”, “more outings”, “activities should be more varied for the residents”, “maybe a permanent rota”, “more funding for activities/trips out for residents to get out more i.e. trips out, beach”, “staffing levels”, “require more lights in public areas”, “more outings”, “nothing to improve but would like the home to run as it is a safe and friendly place to work”.*

**Observations / Comments**

- *“Efforts are always made to accommodate the residents wishes when this is possible and they are made to feel included. An example of this is when day trips are arranged for the residents. They are asked to give suggestions of any places they would like to visit in the future”.*
- *“The home is currently undergoing a refurb and has new management in place. I am looking forward to seeing this all finished and settled”.*
- *“I enjoy my job as an activities coordinator, I like to see my residents happy and I’m always there for relatives and staff”.*
- *“Nothing at all, everyone is trying their best to meet our goal”.*
- *“Everyone is happy in their work and would go the extra mile if needed to help”.*
- *“Katie is fantastic and more funding should be put in place so more trips and stuff inside the home, Katie is amazing the place would be lost without her kind heart and all she does. Uniforms should be different on dementia floor as this should be more relaxed as service users don’t like uniforms”.*
- *“Some staff need to listen to each other to help them do their job to a better standard. The residents are always able to have a choice in what they want, if it’s personal care or otherwise. Sometimes there isn’t*

*enough staff which means there is no one to call for covering shifts if someone calls in sick or to pick up the extra ones”.*

- *“I love working here and would be happy for my relatives to stay here”.*
- *“Staff engage well and help each other. Residents appear content and happy with staff. I am still settling in”.*

## **Healthwatch Darlington Observations**

The homes were all very welcoming, with the manager or senior member of staff greeting us and introducing us to the environment, staff, visitors and residents. We were able to look around the communal areas where the majority of notice boards were up to date with the exception of one with an incorrect date displayed.

The cleanliness of all homes was very good and in some homes decoration was taking place which enhanced the brightness and welcoming feel of the homes.

All the staff were very helpful and friendly in each home we visited, the interaction between residents and staff was very kind and caring.

One home had visitors from a local nurse and to see the interaction and smiles on faces was very nice.

- Fresh flowers, calendar, activities on the wall, nice atmosphere, children from Bright Little Kids visiting, lovely to see interaction with residents. Clean and fresh.
- Décor a bit dated, atmosphere seemed nice as we walked through, and staff seemed friendly.
- Fab place, lovely atmosphere, very friendly, details of visit on reception.
- Nice atmosphere very welcoming details of our visit on the wall.
- Nice atmosphere décor a bit dated, notice board in back room out of date, clean friendly atmosphere.
- Residents seemed content with their surroundings and anything negative was generally related to sharing and would occur in any group setting, for example what to watch on the tv. Staff were committed to caring for the residents and treat everyone as an individual.

- I am a volunteer and I visited two care homes and was pleased at the atmosphere in both of them. I was impressed with the standard of care that is given and has eased my mind should I, or a relative need to enter such a home.

## Recommendations

- Promote ratio of staff to number of residents so that the staff delivering the service, the residents receiving the service, and relatives of residents visiting understand the requirements set out by the Home regarding the number of staff per number of the residents.
- For staff to spend more time with residents where possible, giving a better 1 to 1 service.
- For residents to be given the opportunity to get out doors in the fresh air more, either in the garden or by trips out.
- For staff to be more mindful of their team listening skills and to act on any perceived communication breakdown.
- Being aware of small housekeeping issues as these can make a big difference to residents if rectified.

## Acknowledgements

The Healthwatch Darlington team of staff and volunteers would like to thank all residents, family, friends and staff for their time in completing the surveys and talking to us. All the homes were very welcoming, open and honest during our visit and is very much appreciated. Our report will be shared with the Care Homes involved as well as the Care Quality Commission, Darlington Borough Council Commissioning Team and the public.

## Control Sheet

Date Submitted	15/02/18
Date Response due	01/03/18
Date Response Received	01/03/18
Follow up actions	01/03/18
Published	05/03/18





**healthwatch**  
Darlington