

Supported living in County Durham

Research into the experience of tenants residing in
outsourced supported living schemes in County Durham



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Healthwatch County Durham

Healthwatch County Durham is the county's consumer champion for health and social care, representing the voices of current and future users to decision makers.



We listen

We listen to patients of health services and users of social care services, along with their family members or carers, to find out what they think of the services they receive.



We advise

We advise people how to get the best health and social care for themselves and their family. We provide help and information about all aspects of health and social care provided in County Durham.



We speak up

We make sure that consumers views are heard by those who provide health and social care. Wherever possible we try to work in partnership with providers to influence how they make improvements.



Executive summary

In 2018 Healthwatch County Durham (HWCD) was approached by the Adult Social Care commissioner at Durham County Council (DCC) with a workplan request for HWCD to consider carrying out some engagement with tenants who live in supported accommodation, where the support provider had been outsourced from DCC to Embracing Care.

The aim of the engagement was to see if there had been any changes in the delivery of support since the transfer and to find out if there was anything tenants/carers/family wanted to let us know. This request was signed off by the Healthwatch board and visits took place throughout March 2019.

Out of the 33 supported living schemes in the county, Healthwatch worked with the council to select 9 homes to visit. In total we spoke to 32 tenants and 1 family member about their views and experiences.

The tenants living in the houses we visited were pleased to be given the opportunity to share their views about the change in service provider. Most of the tenants we spoke to had found the transfer to the new provider seamless and had not noticed any change in the support provided to them. However a number of tenants did tell us they felt they had not received enough information prior to and during the transfer to the new provider and they would have liked to have seen the new managers more during the transfer. Although this cannot be remedied now, it will be a recommendation for any future change to support providers.

There were some schemes where the tenant make-up led to tensions. There were some tenants who told us they felt their aspirations about how they would like to live and carry out daily activities were not being met because of the needs or perceived risks to other tenants in the house.

Inevitably, there had been some staff changes during the transfer and where this has happened tenants found it difficult. Temporary staff also caused anxiety for a number of the tenants, they felt more comfortable with people they knew and who knew them. Although we were not specifically asked to gather the views of staff, we did chat to them about the change. It was acknowledged that it had been stressful during the TUPE process however they were settling in with the new provider, changing some of the paperwork if necessary, but where processes were working well, these were not being altered.

Activities were valued by tenants and it greatly enhanced their everyday experiences. We found quite a variance in the types of activities available for tenants, some were fairly independent and were happy to go out and about unaccompanied, whilst others needed support in the



community. In the houses we visited there was a variance in the activities undertaken with tenants and support workers, but as we did not have access to care plans we were unable to determine if it was meeting the identified needs of the tenants. We were told about day to day activities like household and personal shopping.

We were told that tenants did not have “key workers” but were supported by the whole staff team in any particular house, one tenant told us she used to have a key worker who no longer worked in the service and she missed her. All the tenants we spoke to were confident that they would know who to go to if there was something they were unhappy with.

We were told in some of the houses that support hours were shared, so this made it quite difficult to determine whether individuals living in schemes were receiving the support as per their needs assessment.

It is important to note that a number of the observations and recommendations we have made were not issues that have arisen as a direct result of support service being outsourced to Embracing Care, where tenants live and the daytime activities were determined prior to the change of provider. However, because they were things tenants told us were important to them, we see value in including them in this report for commissioners and operational staff to consider.

Our recommendations are to ensure that:

Along with this report the commissioners have a period of reflection where they discuss with the new provider, the way the new provision has evolved, whether there are any emerging staffing or service delivery issues and how they can be addressed. This might include staff v management ratios and whether it’s working effectively.

If there are any future service provider changes, that commissioners and providers endeavour to keep individuals receiving the support well informed throughout the process.

Where new tenants are being supported to select where they would like to live, that careful thought is given to the client mix to ensure the needs and aspirations of both existing and prospective tenants can be accommodated (This includes the gender make-up in a house).

Wherever possible the provider should try to minimise the use of agency staff. Temporary staffing was raised as a concern for many tenants and family members (some tenants told us the provider was using “job shadowing” to



try and have temporary staff who were more familiar with each other. This was well received by tenants).

The support assessments/allocated support of the people living in the scheme is reviewed to ensure it is continuing to appropriately meeting their individual needs. (It's less than 12 months since the change of provider),

Opportunities for tenants to be involved in activities in and outside of their home, which meet their needs and aspirations is maximized.

Staff are mindful of the changing needs of the tenants and to contact social services if they believe the needs are not being appropriately met either in relation to the assessment of support needs or their physical environment.



Background to this work

Why this work was necessary?

Healthwatch County Durham was approached by the Adult Social Care commissioner at Durham County Council to request that we consider carrying out some engagement to collect the views of a sample of tenants who live in supported accommodation, where the support provider had been outsourced from Durham County Council to Embracing Care in 2018.

What did we want to find out?

The aim of the engagement was to see if there had been any changes in the delivery of support since the transfer and to find out if there was anything tenants/carers/family wanted to let us know.

Audience

This report is for the commissioners of Services at Durham Council, the service provider and the Board of Healthwatch, to inform them of our findings. It will also be shared with the people accessing services and be made available on the Healthwatch website

What we did

Embracing Care was contacted by the commissioners to brief them on the review and a scoping pre-visit was arranged by Healthwatch to speak to the manager of each of the schemes, to advise on the background, purpose and proposed consultation methods. A copy of the questionnaire (see appendix 1) was shared and there were discussions about the most appropriate methods of communication. Wherever possible the inclusion of family and carers in the consultation process was encouraged. A letter was provided to the scheme managers to enable them to inform family and carers about the visits and giving them the opportunity to share their views and a brief questionnaire was also available for them to complete.

Who we spoke to and what they said

The three scheme managers and support staff were enthusiastic in enabling the tenants they supported to share their experiences. They helped facilitate the meetings and we have outlined a summary of the responses received.

At the meetings between Healthwatch representatives and tenants we outlined the purpose of the meeting, emphasising that unless they told us something that put themselves or others at



risk, their comments would be anonymous and that the final report would not be specific about who made any particular comments, but would summarise the views of the people receiving services as well as their families and carers. Tenants were also advised that the questions were not compulsory and if they did not want to answer any particular question, then that was fine, they were also advised they could leave the meeting at any time.

We spoke to between 2 and 9 tenants in each of the houses or complexes we visited, some were in small group meetings and others were on a 1:1 basis. We did allow support staff to be present, as this provided reassurance for the tenants, however this was only at the request of or with the agreement of the people we were meeting. Any particular difficulties or risks had been highlighted to us prior to the consultation. Although there was a questionnaire, this was mainly to structure the meeting and the questions were asked by the Healthwatch representative.

In total 32 tenants were interviewed which represents an approximate 25% sample of all the tenants supported by Embracing Care under the new contract. Overall it has been determined that the majority of the tenants interviewed are very happy with the support they receive and the environment they live in.

We also spoke to, or received completed questionnaires from 7 family members. The issues raised by them were;

- The value of permanent staff who know the tenants and create a sense of security
- The lack of activities for some tenants. It was stated that some tenants used to have days when the staffing was arranged so they could go out shopping or have evening activities , but that this has stopped
- The importance of having people living together who are compatible with each other

Safety and Security

Most of the tenants interviewed felt safe and secure and would know who to talk to if they were unhappy. There were some discussions about security in relation to locked doors if tenants were in the house alone, clarification from Embracing Care confirmed that the policy is that they would always encourage tenants to keep the doors locked but would try to ensure the tenant knew when the support worker would return.

Most of the tenants we spoke to, had Financial Protection from the Council, which meant they were well supported to keep their finances safe, although some tenants mentioned there were sometimes delays accessing their funds when they needed to make purchases.

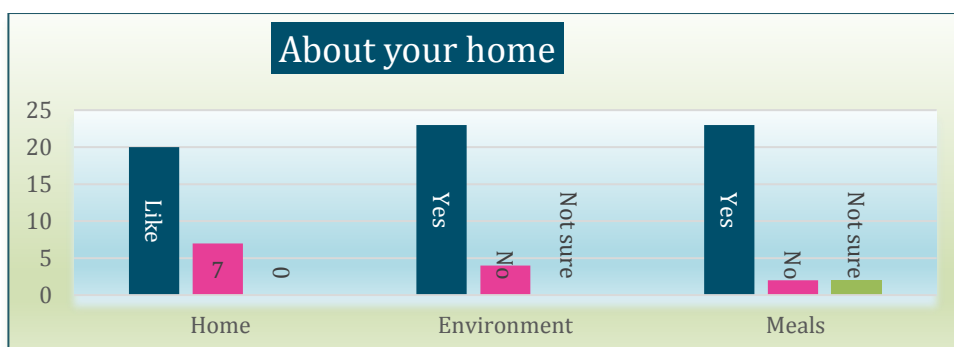




Environment

Not everyone we spoke to had chosen the home they live in, some had initially spent time in a house because of an emergency placement, which then became permanent. Most tenants liked where they were living and they had their own bedrooms which most said were decorated to their personal preferences, some were living in individual flats. Receiving visitors was not identified as problematic in any of the houses we visited.

Most people enjoyed their meals, and there were choices available. Sometimes the choices were from a pre-determined menu agreed jointly by tenants and in other cases the meals were specifically purchased/cooked for an individual. Tenants talked about having specific meals to meet dietary needs. Most evening meals were at set times, however it was mentioned by tenants that they could have breakfast when they wished. One tenant did tell us that he would like to shop and cook with fresh produce rather than frozen and that he had limited opportunities to cook because of the risks identified to the other tenants he lived with. Both he and his family felt he was losing some of the independent living skills he had acquired at college, which was a disappointment to them. In most houses we observed bowls of fruit, encouraging tenants to have a healthy diet.



Support

Most tenants said they were happy with the permanent staff who supported them. They valued having a consistent staff team, who they know and trust. It also meant that where communication was more challenging it helped when the support staff were familiar with individuals. Where there were temporary/agency staff, tenants found this more difficult. On the visits we observed staff supporting individuals, they were friendly and treated the tenants with dignity and respect. Tenants valued the visits from the scheme managers as this gave them an opportunity to share their views.

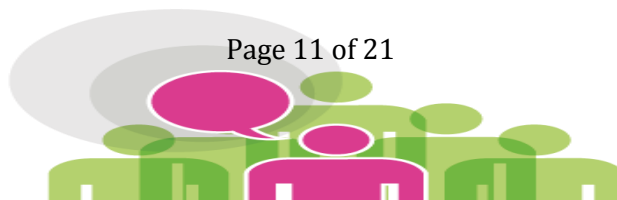
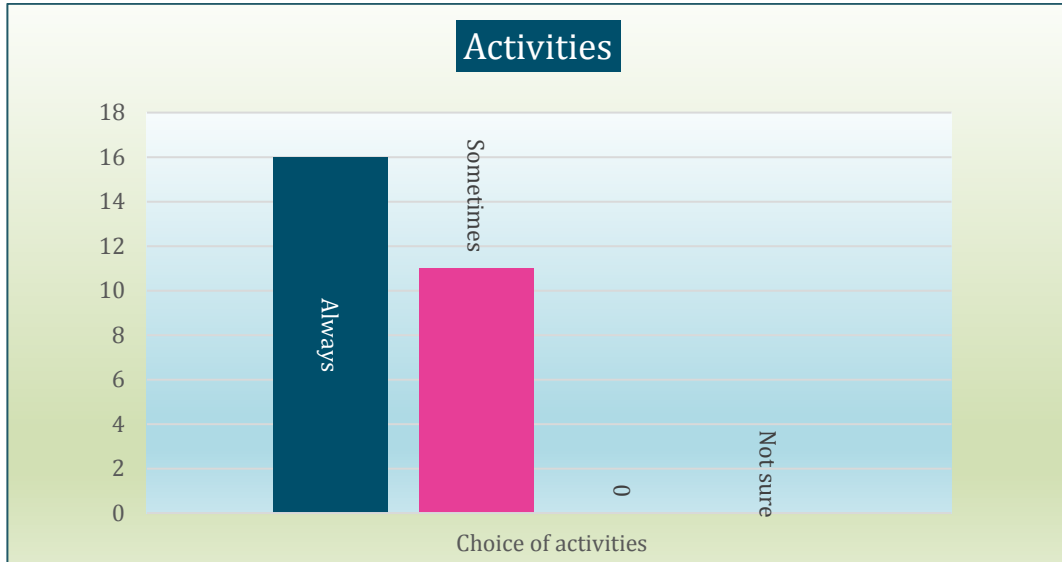


Activities and Health

Activities varied greatly from scheme to scheme and between individuals. Some tenants still accessed day services. For some individuals accessing day services was still greatly valued as it gave them the opportunity of meeting friends. There were a number of tenants accessing “befriending” services supporting individuals with, shopping, trips out etc. and the people accessing these services spoke highly of them. Some tenants told us they were reluctant to engage with the befriending scheme as they would have to pay for it. Another tenant talked about aspiring to get a job in the community and that it would be more preferable to day services which he had chosen not to engage with. Embracing Care have set up a voluntary befriending service, delivered by staff which is helping some tenants access to activities. Access to outside space was available in all of the homes we visited, tenants did talk about barbecues or being outside in the nice weather. One tenant talked about the work he did in the garden and how much he enjoyed it. All the houses we visited had garden maintenance undertaken by the landlord and the properties were neat and tidy on the exterior. There was reference made by



one tenant to the fact that some of the 1 to 1 time with support workers had reduced and this was disappointing to them. One tenant told us they had fewer opportunities to go on holiday than in the past. Embracing Care do now have the ability to accompany tenants on holidays and they will be using this opportunity where possible.



Conclusions

The tenants enjoyed the opportunity to voice their views, it was recognised that gathering the views of a small number of the tenants was more difficult, although the support workers were very supportive with tenants where communication was an issue, therefore there has to be a note of caution in the accuracy of their response. However we are confident that in the main they are happy with the support they are receiving and did not feel the service had deteriorated since the new provider had taken over. Most had not really noticed any change and a few told us they thought it was better. Most liked their environment, the staff, their meals and the support provided. Staff changes/temporary staffing seemed to be the greatest concern to tenants.

There was a wide variance in activities available. Some were certainly accessing more activities than others. It might be useful for the provider to share best practice within their teams on the activities they undertake. Mainstream rather than disability focused activity opportunities was a very positive experience for some. Those accessing Day Services seemed to value this and some stated it was an opportunity to meet up with friends. Where tenants were accessing “befriending” support this was also very much valued and again could be something that is promoted.

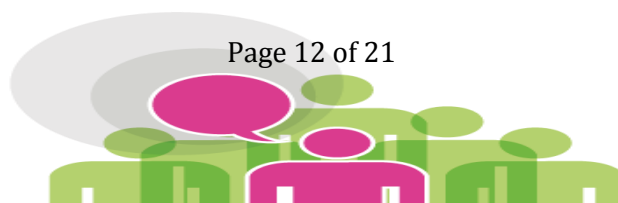
Communal areas were all neat and tidy although some seemed to reflect more the taste of the older tenants living in the scheme rather than the younger ones. In a number of the houses we visited, the kitchens had recently been re-furbished and they were bright, spacious and accessible for those with mobility issues.

Our recommendations based on our observations and discussions are to ensure that:

Along with this report the commissioners have a period of reflection where they discuss with the new provider the way the new provision has evolved, whether there are any emerging staffing or service delivery issues and how they can be addressed. This might include staff v management ratios and whether it is working effectively.

If there are any future service provider changes, that commissioners and providers endeavour to keep people receiving the support well informed throughout the process.

Where new tenants are being supported to select where they would like to live, that careful thought is given to the client mix to ensure the needs and



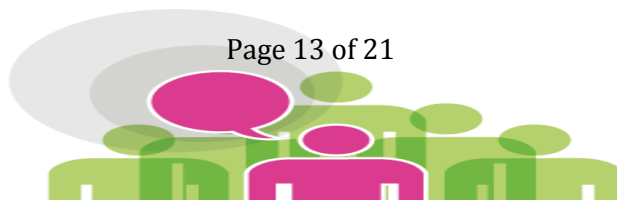
aspirations of both existing and prospective tenants can be accommodated (this includes the gender make-up in a house).

Wherever possible the provider should try to minimise the use of agency staff. Temporary staffing was raised as a concern for many tenants and family members (some tenants told us the provider was using “job shadowing” to try and have temporary staff who were more familiar with each other. This was well received by tenants).

The support assessments/allocated support of the people living in the scheme is reviewed to ensure it is continuing to appropriately meeting their individual needs. (It’s less than 12 months since the change of provider).

Opportunities for tenants to be involved in activities in and outside of their home, which meet their needs and aspirations is maximized.

Staff are mindful of the changing needs of the tenants and to contact social services if they believe the needs are not being appropriately met either in relation to the assessment of support needs or their physical environment.



Thank You

Healthwatch would like to thank:

All the tenants and family members who took the time to share their views with us

Embracing Care, the support provider who helped facilitate the meetings and gave us extra information about the support they provide.

Appendices

- 1 Consultation Questionnaire
- 2 Family questionnaire
- 3 Table of responses (DCC only)



Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Residents



Please let us know what you think...

Healthwatch is helping Durham Council to review some Supported Living homes , which had a change of support provider to Embracing Care in 2018. The information we gather will help them understand what is working well or what could be improved.

We are here today to find out what you think about the support you get and if there are ways it could be better. We have some questions we are going to ask. You do not have to answer the questions and can stop the interview at any time. You can also tell us other things, if you think it is important about your home or your support. All the questions are about how you have found things recently in your home.

Usually, all the information you give us is confidential. **However**, if you tell us something that means your own safety or the safety of another person is at risk, we will have to share that information with others.



1.SAFETY

Do you feel safe and secure in your home? (Things such as fire safety, safety in the kitchen, staff telling you about your privacy)

Yes No Not Sure

Overall, how do you rate the way you keep safe and secure in your home?

Good Not Sure Poor

😊 😐 ☹️

2.ENVIRONMENT

Do you like where you are living?

Yes I like it a lot I quite like it here I do not like it here

Are you involved in how your home looks?

Yes I'm involved a lot I'm sometimes involved I'm not involved

Do you enjoy the meals you have in your home?

Yes I like most of them I like some of them I don't like them

Do you have a choice about the food you would like to eat and when you want it?

Choice: Yes No Not Sure

Time: Yes No Not Sure

Is there anything which would make your home or your meals better?

Overall, how do you rate your home?

Excellent Good It's sometimes good I don't like it

😊 😊 😐 ☹️



3. SUPPORT-Since the autumn in 2018 (at the end of the hot sunny weather) can you tell us about the support you are receiving?

<i>Are you happy with the way you are supported since the new provider took over the service?</i>			
Yes it's better <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes It's just the same <input type="checkbox"/>	No it's not as good <input type="checkbox"/>	I'm not sure <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Are you happy with the way they support you?</i>			
Very happy <input type="checkbox"/>	Quite happy <input type="checkbox"/>	Unhappy <input type="checkbox"/>	Very unhappy <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Would you know what to do if you were unhappy about your support?</i>			
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Sure <input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Is there anything that would make the support better?</i>			
Overall, how do you rate the way you are supported?			
Good <input type="checkbox"/> 😊	Not Sure <input type="checkbox"/> 😐	Poor <input type="checkbox"/> 😞	

4. ACTIVITIES

<i>Do you have a choice about the activities you do every day?</i>			
Yes always <input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	Never <input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Which activities do you like?</i>			
I like:			
I do not like:			
Overall, how do you rate the things you do?			
Very Good <input type="checkbox"/> 😊	Good <input type="checkbox"/> 😊	Sometimes good <input type="checkbox"/> 😐	Never good <input type="checkbox"/> 😞



Finally.....

Is there anything else you wanted to tell us about your home or the support you receive?

Observations by Healthwatch representatives:

Where you live:

The names of the Healthwatch People who visited today

.....

Date of visit:



Appendix 2: Questionnaire for Family



Please let us know what you think...

*Healthwatch is helping Durham County Council to review some supported living housing, which had a new support provider, Embracing Care, in 2018. The information we gather will help them understand what is working well and what could be improved for current services. As a family member of one of the people being supported by Embracing Care we are keen to hear if there is anything you would like to tell us about the support your relative is receiving. You can tell us by completing this brief survey and emailing/ posting it to us, phoning us on our Freephone number or logging onto the Healthwatch website and completing the survey online.
Thankyou*

Our contact details: The names of the Healthwatch Staff who are carrying out this review are: Denise Rudkin and Claire Cowell	Healthwatch County Durham Whitfield House St Johns Road Meadowfield Durham DH7 8XL 0800 3047039 www.healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk
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Family member name and address:	
Your name:	
Your relationship ie. Brother:	
Your telephone number if you would like us to contact you:	



Do you think your relative is safe and secure where they live? Do staff help to keep him/her safe by explaining about danger, for example fire safety or tripping hazards)

Yes No Not Sure

Please write here is there is anything else you would like to tell us about keeping safe

Does your relative like where they are living?

Yes likes it a lot Quite likes it Does not like it

Are they involved in how their home looks?

Yes involved Not involved Don't know

Do they enjoy the meals?

Yes No Don't know

Is there anything else which would make their home better?

Are you happy with the way they are supported since the new provider took over the service?

Yes it's better Yes It's just the same No it's not as good I'm not sure

Is there anything that would make the support better?

Do they have a choice about the activities they are involved in?

Yes always Sometimes Never Not sure

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about activities and leisure?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about where they live or the support they receive?



