



## Virtual Visit to Rossmere Park Care Centre



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# 1 Introduction

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In March 2020 Healthwatch England advised all local Healthwatch organisations to follow government guidance and stop all face-to-face engagement with the public, including Enter and View visits. This prompted local Healthwatch organisations to consider other ways to observe health and care services being delivered and this resulted in consideration being given to the development of virtual visits. Virtual visits do not have the same legislative standing as Enter and View visits but are currently a useful engagement tool.

Healthwatch Hartlepool has followed guidance issued by Healthwatch England around the development and conduct of virtual visits and volunteers who have conducted virtual visits have all been drawn from our pool of trained and approved Enter and View visitors. Whilst it is without doubt that a virtual visit cannot replicate the full, all-round experience of care provision that an Enter and View visit gives, nevertheless they have provided a useful insight into patient experience and the impact the Covid pandemic has on care provision during these unprecedented times.

## Details of visit

Details of visit:	
<b>Service address:</b>	Rossmere Park Care Centre
<b>Service Provider:</b>	Rossmere Park Care Centre Ltd
<b>Date and Time:</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> July and 2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2021
<b>Authorised Representatives:</b>	Margaret Wrenn, Bernard Hays, Stephen Thomas, and Carol Slattery as an observer.
<b>Contact details:</b>	Healthwatch Hartlepool, The Orcel Centre Wynyard Road Hartlepool TS25 3LB



## Background

Rossmere Park Care Centre is a large care home with nursing provision in Hartlepool. It has the capacity to house 51 people and at the time of our visit had 49 residents. It is registered to provide care for older people, people living with dementia, people with physical disabilities and sensory impairment and younger adults with physical disabilities. The home also provides palliative and respite care.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has monitored the care home since May 2017. At its last inspection in September 2018, the CQC awarded the nursing home with an overall rating of good.

The facility is run by Rossmere Park Care Centre Limited and is the only care home operated by this group in England. The registered manager of the home is Maxine Lee who has been in post since the service was registered with the CQC in April 2018.

## Aim of the Visit

The visit to Rossmere Park Care Centre was the first virtual visit conducted by Healthwatch Hartlepool and as such was a learning experience for all concerned. It was conducted in line with Healthwatch England guidance issued in 2020 covering virtual visits and as such, had the following aims and objectives -

- To gain an insight into the impact the Covid 19 pandemic has had on the delivery care and how the home has responded.
- To gather feedback from residents, family members and staff of their impressions of care provision at Rossmere Park and how it has evolved during the pandemic.

## Methodology

There were three distinct phases to the visit -

### 1) Preparation and Planning

As has already been mentioned this was the first virtual visit conducted by Healthwatch Hartlepool and as such required considerable preparation and planning. A three-person team, comprising of two Enter and View trained volunteers (Margaret Wrenn and Bernie Hays) and the Healthwatch Development officer (Stephen Thomas) was selected to conduct the visit. The team initially familiarised itself with Healthwatch England guidance on conducting virtual visits and the methodology for conducting such visits. Virtual meetings were then held with members of the Commissioning Team from Hartlepool Borough Council. These meetings provided vital information and background relating to the operation of care homes across the borough during the pandemic and specifically, Rossmere Park. This included details of Covid outbreaks at the home, Covid testing, and vaccine roll out.



## 2) Contact Rossmere Park and Initial Discussions

As with Enter and View visits we contacted the home manager to inform them of our intention to visit and importantly reassure them that day to day care provision would not be impacted upon. The home confirmed that they were happy for the visit to go ahead and a virtual meeting with the Home Manager and Deputy Manager was arranged with a view to getting their perceptions of the impact of the pandemic on care provision, how it had impacted on care provision and how services had adapted and developed to meet challenges and maintain high standards of care and support for residents.

## 3) Consultation and the Virtual Visit

Following the initial discussion with the home manager a questionnaire was circulated to family members of residents who regularly visited the home. A copy of the questionnaire and a summary of responses can be found in Appendix 1. This was followed by the virtual visit itself, which included a tour of the communal areas of Rossmere Park, opportunities to observe activities and virtual discussions with residents and members of staff.

## Findings

### 1) Virtual Discussion with the Manager and Deputy Manager (15<sup>th</sup> July 2021)

The visiting team were warmly welcomed by the Laureen, the Deputy Manager who was joined later in the discussion by Maxine, the Home Manager who had been called away. Andrew Ross, from the HBC Commissioning Team was also present. From the outset, a positive impression was gained that staff at the home had been quite proactive in the way in which they had responded to Covid.

The home had managed to secure enough personal protective equipment during the Covid pandemic, especially at the worst times, so they did not struggle with that, and the local authority had been very supportive of the home during this difficult time.

At the height of the pandemic, the Home were able to keep those residents affected with the virus isolated from other residents and cared for accordingly in one wing of the Home. This made life a little easier from the point of view of the rest of the staff and residents, and as things settled down, they were able to eventually return to normal, and at our meeting there were no residents in the home affected by the virus.

The staff were also supported by Management, and the mental and physical health of the staff was discussed at length so that every staff member was aware that there was an open-door policy within the Home, and if they felt the need to speak to someone about their health, then there was no problem at all in doing so. At this meeting it was mentioned that two members of staff were pregnant and had not had the Covid vaccine. Most of the other members of staff had been vaccinated against the virus.



Staff who had been recruited at this time, were obviously, working under difficult conditions. They were inducted as normal and shadowed permanent members of staff carrying out their duties, but some felt that caring was not the career for them, so this made life a little difficult for permanent staff, but they managed to work through the difficulties, and the Manager was extremely proud of the work force.

The Home has two activity co-ordinators covering the whole week, from 8am until 4pm. They continued with the activities as much as possible during the pandemic. As well as daily activities there is a monthly big event but due to Covid restrictions trips out have not been possible.

Staff training was also continued during this time, particularly Lifting and Handling, Health and Safety, DOLs and the Mental Capacity Act. This has been possible as the home employs an in-house trainer.

Some of the residents who were living with dementia, found it more difficult to cope, and some became distressed, because they were unable to see their relatives as usual, and staff members remarked on the effect the pandemic had on their conditions. It was upsetting for staff to see the deterioration in some residents during this time. They did their best with telephone and skype calls to relatives as much and as often as possible, conditions permitting. Residents now also allowed 5 nominated visitors.

The Home continues with the Hydration Stations to encourage the residents to drink to maintain their hydration levels, this has been ongoing for quite a long time in the home and is encouraged frequently by staff members.

It became obvious early in the pandemic that it would be advisable if acceptable of course, for the residents to be cared for by one GP practice. In the main most residents agreed with this, one or two maintained their own GPs, and the system appears to be working well at present.

Podiatry is continued as usual, once the initial lockdown was eased, and the residents are now seen and treated regularly, approximately every 6-8 weeks.

Dentistry is also available, and mouth toilet for those nursing residents is carried out, as and when required. Dentures are taken care of in the usual manner. As reported, drinks are encouraged, to help maintain residents' oral health.

There's a staff member who is charged with Infection Control and keeping staff informed, about whatever is necessary to keep the home free from infection, especially at this time.

The last CQC report on Rossmere Care Centre was discussed, and they had mentioned ventilation in the building. It was confirmed that Air conditioning units had been installed as requested.



## Virtual visit (2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021)

After introductions, feedback was given to the Home Manager (Maxine) and Deputy Manager (Laureen) on the findings from the family member questionnaire. There had been six replies from the questionnaires. These replies were very positive about the care residents received, their food choice, their comfort, and all-round wellbeing in the Home. All were aware of the visiting restrictions but felt that the staff were doing their best to allow as much freedom as possible within the guidelines. They also felt that there were very good face-to-face and telephone visits, and information given to them, regarding their loved ones' care. Garden and conservatory visits could also be arranged. A detailed breakdown of the feedback can be found in Appendix 1.

After this, we asked about visits to those residents with dementia and those on end-of-life care. These were prioritised as much as possible, within safe limits but not as restricted as normal.

We asked about resident isolation on discharge from hospital, and Maxine outlined the measures taken at Rossmere at present regarding this problem. Staff had noted however, that those with dementia if left alone in their rooms for any length of time deteriorated rapidly, so they did as much as possible to ameliorate this.

We started the virtual tour by going into one of the communal areas first, and there was much laughter and hilarity emanating from the lounge where those residents who were able were enjoying the activities. At the time, they were playing 10 pin bowling, with the staff members retrieving the ball so that the residents could try their luck at knocking down as many of the pins as possible. All seemed to be enjoying themselves, but we were able to speak to one of the residents, who although he was on continuous nasal oxygen, seemed quite pleased to speak to us. He has been in the home for about 4 years and was very complimentary about the staff they were kind, he said and attentive. He looked warm and comfortable, and when asked about food in the home he was delighted with it, plenty he said and great choice. He ate when he was hungry, he said, and was quite satisfied. He didn't have many visitors normally but was aware of the restrictions due to the Covid pandemic but agreed that there was little to be done about it at the moment.

We also spoke to a lady who was in the lounge too, she was cheerful and smiling, but said that all she wanted was to be in her own home. She said the staff were wonderful, and she was comfortable and enjoyed her food, but it was not the same.



We continued upstairs where the majority of those requiring nursing care were housed. We spoke to one of the trained staff on the department. He explained that he'd been working at the home for about the past eighteen months, he was enjoying the experience, and felt that the availability of training was very comprehensive, and updates on dementia training, safeguarding and others was carried out yearly. He explained that residents/patients were weighed on arrival at the home and weighed monthly from then on. They were on food charts four-weekly and fluid charts to keep a comprehensive record of how they were progressing. If there were any problems with a patient's weight, then they requested a visit from the Dietician. Generally, they checked the patient's BMI, but he queried this because they were looking at the patient daily and could see what was going on, so he felt sometimes he needed to insist that the dietician visited the patient and dealt with the problem.

The next person to whom we spoke, was a Care Assistant training to be a Care Practitioner. Delighted with the face-to-face in-house training, which continued during Covid.

We observed plenty of relevant notices and posters displayed on notice boards whilst on our visit. These included reminders regarding PPE procedures. The one-page profile of each resident was still ongoing in the bedrooms.

Apparently, there had been no problems at all regarding PPE during the Covid pandemic. The home was well-served with stock.

The Home are recruiting staff now, due to those who decided that caring was not for them or decided that they would not have the Covid jab.

No recommendations at present. They seem to be doing everything possible to keep the home, staff, and residents as safe as possible.

## Conclusions

Although a virtual visit was carried out, it was concluded by the visiting team that such visits are not as effective as Enter and View visits. However, we all made the best of the current situation, and our thanks go to Maxine, Laureen, their staff team and residents for their full cooperation and valuable inputs.

All in all, the visit proved to be a positive experience and the visiting team were impressed with the way the home had risen to the challenges and difficulties of the previous 18 months.

The home appears to be well led, and staff morale to be good. Staff are provided with regular training opportunities and encouraged to develop within their roles.

Residents appeared to be happy and well cared for, and evidence was provided which showed that nutrition and hydration levels are regularly monitored. Feedback from family members indicated a high level of satisfaction in the care loved ones are receiving.





Understandably, the home has been unable to provide the usual level of activity for residents during the height of the pandemic but is clearly making every effort to address this as residents and almost all staff are now double vaccinated.

Concerns were raised about restrictions around visiting by both residents and family members, but it was generally recognised that these were unavoidable and family members were generally pleased with the efforts the home had made to keep them informed and involved in the care of their loved one.

## **Recommendations**

The home should be commended for the way it has maintained a high standard of care for its residents during an extremely difficult and distressing time.



## Appendix 1

### Rossmere Park - Relative Questionnaire Feedback

#### Introduction

#### 1) How long have they been in the home?

- 3 years
- She has been in Rossmere Care Home since 2019 for recuperation. Due to the pandemic, she has not been able to return home.
- Over a year and a half
- Nearly a year
- Less than a month
- Approximately 2 years

#### Care

#### 2) Are staff friendly/approachable?

- Always
- All the staff are very friendly, helpful and caring, and always have time to answer any questions.
- Yes, without exception, from the manager to the last new recruit
- Always
- Yes very
- Yes

#### 3) Are Interactions between residents and staff positive and friendly?

- Most certainly are
- She has dementia and can sometimes be challenging, but all staff treat her with respect and care.
- Yes, all staff and management apply the same respect to all relatives and visitors, and residents
- Yes, they are
- Yes
- Yes

#### 4) Are staff available when you or your relative/friend need them?

- Always
- If there was anything my family and I were concerned about, or needed to know, it is dealt with at once.
- Yes, unless they are carrying out their daily tasks elsewhere on the premises, then another member of staff/management will offer their services/information to you if the point in question is urgent
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes



**5) Have you been involved in your relative/friends care plan?**

- Yes
- We have been involved in all her care
- Yes always. I am kept well informed of any proposed ideas/changes. Most information is typed out and posted on easy to see places anyway
- No
- Yes
- Yes

**6) How does the Home communicate with you?**

- By phone or in person when in the Home
- When we visit, several times a week or by phone
- I always receive written notices, of changes by post and/or they will ring me at home to pass on information, particularly on visitor changes
- Telephone and face to face
- When we visit or by phone
- By phone

**7) Does your loved one speak positively when in the home?**

- Absolutely, he loves being here
- She has advanced dementia, so no conversation to speak of
- She cannot speak very well because of her illness but staff understand the problem and cope very well. She gets on fine with staff in her own way.
- Yes
- Yes, he is very happy here
- Yes

**8) Are you happy with the care your loved one is receiving?**

- Definitely
- All the carers do everything they can to help her in a difficult situation
- All my family have visited, and we are very happy with the way x is being cared for in Rossmere care Home.
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes

**9) What activities does your loved one enjoy?**

- Bingo, art works
- There is musical entertainment in the lounge to which carers occasionally take her. She also likes watching TV in her room.
- Taking for walks out. Sitting out in the garden weather permitting and watching TV in the lounge or her bedroom. Unfortunately, x is confined to a wheelchair due to an accident at a previous Home
- Seeing family
- None at present as he is in bed all day due to illness
- Singing, dancing



- 10) **What activities does your loved one engage in?**
- Within his capacity, all of them.
  - She has extremely poor mobility and dementia and it is difficult for her to engage in any activities
  - X is restricted to the above answer. She broke her hip at the previous care home she was at, the fourth fall she has there. That's why we had her moved urgently here.
  - None I am aware of
  - None as above
  - As above
- 11) **Are they encouraged by staff to join in activities?**
- Yes
  - The carers and staff do try to get her to join in.
  - Yes, as much as possible
  - Unsure
  - No, as above
  - Yes
- 12) **Have you ever been invited to attend meetings regarding your loved one's care?**
- Yes
  - Since the pandemic and lockdown there have been no meetings
  - I've had several formal and informal "chats" with management, nurse and other staff quite often and discuss anything we feel is relevant (and maybe not always directly relevant)
  - No
  - Not been here long, but meetings have taken place whilst we visited
  - Yes

### Environment

- 13) **Are you happy with the cleanliness of the home?**
- Definitely
  - The standard of cleanliness is excellent
  - In one word - yes
  - Yes - excellent
  - Yes
  - Yes
  - Yes
- 14) **Do you feel your loved ones' room reflects them? Are they able to make it their own?**
- His room is personalised with family photos
  - Yes, the room is pleasant with family photos and some of her personal things
  - Again yes. She appears quite happy and settled in her room
  - Yes



- Yes
- She has one or two things from home in her room

**15) Are you happy with the cleanliness of your loved one's room?**

- Yes
- Yes, her room is warm, clean and airy
- Yes, always found it clean and tidy
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes

## Visiting

**16) Are you now able to visit your loved one in person?**

- Yes
- Yes, I am able to visit regularly in her room
- Yes, as I am retired, I have plenty of free time and am always encouraged to visit x in person on a regular basis, so I am a regular visitor, usually 3 times a week, which I really appreciate
- Only 3 per times per week for an hour which is dismally insufficient for his mental wellbeing
- Yes, as on end-of-life care
- Yes

**17) How is the home facilitating this?**

- Lateral flow tests before allowing entry.
- I book slots to visit each week in advance at reception
- Our family have an unwritten arrangement on visits. I visit mid-week and other family members who are working at the weekend, mainly Sundays
- Negative lateral flow testing for all visitors and PPE
- By visitors wearing full PPE and lateral flow test
- Two per week off named persons list. Test beforehand, then visit in room

**18) What precautions do you have to take?**

- Masks, gloves and pinafores to be worn at all times during the visit.
- I arrive 30 minutes before the visit and get a lateral flow test. I put on an apron, gloves and mask before seeing her in her room
- I always take Covid test first. Have always passed test, plus had two vaccines. I am given plastic gloves, apron and mask before being let in.
- Negative lateral flow and full PPE
- Hand sanitising, lateral flow and full PPE
- Full PPE

**19) Do you know who to speak to if you have a complaint?**

- Yes
- I would see Maxine, the Home Manager
- Yes, no problem there



- Yes
- Yes
- Yes

**20) Is there anything else you would like to tell us?**

- My father loved being here. He is treated with respect, even when he is behaving like a diva or believes he should be in hospital.
- Since lockdown brought on by the pandemic, the care home has dealt with an extremely difficult situation very well and my respect and thanks go to all carers and staff who work there.
- Another very important comment I would like to make is that all the food is very good quality and well presented
- I and my son and daughter would appreciate more involvement in x's care planning package, along with more frequent visiting for longer periods. A flexible approach to visiting would be welcomed, rather than being required to make an appointment. Visiting times are extremely restrictive especially as we all work, no out of office visits or in x's room at weekends
- Staff here have been warm and friendly. No concerns regarding health care
- The family is happy with the care given to x

## **Acknowledgements**

Healthwatch Hartlepool would like to thank all staff, residents, and family members of residents at Rossmere Park Care Centre who helped to make our virtual visit informative and enjoyable.

We also wish to thank staff from Hartlepool Borough Council's Commissioning Team for their help and support in organising and facilitating our visit.

## **Service Provider Response**

