

## Digital Audit of websites and social media accounts for Care Homes in Shropshire

### The context of the report

Websites are often the first port of call for people wanting to find out information about any business and this includes care homes. During the Covid-19 pandemic we have all become increasingly reliant on digital technology and online communication.

Guidance published by the Competition and Markets Authority in 2018 gave the following advice to care homes:

'In summary, you must give potential residents and their families or other representatives all the information they need to be able to make informed choices, including whether to make further enquiries or visit your home.

You must give this information:

- at a time that ensures that people can understand and engage with it
- in a clear, accurate, accessible and easy-to-understand manner, with appropriate prominence
- in all the places that people are likely to look for it (which includes on your website and during telephone or online enquiries about your home)



Upfront information should be provided to all potential residents and their representatives, regardless of how their care is being funded. However, certain information (for example about your weekly fees and any upfront payments) may only be relevant to residents who pay for their own care.<sup>1</sup>

Healthwatch Shropshire wanted to see if the information that people might need to decide whether a care home could be right for a loved one is available online. We recognize that there is no substitute for visiting a care home and meeting the staff to get a feel for if it is

the right place for a loved one but websites can be a good starting point to make a shortlist of homes to visit.

We also wanted to see what use care homes were making of social media, particularly during the pandemic when there have been restrictions on visiting.

### What we did



A group of Healthwatch Shropshire volunteers and staff looked at the websites for all 120 registered care homes in Shropshire. We downloaded an up-to-date list from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) website [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk). Volunteers from Safe Ageing No Discrimination<sup>2</sup> (SAND), who are based in Shropshire, also looked at a selection of the websites and gave their feedback.

With some input from colleagues at Shropshire Council we decided to look at the following aspects of websites, which we thought would be the most useful information for people looking at a potential new home for a relative or loved one:

- Meet the team - some information about the Manager and other members of staff perhaps including some pictures
- Mission Statement or Values - a statement which would set out their aims and approach to delivering care and describe the culture within the home
- Activities - information about what activities take place regularly at the home
- Meals - information about food available at the care homes
- CQC - information about the home's current rating with the CQC and whether there was a link to the most recent report
- Complaints - a complaints procedure or information about providing feedback to the home
- Contact form - a clear contact form or contact details of the home
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - information that would indicate that the home is welcoming to, and inclusive of, people of different backgrounds, cultures, genders or sexual orientations
- Social Media - links to social media accounts
- Fees - an indication of fees

<sup>1</sup> Care homes and consumer law: short guide for businesses - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

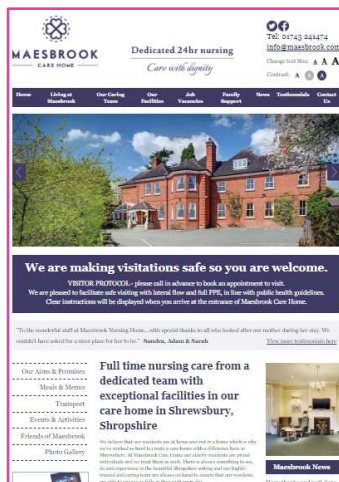
<sup>2</sup> SAND – Campaigning for the rights of older and old LGBT people accessing health & social care ([wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com))

We also looked for Facebook accounts ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) for 30 of the 120 care homes registered in Shropshire. We chose 30 care homes from the full list at random and checked if they had a Facebook page, whether it was private or public, whether it was updated regularly and what it was mainly being used for e.g. recruitment, communication with relatives, involvement in the local community.

## What we found out

### From the websites:

- 20 out of 120 care homes did not have a website although there was often information on other sites such as [www.carehome.co.uk](http://www.carehome.co.uk).
- 7 websites were not showing the home's current CQC rating, 8 did not have a link to the report.
- 74 homes had information about their Mission Statement or Philosophy of Care available on their website.
- 13 websites gave an indication of fees - this was most often stating what was or wasn't included in fees rather than giving an idea of what the fees per week would be. 6 websites gave either full illustrative costs or the starting costs for rooms.
- 35 websites had links to social media accounts.
- 15 websites had some information about inclusive practice and consideration of people's individual needs.
- 78 websites had photos on them - these were mainly exterior and interior photos of the homes.
- 51 had information about meals - 12 had a sample menu.
- 71 had some information about activities - 35 showed some photos of activities taking place.
- 6 had their complaints procedures on their websites



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- 98 had clear contact details. Many also encouraged people to make a booking to visit the home.

### From Facebook Pages:

- 9 of the 30 homes chosen did not have a Facebook Page. A further 6 had pages which had not been updated in a long time or had nothing on the page.
- We found 2 care homes which had private groups, one of which had moved away from a public page during 2020.
- The remaining 13 pages which were public were being used for communication with relatives, friends and the wider community and contained pictures of residents and staff and activities within the homes. The pages were also used for recruitment and to give updates on developments at the home for example 3 homes had posted updates and pictures of their completed visitors pods used during the Pandemic.

### Suggestions for websites:

**Accessibility** - When updating websites it's worth considering how easy they are to read for people who may have sight impairments. In particular update the Alt Text fields for pictures with a description of what the picture is. This means that people using a screen reader will hear the description.

**'Buttons on the homepage let the user change the text size and contrast. This could be really useful for people with sight impairment'** – Healthwatch Shropshire Volunteer

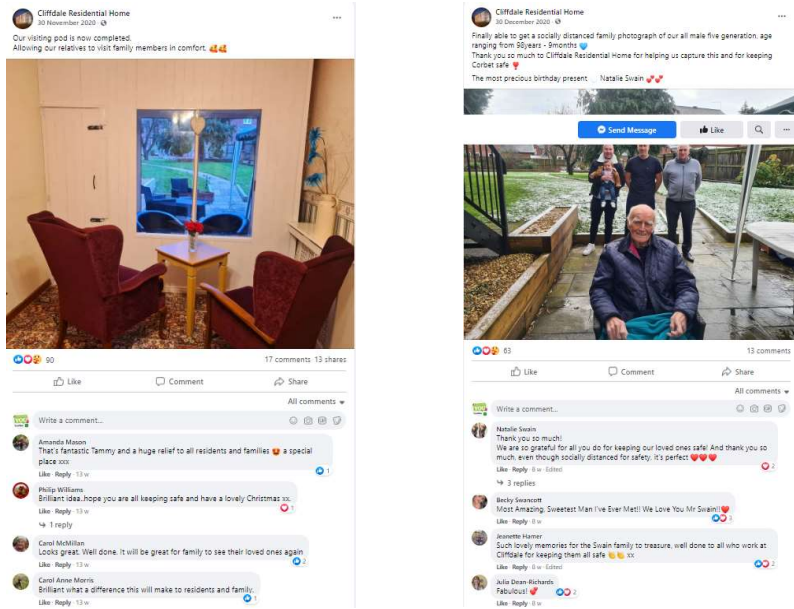
**Testimonials** - we loved reading the brilliant feedback that care homes have received about the care they provide. To make these testimonials more useful to potential new residents consider dating them - this doesn't have to be a full date - just the year will do so people know how current they are.

**Equality and Diversity** - Do your staff have equality and diversity training? Do you celebrate different festivals and events from different cultures? Is your home a welcoming environment for people from diverse backgrounds or of different sexualities and gender identities? Does your chef cook up meals for individual tastes? Your website is one place for you to tell people about it. Let people know that your care home is an inclusive environment but also *how* it is inclusive.

**‘Equality is stated as a value, I could not find anything to explain what they mean by it in theory or practice, nothing to indicate awareness of different cultures or backgrounds that I could find.’ SAND Volunteer**

**Practice Example - Cliffdale Residential Home**

‘We find our Facebook page a really good way of keeping in touch with our residents family’s. Our staff take great pride in our Facebook page and enjoy reading the positive feedback from comments posted on our posts. We also use Facebook for advertising any job vacancies.’



**Activities and meals** - sample menus and activity schedules can really give people an idea of what day to day life might be like at your care home. These don’t have to be updated all the time.

**Fees** - Giving people an idea of fees on your website meets the guidance issued by the CMA (Competitions Market Authority) and can make it easier for people to know whether or not your care home might be an option for them or their loved one.

**Suggestions for Facebook:**



If you don’t already have a Facebook page for your care home consider setting one up. It’s free, quick to do and can be a useful tool for communication (including recruitment) and even if you aren’t confident using social media yourself you will almost certainly have a staff member who knows how to do it and might enjoy taking on this role.

Many of the pages we looked at were public groups with no privacy settings. We saw great examples of these pages being used to communicate with relatives and friends and also the wider community. It’s best to check you have the right permissions and consent in place to share photos of residents and staff on these groups.

It may be worth considering the benefits of setting up a private group to share photos and communicate with friends and relatives. Further information on the differences and how to change them can be found here:

[What’s the difference between a public and private Facebook group and how do I change the privacy setting? | Facebook Help Centre](#)

**Practice Example - Morris Care**



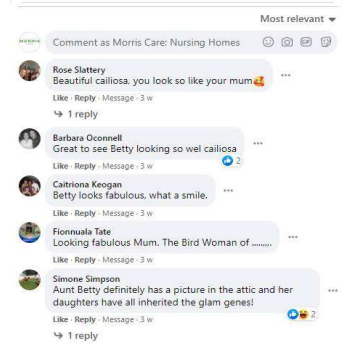
‘For a number of years now Morris Care has been committed to the benefits of how social media can unite residents with their families and friends and connect staff and the local community too. For us in particular, our facebook community provides a place where stories, life events and special moments can be simply and effectively shared and enjoyed.

During the pandemic, when visiting has been so severely restricted, it has proved itself a vital communications route, along with our regularly updated website and its ‘Friends and Family’ Hub.

For relatives, in the absence of personal visits, seeing their loved one engaged and enjoying themselves, taking part in activities or maybe just looking happy and cared for - has been utterly essential, as reflected in the touching engagement and responses we receive. Social interaction within our Homes remains at the heart of daily life, motivating residents and giving them enjoyment and a sense of belonging and purpose.

As an organisation, we post at least three times a week - sometimes more - with a genuine variety of stories and themes ranging from birdwatching to baking, celebrating birthdays to work anniversaries - it's always heart-warming to read the responses from residents' families about cherished staff too. These are the people caring for their precious loved ones whilst they cannot visit themselves, so many families enjoy showing their gratitude and affection in their responses.

Our facebook page has been important too for our staff, allowing us to share the real-time experiences of what has been an extraordinary year; a place where we can salute and celebrate their outstanding care and kindness.'





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