



Virtual Engagement Report
Westdene Residential Care Home
May 2021



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What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services which exist to make sure that people are at the heart of care.

We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved then share their views with those with the power to make change happen. Helping people find the information they need about services in their area is another of our priorities.

In summary, Healthwatch's main aims are to:

- Help people find out about local care.
- Listen to what people think of services.
- Help improve the quality of services by letting those running services and the government know what people want from care.
- Encourage people running services to involve people in changes to care.

Healthwatch Humber Network

Healthwatch North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, Hull, and East Riding have joined together to develop the Healthwatch Humber virtual care home engagement project to understand the experiences of residents, families, friends, and carers in care homes across the Humber region.

What is Virtual Engagement?

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the nature of Healthwatch's activities shifted from physical engagement to online 'virtual' engagement. We did not want to lose the opportunity to engage with care homes in this unprecedented time and wanted to have the voice of the resident heard. This has meant that all engagement with Westdene Care Home occurred via online methods.

The promotional activity Healthwatch undertook to advertise the virtual engagement and to gain questionnaire responses, was done via the homes and Healthwatch's social media platforms. When the engagement took place, all the interviews with staff, residents and the registered manager were completed using online platforms such as Zoom.

Overview/Background

Westdene Residential Care Home is an independently run home, located on Alliance Avenue in Hull. It is in relative proximity of West Park and Anlaby Road which has an array of shops and food outlets.

The care home was established in 1998 and is registered to provide residential care services to individuals over the age of 65 and also individuals living with dementia. The home has 29 rooms across two floors; 15 of these with en-suite facilities and one companion room. They also have a purpose built-sensory bathroom with a spa bath.

The home is rated as ‘Good’ by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) following their most recent inspection in June 2019; this was the same rating following an inspection in 2018.

Methodology

Healthwatch undertook research prior to inviting Westdene Residential Care Home to participate in the Virtual Engagement.

We looked at a range of care homes throughout Hull to see what COVID-19 information was displayed on their website and whether it revealed how family and friends could contact residents. We also looked online to understand what social media platforms they had and how family and friends were being kept updated on the residents’ wellbeing.

We contacted Westdene Residential Care Home to discuss the virtual engagement in January 2021. The care home agreed to participate and we started the engagement on 1st March 2021. The first week of the virtual engagement was focused on promoting the opportunity to be interviewed by Healthwatch which was extended to staff, residents, family and friends and the following week was when the engagement took place.

We designed promotional materials such as posters and leaflets, sending them to Westdene Residential Care Home along with letters for staff members, residents, family and friends to distribute accordingly.

The week-long engagement commenced from Monday 8th March 2021. In total 15 people completed the survey, this included the Registered Manager, 9 staff members, 3 friends and family members, and 2 residents.

Interview with the Manager

We arranged to interview Jill Carr who is the Registered Manager at Westdene Residential Care Home and has been in this post for 9 years. We asked Jill how she responded to the news about the pandemic.

Westdene decided to shut a week prior to Government issuing its guidance due to concerns she had about the spread of the coronavirus.

“We closed down a week before the Government requested us to, we were organised and prevented anyone non-essential coming into the home to reduce the risk of transmission”

Before the Pandemic Westdene had a Continuity plan which provided guidance on what to do in the event of an emergency such as flooding, Flu pandemic. However, Covid-19 was something that was completely new to the home so this did not form part of their Continuity Plan. The home up dated their Continuity plan as and when they received the latest Government Guidance.

“We had a Continuity plan for other things, we tried to sort ourselves out but it was difficult as the world had never faced anything like this in recent times. We did get COVID and we were not the first home to get it so we have been learning from what has happened nationally and from Hull City Council”

In terms of communication the home received daily updates from the Government and Hull City Council Commissioning Team who also provided information to support the home. Jill went onto say that the COVID team at Hull City Council were extremely supportive when the home had an outbreak of COVID -19.

“It was difficult to keep up with the changes as it was fast- moving, everyone was on the backfoot and in some cases it felt like we were on a sinking ship as it was difficult to prepare or plan for all possibilities. If we did have any concerns we approached the Hull City Council who helped enormously and when they did not know they went and found out for me”

Visiting and keeping in contact with family and loved ones

The residents and relatives were notified straight away about the changes that took place in the Care home and about the restrictions that were put into place. Jill went onto say that the home also provided new channels of communication to help family and residents to stay in touch.

“We had consent forms for vaccinations which we sent to family members through their preferred means. We had one family member who was the main point of contact who disseminated the information to the rest of the family. We bought a mobile phone at the very start so we could use WhatsApp. We set up a Facebook page and staff members managed it, only family members were able to see and access the information. We applied for iPads from the Government website and they provided us with two”

The majority of family members were understanding about the restrictions that the home had put in place to protect the residents and staff members. However, Jill told us that she was aware that family members were desperate to see their loved ones but understood why the

restrictions were necessary. Jill went on to say, that there was one relative that was not happy about the restrictions but following discussion with Jill, the relative sympathise and understood the need for them.

“We received lots of gifts for staff from relatives from the very start until now. When we were struggling for gloves we had donations and relatives would come sit outside, even when they could not see the residents so they could feel closer to them. The gifts from relatives really picked the staff up immensely it’s the little things make a big difference.”

We asked if there were any options so visiting could take place and Jill told us that 8 years ago they had a huge garden that was not fully utilised so they built an extension and three courtyards which link to the drive, this enables relatives to park their cars and enter the courtyard without actually going into the home. The home created some outdoor pods so relatives could visit their loved ones and they have also put measures in place so indoor visits could resume safely.

“We tried to keep visiting in place as much as possible as some relatives like to visit every day. It’s nice to have relatives now being able to come inside as some were lost without being able to see their loved ones.”

Organising visits in accordance with Government guidance was difficult at times because people were interpreting the information differently and throughout the pandemic the guidance changed on a day to day basis so ensuring the home was adhering to the latest guidance was challenging. Therefore, the manager and staff at the care home had to ensure they were working to the latest guidance and make sure it was been strictly followed. Jill went on to say that the team had worked hard and worked above and beyond their contracted hours to make sure all the guidance was in place and up to date.

The home involved family members and visitors in the risk assessment process to enable visits to take place.

“We use a company called QCS to help write the risk assessment. We provide relatives with a consent form that they read and sign, we have also put this on Facebook and have contacted relatives directly to discuss it. The form includes agreements on them wearing PPE, taking lateral flow tests, information regarding their medical conditions and allergies etc.”

The homes main concern regarding visits was ensuring everyone was following the guidelines, Jill went on to say that at times she found this quite difficult. Nevertheless, the home facilitate the interaction between residents and family by keeping them in contact via WhatsApp, text and facetime. They also provide updates to family members on Facebook. The care home had recently helped a couple residing at the home to celebrate their wedding anniversary, by organising a small tea party and taking plenty of photos so they could be shared with the couple’s daughters.

“Some relatives are not very good with mobile phones or technology and some residents with advanced dementia do not understand how to speak to relatives through the iPads. We have staff supporting conversations to give peace of mind and this has been reassuring for relatives to see their loved ones doing well.”

We were told that the home makes every effort to keep relatives up to date on their loved ones wellbeing on a regular basis and they always make themselves available when required to speak with resident's family and their friends.

Outbreak Management (Including Testing)

There has been approximately 95% of COVID -19 cases between the staff and residents in the last 8 months. They currently have things in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 such as having extra sinks in the corridors for washing hands and they have provided staff with a lot of training to ensure they are keeping themselves and the residents safe.

We asked what support she had received during the pandemic. Jill told us that Hull City Council were really good and provided the home with emotional and practical support. Jill advised that Hull City Council telephoned the home on a regular basis and responded to any concerns that they had and they made sure the home had full access to PPE. Jill went on to say that she really appreciated this support and that of the Frailty team who have been equally supportive.

“The frailty team has been a godsend as I can ring them up and speak to them about any concerns. When acting against time, the Frailty team are really good at getting things sorted out quickly and they would speak to relatives as well which really helped”

Additionally, all the staff are tested three times a week, two lateral flow tests and one PCR test. They have a testing centre on Thursdays for PCR and lateral flow tests on set days depending on the staff schedule and several staff members have also been tested for antibodies. Jill also pointed out that she has 52 staff members in all so a lot of time and energy goes into registering tests online and she has enlisted the support of a dedicated staff member to help with this task.

Although the home had a process in place to ensure testing took place, it did not always run smoothly this was due to some staff members not always available to pick up their test on a Thursday, other than that there had not been any other issues.

When asked what support was available for those staff members who tested positive for COVID-19, Jill told us:

“We ring staff regularly, some staff members are on their own and some are single parents. One staff member didn't have paracetamol so we posted some out to her. Our team supports each other, we don't use agency as we are now a lot more closer and are a strength to each other as some staff have not been able to see their families so it's been comfort to them to have others checking in on them and caring about them as if they were family. I can see that the team are now a lot more thoughtful of each other, we were already a great team before COVID but now it's even better. We did lose a few staff due to the pandemic over concerns regarding their health and fears of catching COVID which was understandable.”

The home keep files of all those people who have been tested for COVID-19, they are issued with a barcode that they use when they register online. The manager receives an email and

the staff members receive a text message to say whether they tested positive or negative. Jill did say initially there was a delay in them receiving the results but this as now improved.

When we enquired about the residents having COVID-19 testing, Jill confirmed that all residents are tested once a month, sooner if they have any concerns and following an isolation period of 14 days following hospital discharge.

The home also have a dedicated staff members who are responsible for testing residents and their relatives when they visit. Jill did say that not all of the residents understand the reason for the tests so at times testing some residents can be challenging, when this situation arises the staff members are advised to gently approach residents and not force them and if need be return to encourage them to have a test later in the day.

The home as a lounge that is specifically for visitors, were they can have a lateral flow test where they must wait for 30 minutes and can only enter the home if they have a negative result. All visitors follow the guidance i.e. wear masks, wash their hands and maintain the required social distance.

“We have lateral flow tests, relatives wear a mask when they come into the home and wash their hands, and they go into the front lounge which is kept separate from the home”.

“They are only allowed to visit if they receive a negative test”.

Changes in Care and Access to Services

There are a combination of GP face to face or online consultations, the latter was introduced during the pandemic and was only achievable due to the receipt of the iPads that they had received. The community nurses only visit the home if they need to carry out any specific treatments.

The home are experiencing difficulties when trying to access the GP surgery and they often find themselves waiting in long queues for example, 40 plus in the queue which the home finds very frustrating and time consuming.

“We are registered with Springhead Surgery which is a Modality practice as we had to re-register all of our residents with them, we did not have a choice in it as we were told that’s what we had to do. We have asked if the home can have an email or a direct number for GP surgeries as pharmacies have them, we continue to wait for an outcome.”

The home now access the support of the Frailty Team to help them and have found them to be really helpful.

“Prior to having access to the Frailty Team we had lots of problems trying to get the support we required. The Frailty Team have provided the help and support we needed. They work more productively than the doctors. ”

We asked about the homes experience of hospital discharges and we were told that some of the residents had been discharged without a COVID-19 tests while others had been discharged back to the home having had a negative result. Previously, there had been long

waits in telephone queues at GP practices to get residents results but this situation had now improved.

Wellbeing

We asked the manager what were her main concerns about the wellbeing of her residents and Jill recognised the importance for following the Government Guidance and the need to implement restrictions to ensure the safety of all the residents and staff members. Jill went on to say that at times it was very stressful for all concerned and at times she felt overwhelmed and quite emotional.

“As a manager I tried my best to always do what is right however sometimes it can be difficult to know what the right answer is”.

The home was much quieter than normal which was mainly due to the restrictions and people not visiting as much as they did previously. Some of the residents were much more settled due to it being much quieter while others found it difficult not seeing their friends and families as often or in the usual way.

The care homes usual activity plans had to be put on hold which was another cause for concern for Jill so they had to adapt and look at new and different ways to ensure the residents continued to be stimulated and entertained.

A concerted effort was made by all the staff members to speak to all the residents on a 1 to 1 basis to ensure they were not feeling lonely or isolated in their personal rooms. The current rotas allow for this as there is more staff on duty between the early and late shifts, Jill felt that this had a positive impact on staff as they are now much more focussed on their residents.

“The staff speak to residents every afternoon between the early and late staff coming and going”.

“The Senior carers and care staff are now thinking a lot more about the resident’s wellbeing and how we can make sure they are not isolated”

The home had also used technology to monitor those residents who preferred to stay in their own rooms to ensure they were not over looked or left too long without any staff interaction and this enables the staff members to focus their attention on those residents who need it most.

“Some residents want to stay in their rooms, we have a mobile handset like a telephone which tells us the last time anyone was in the residents room, we monitor this to make sure residents aren’t left alone for too long and staff can focus interactions where needed most”

Sadly, a few staff members had handed in their notice due to their worries about the spread of the virus and the impact it may have on their families. Jill told us it was a really difficult time but the team managed to pull together, staff were working more hours than normal to ensure

the health and wellbeing of the residents. Jill was more than grateful for how the team had worked together to support each other throughout the pandemic.

“The staff put in more hours, we are stronger now than before and I feel very lucky to have the team I have”.

Activities and support

Before the pandemic the home had access to external entertainers that used to come to the home on a regular basis to provide a range of activities to suit individual resident’s needs. However, due to the restrictions this has not been possible and all external entertainment had to be cancelled. Additionally, the home had their own activity coordinator but soon into the pandemic they were advised to shield. The manager told us that this was a very difficult time and she found herself having to prioritise the work the home delivered above providing activities until all measures were in place to protect the residents.

“We spent a lot of time catching up and trying to sort everything else out, as time moved on and we got into a better position”

Once things had settled down the home started to adapt and look into new ways to deliver activities to ensure the resident’s emotional needs were met. The home have also researched and found they could access games that residents could do on their mobiles and iPads

“We’ve had more opportunity to do one-to-one activities. We have been looking in to the best use of the mobile phones and iPads and also been using them even though they are time consuming to ensure residents have the opportunity to access entertainment and use them as there is a lot of games on there for residents. We also get newspaper for residents who want to read them”

The home could no longer invite the local nursery into the home who previously visited the residents on a fortnightly basis we were told that they were a great joy for the residents. The home had adapted and have started to deliver a lot of smaller activities to their residents to promote their wellbeing and ensure their ongoing safety. The home had also made some further purchases and ordered a rainbow table which is a size of a small table that incorporates a number of activities that a number of residents could use at the same time. They have also purchased a new smart television so they can access YouTube for music and activities, to promote movement to music and chair exercises.

Observations

Following the interview with the Registered Manager; we had a virtual tour of Westdene Residential Care Home. This observation was unfortunately impacted by significant issues with the wireless connectivity within the building which the home had been aware of and had been in the process of resolving.

The tour began from the Registered Managers office, which is located next to the entrance to the home. The reception area was clean and tidy, with laminated floors and magnolia walls, which continued throughout the home. The reception area had a hand sanitiser station at the entrance

When we were being shown down the hallway, heading towards one of the three homes courtyards, we saw there were numerous pictures of the residents across the walls.

The courtyard that we were shown was spacious and well kept, it had a bricked floor with two benches under a gazebo, which were separated to comply with social distancing and had been freshly painted at the time of the observation. The Registered Manager advised us they were soon going to be getting some bedding plants as it will soon be the summer period and residents enjoy seeing the flowers bloom. We were told that the residents can access this area as and when they please and are able to have the choice of eating their meals indoors or outdoors when the weather permits.

We found that beyond this point, as we were being led to the dining area that there were some connection issues which resulted in us not being able to enter the area. At the time of our observation, the residents had just finished their lunch and we were able to see the dining area through an interior window within the home. From what we could see, the dining area was large, with tables spaced out to enable social distancing. The tables were set to enable two residents to sit opposite each other, allowing interaction between them during meal times. From what we could see, the décor of the room was well kept, with clean and well cared for laminate flooring and magnolia walls.

After the connection stabilised, we were led through one of the homes lounge areas which was carpeted and had seating for around a dozen residents, spaced out to ensure adequate social distancing. We were told by the Registered Manager that this room can also be used for indoor visits as there was a secure entrance to the side of the lounge that connects to an unused space within the home. Due to COVID, this unused space has now been made into a waiting area for family and friends after they take their lateral flow test as they can come through the entrance of the home and go directly into this area, minimising the of transmission as indoor visits take place.

The Registered Manager attempted to show us one of the bedrooms on several occasions, but we found upon entry to the room that the signal would completely disconnect. From what we could see as the connection jittered, was that the room was carpeted and contained furnishings such as a small bed and chair, cabinets with personalised items such as ornaments. We were also able to see that there was a history board at the very entrance to the room which had pictures and showed the interests and past experiences of the resident. The room we saw also had an en-suite however we couldn't take a look inside.

What did staff members say?

There are 52 staff members working at the Care Home and this figure included the Registered Manager. Westdene employs senior carer staff, care assistants, days and nights, domestic staff, activity coordinator, and cooks to ensure the health and wellbeing of the residents

During the virtual engagement we were able to speak to a range of different staff members who had different job titles. We were told that most of the staff members have been working

at Westdene for more than 8 years with some being slightly newer but have still been there for at least 2 years.

All the staff members we spoke to, told us they really enjoyed working at the care home and they felt it was a happy place to work. The staff members interviewed told us they felt supported in their job roles.

“There is a sense of family, I’m lucky to be part of something like this”

“It is very rewarding, the little things make all the difference.”

“Great place to work for, supportive staff and will help anyone. Residents are great”

“It’s a small family business, looks after its staff, are understanding of any personal issues and problems, you are known personally not just a number.”

“I feel like I am making a difference by coming to work each day and that what I do is important.”

“They are a great team and all the staff are very supportive. Management are good and they help us to achieve our best. They helped me with my university work and supported me through those years.”

When asked the staff members if their job roles had changed during the pandemic, the majority of staff members interviewed told us their job roles hadn’t changed too much but they made reference to being much more aware of the effects of the virus and how easily it is transmitted so they made sure the care home was clean and all the measures that were put in place to protect the residents and staff were strictly followed for example they made sure they washed their hand regularly throughout the day and wore PPE for each interaction and ensured it was safely disposed of. Some staff members found the whole experience up setting and hard work to ensure everyone’s safety and worried when there was a limited supply of PPE. While some staff members were very proud of their achievements.

“I became more knowledgeable, received more training and became more involved with my colleagues.”

“It was stressful and upsetting and was hard work, it was a scary experience”.

“Difficult when we had limited PPE, hoping everything was safe. Depressing times.”

“I did everything and covered every role in the care home to help”.

I was the only one not to catch COVID. It was all hands on deck, I had to cover all the roles”.

The experience was good in bringing everyone together”

Changes in Care and Access to Services

The staff members we spoke to, told us that they had all worked extremely hard to maintain the status quo and they felt that the care that they provide was not compromised in any way. In fact the staff members felt they went above and beyond their roles and responsibilities to ensure the safety of their residents. Some staff told us that at the start of the pandemic and the restrictions were imposed they felt abandoned by the doctors as they were not easy to get access to and they were not visiting or offering face to face appointments.

When asked what was their biggest struggle was throughout this time and we were told telling the friends and a family that they were no longer able to visit their loved ones. They had to find different ways to ensure they kept in touch, initially this was by telephone and later they were able to use WhatsApp, Facebook and use the iPad for virtual means.

“At the start we had no support and we felt abandoned by the doctors”.

“We were not able to get everything residents needed.

“We are OK at the moment as doctors are now more involved”.

“When I came back from having COVID-19 we were back working 70 plus hours per week”

“It was really hard.”

Wellbeing

We asked the staff members what their biggest concerns were during this time and we were told residents catching COVID-19 and deteriorating or even dying was their biggest concern, followed by residents feeling lonely due to having to isolate and not being able to see their family and friends. Some staff members were frightened that they may bring the virus into the home and some staff members spoke about the difficulties that they were having trying to keep residents in their rooms when they were isolating. There was also some concerns about the staff member’s families contracting the virus.

“Loneliness and deterioration of residents”,

“Feeling responsible for their deterioration.

“I have had difficulties with my own family”

“Shortage of PPE supplies at the beginning of the pandemic as I was worried about residents catching COVID and dying.”

“I was scared of catching it and bringing it into the home and passing it to my family”.

“Keep residents safe”.

“Difficult to keep the residents in their rooms, difficulty having PPE available at the start of the pandemic”.

“It was hard with long shifts”.

What did residents say?

We were only able to interview two residents who have been residing at Westdene between 1 and 2 years. Both residents told us they were happy to take part in the engagement and preferred to be interviewed together. From the residents presentation demonstrated that they appeared to enjoy living at the home, and content in their environment. Both residents spoke about the importance of keeping in touch with their families and friends and being able to see them on a regular basis.

“It does not feel like a Care Home”.

“It has a homely feel to it”.

We are happy as long as we can see our friends and families”.

Changes to Care

We asked the residents if their care had changed, and they both stated that very little had changed in terms of the standard of care that they receive. They both voiced that all of their care needs continued to be provided, and they were able to make decisions about the care that they received and that their opinions were always taken into account.

Both residents told us that the home had a different feel since the pandemic started and referred to people not being able to visit especially family and both expressed in the strongest terms how much they are missing their friends and family.

“It’s different to normal since the pandemic started”.

“We can’t have visitors”.

“It’s difficult at times, I miss seeing family”

When asked if they had a named worker who works closely with them to ensure all of their needs are met, they both told us they did not have a specific carer but did go on to say that all the staff treat them with dignity and respect.

When asked if they felt safe in their environment, both residents told us they did feel safe and they didn’t have any concerns about contracting COVID-19. They both confirmed that if they did have any concerns they knew who to approach and they felt confident that any concerns would be addressed and resolved.

When asked how staff members had kept them up to date about the changes made to ensure they were safe in their environment both residents told us they hadn’t been told about the any changes.

Access to Services and Testing

When we asked the residents if they had been able to access to other healthcare services in the community such as Dentistry, Opticians and Community Nurses they both were under the impression that they were unable to access any services due to the pandemic.

Both residents told us that they had their GP changed during the pandemic but neither of them had needed to access their new GP during this time and they were not unduly concerned about this change.

We also asked if they had been tested for COVID-19, they both told us they had but neither of them were aware if they had an antibody test. Both residents were happy to have the tests and understood the reason for them to be completed.

Both residents told us they understood the procedure to be followed if they tested positive for COVID-19 and the need to isolate to protect other residents and staff working in the care home. One resident told us that they had already had COVID-19 but was well looked after by the staff team.

“We would have to isolate for two weeks”

“We were given more care as and when needed if tested positive”

Communication and Visiting

To help the residents maintain regular contact with the friends and family the home purchased mobile phones and an iPad. Both devices enabled the home to access some social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. These platforms made it possible for the residents to see their friends and family on a regular basis albeit virtually. To make this possible the staff members helped the residents to use them as and when they required. Both of the residents we spoke to also told us that they had their own private telephones situated in their personal rooms which also enabled them to receive calls and make calls to friends and family whenever they wished to.

The residents also told us that pods were developed making it possible for the residents to receive visitors into their home and in the Garden areas safely. One of the residents did express her dissatisfaction that she is unable to see her friends and family enough and they would like to see them on a much more regular basis.

“We have telephones in our rooms,

“We have video calls so we can see our friends and family”.

“We now have Pods so we can have safe visits”.

“We are now open to visitors”.

“Family have been able to visit us as much as possible but not as much as I would have liked”.

Wellbeing and Activities

In terms of the residents wellbeing and the impact that the pandemic has had on them, both of the residents told us that their mental health and wellbeing was generally good however one of the residents declared that they felt much lower in mood and they stated they didn't feel as happy as they did pre-pandemic.

We asked them if we could turn the clocks back, what could the care home have done differently, and both residents told us that the home couldn't have done any more than they already do for all the residents and they both thought they have always received good support before the pandemic and continue to do so.

"I don't think they could give me any more support than what they already do"

"Could not do anything more than what they are already doing."

"You can get anything you want from the staff, you just have to ask".

"If they can do it they will".

We asked the residents if they were still able to access activities in the home at this time and we were told that a lot of the activities had stopped for a while but they were now able to access some activities in the home. One of the residents told us that they were free to attend any activity whenever they wished to.

"There has been some changes to the activities".

"There are less activities than usual".

"I join in when I can."

We posed a question about the future and asked if they were feeling positive about the future and both of the residents told us they were not feeling positive, one of the residents felt uncertain stating they don't know what's going to happen next. They both expressed their disapproval about the restrictions imposed and one of the residents told us they would have preferred to be in their own home, where they would have been able to receive visitors whenever they wished to.

It was clear by our interaction with the residents that they had both missed their friends and families. Nevertheless, they both made it very clear that they were really pleased that they could now see their friends and family even though it wasn't as regular as it used to be.

"Not particularly, don't know what's going to happen in the future but glad I get to see my family again."

"Not really- But I'm glad that visits have started again,"

"You just don't know what is going to happen next"

“I would prefer to not have been restricted from seeing my family but I know they visited whenever they could”

“I would have preferred to be in my own home during the pandemic, but its okay. Family visit when they can. I would like to see my grandchildren”

What did family and friends say?

We were able to speak to three family members during the virtual engagement and all three were more than happy to be interviewed to ensure their family member’s voices were heard. All three told us that their loved ones had memory impairment so they would not be able to take part in the interview process.

They were all regular visitors to the care home before the pandemic and they went on to say that the pandemic had served to restrict their visits to their loved ones. Initially, they were not able to see their relatives face to face, so every other day they would telephone the care home to keep in touch and later when measures were put in place, they were permitted to visit their loved ones on a weekly basis.

Overall, relatives seemed to be happy with the way the home was caring for their loved ones. In the sections below, we will see very positive comments in regards to how well the home dealt with outbreaks as well as helping residents to receive care outside of the home if they needed it.

Furthermore, we also note that the family members have an appreciation for all the hard work the carers have put in for their loved ones before the pandemic and during the pandemic.

Changes to Care

When we asked the family members if they were aware of any changes to the health care services their loved ones received. They all told us that at any time a doctor was required, the care home would always call them to let them know. One of the family members told us that she was aware that GP face to face appointments were limited due to the restrictions and virtual consultations were being offered. However, she did go on to say that due to her mum’s medical statues her mum continued to receive face to face GP appointments

“My mum, has face-to-face visits rather than virtual ones because she has certain medical needs to be met (e.g. Diabetic medications etc).

“The home always calls me if my mum needs a doctor”

One of the family members told us about her mother’s experience when she had to go to the hospital following a fall. She went onto say that her mother has dementia and is not able to go to the hospital alone. When the accident occurred the home telephoned the relative immediately to let her know and invited her to join her mum at the Hospital so that she could help the medics by providing them with information regarding her mother’s care and provide much needed reassurance to her mum.

“I received a call to tell me that my mother had a fall and was asked to go into the hospital immediately”

The relative told us that her mum was treated well while she was in Hospital and prior to her discharge the hospital conducted a test to ensure she had not contracted COVID-19 which would have placed other vulnerable residents at risk. Following discharge back to the care home, the relative confirmed all procedures were in place to prevent the virus coming into the home. Her mother had to self-isolate until the results were known and she had received a negative result before she could be reintegrated back into the main area of the home. This provided some reassurance and demonstrated to the family members that Westdene has a clear plan set out in case residents needed to go into hospital, and that they were careful not to bring the virus into the home.

“Once the test was negative, she was brought back into the main home areas where she could interact with other residents again”

Communication and Visiting

The family members were asked about how visitations had changed during the pandemic and what affects this had on their family members who lived in the care home and also how those restrictions made them feel.

All the family members told us that the care home staff were clear with their communications and they managed to tell family members in advance about the visiting restrictions they were implementing.

They were told that the home decided to put restrictions into place a week prior to the government guidance coming into effect as they believed it was the right thing to do, to protect the residents and prevent the virus potentially coming into the home.

Family members informed us that they were told in various different ways about the changes to be made such as email, telephone calls, letters and they felt that they were told in advance, providing them with plenty of time to adapt to the new restrictions.

“We were informed at beginning of March, a week before lockdown visiting restrictions were put in place”

“I got an email from the home and also got a call I managed one last visit before they put the restrictions in place”.

“The home informed us a week prior about the big changes that were going to be taking place”.

“I got an email from the home and also got a call and they informed me over the phone. I had my last visit and told they would be closing”

“They sent emails and updates on Government restrictions that were going to be coming into force/easing etc. Also kept informed about whether there were any covid cases in the home either by email or telephone”

Understandably, family members also had an emotional response to the restrictions. We tried to find out how this affected their well-being. All family members were really upset that restrictions were put in place which determined when they could and when they could not see their loved ones.

All family members thought that one way or another they managed to keep in contact with their loved ones and this felt a little better than no contact at all.

“I was very upset, not being able to go in.

It was tough but I understood the reasons why they were restricting visitation and appreciated their reasons.”

“I was extremely upset as I used to visit my mum every day, however I was able to call everyday so this was OK, and this still made me feel that I was in constant contact with her”.

One family member told us that the home were extremely accommodating and they were able to text the care home to ask questions about her family member and arrange a time to call so that they could speak to their relative. The care home had made this possible by proving time slots were relatives were actively encouraged to contact the home between the hours of 10am-4pm. One of the relatives told us that she received updates throughout the day regarding how her mums health and wellbeing.

“Contact was unlimited but only within the hours of 10am-4pm. The same applied for texting the homes phone, which allowed me to ask questions, arrange the phone call with my mother or receive updates throughout the day”

“I managed to stay in contact through video calls and had phone numbers to call through WhatsApp”.

Another family member told us that her relative had support from a staff member each time she called, which she appreciated as her mother had difficulties using the telephone especially as it was a video call. This ensured that their communication was effective and the relative said that this made her feel that her mother was being well cared for.

“My mother was always accompanied by a nurse/member of staff as she had a bad habit of putting the phone to her ear instead of holding it in front to converse in the video format”

They received pictures of their family members and updates about them throughout the day and this made them feel at ease. It was very pleasing to hear that all family members all

believed that the home went above and beyond to ensure that communication was there despite family members not being able to physically see each other.

All of the family members interviewed felt that the home are doing everything they could to ensure that the residents well-being was looked after by ensuring they had constant communication with their family during such difficult times.

Wellbeing,

Family members were asked how they felt about their relative's possibly contracting the COVID-19 virus. All family members understandably were worried and concerned about their relatives getting sick and how their care would be delivered if they became ill. They told us that they were informed right away if anyone in the home was tested positive even if it was not their relative. The family members felt that they were kept informed at all times with all the cases and how they were managed in the home.

I was very concerned. There is always a risk. The home did inform us straight away when my mum had to be in isolation because she had been to the hospital where there were positive COVID cases. The care home was really good at keeping me informed with all the isolation steps and also when my mum came out of isolation”

“Very frightening of it happening”

“Informed us immediately when my mum caught COVID but luckily she was not too ill. She has had her first vaccine, next weekend she has her next one. Was in touch regularly to make sure she was OK”

Understandably, family members had many concerns and we asked if they felt that their worries were listened to and actioned upon. All family members informed us that they felt their worries were put to rest when they spoke to the staff at the care home. One of the family members told us that she had every confidence that the home were handling any outbreaks with care and she felt that her family member was in safe hands.

“They listened to my concerns and reassured me any time I needed it”

“They kept us informed, it was more difficult as we could not see and speak to my relative for a few days when she was ill, but the staff did everything they could to keep me informed on how my relative was feeling”

Some relatives told us any concerns that they had, were soon put to rest because they felt the care home was very proactive when looking after the resident's health and wellbeing and especially during any outbreaks of the virus in the home.

“Never had any concerns but was always well informed about my mother's condition and in regards to any improvements or declines. She felt for the staff as well, who had to take care of her mother who have covid, yet the staff also had home lives that they would go back to and so she was concerned about the impact it had on them too. So overall she had confidence that the home would do everything they possibly could”

“They kept us informed, was more difficult as we could not see and speak to her herself for a few days when she was ill, but they did everything they could”

The home was quick to get in touch with them, when their relative had a dentistry issue. The home had advised the relative of the steps to be taken when taking their family member to the dentist. The relative told us that they were made aware by their family member that they were in discomfort once they got back home after their dentistry treatment. The relative made contact with the care home to make them aware and told us that the carers were already aware and they had taken appropriate action to reduce the discomfort.

“I have no major concerns”

“I find the home to be proactive when taking care of my mums needs”

“My mum called me and said she was sore following her dental treatment, so I contacted the home and they were aware already dealing with it”

In further regards to resident’s well-being and safety, one family member told us that the precautions the home took were amazing. They went on to say that she picked this particular home for her mum because she had heard about how great they are with their residents, and how well their residents are looked after.”

“The precautions they have taken (lateral flow, sanitization, waiting areas) are amazing. Could not ask for anything better than what they are offering”

“All the staff work extremely hard, the care is second to none. I asked if my mum could go to this home though word of mouth as I have heard how exceptional they are”

Activities

Family members were asked about how the activities and entertainment might have changed for their loved ones at the care home during the pandemic. They told us that they believe the home were offering as much as they possibly could, to entertain the residents during this time. The family members told us that they could see some of the resident’s activities through videos that were sent to them and they could see their loved ones part taking in activities during such difficult times.

“all the staff will always involve her in arts and crafts, sing along, dancing, seasonal baking (Christmas cookie decorating) and even doing her hair (cutting and styling) She has been able to see glimpses of each of these through the staff sending videos messages or photographs of her partaking and engaging in these activities. They have been trying as hard as they can to keep everyone’s spirits up and make everybody happy, which keeps them going”

One family member told us about the staff going above and beyond to ensure her mother had her favourite treats in her room all the time and also the staff members are in constant contact with them to ask if there is anything else they can do to make the resident’s stay better at the home

Additional comments that the family members wished to express:

“I have no complaints, I just want to praise all the staff for all their hard work through these difficult times in this environment as it’s not easy”

“They took all the right precautions and now have make visitations that can be done through a glass screen or through a double glazed hub outside while mum sits inside, giving them the first sort of face to face, close proximity interactions while still being cautious”

“I am more than happy with the food and facilities my mum is getting, I truly believe my mum has thrived whilst being housed there. Also they do not stop me from taking treats in for my mum either”

“My mum is a big fan of Horlicks, which is always kept in her room because they know how much she likes it. There is a great sense of communication between my mum and the staff in terms of ‘what would your mum like?’ and ‘is there anything else we can do?’ to make her feel more at home and that her individual needs are met”

Recommendations

As our observation struggled due to the severity of the connectivity problems, we were unable to get a full-tour of the home. These issues existed prior to the start of the engagement which at one point affected both the telephone and internet connectivity in the building. We have spoken with the manager about these issues. This will be resolved sometime in the future as she has already taken action and arranged for the home to change over from copper telephone and internet lines (ADSL) to the newer Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP); which will have less interference and will not degrade over time, unlike copper connections.

We feel from looking at website for Westdene Residential Care Home that it does not reflect the commitment and passion we’ve seen during our interviews.

In addition, to the suggestions below, the CQC rating on the first page is connected to an archived CQC page instead of the correct one and at minimum this should be corrected.

We would also recommend for the following to be considered to improve the website:

- A different layout (the current background does impact on the readability of the text). The text and images could also be larger.
- More information about the home, including COVID-19 policies, what activities and services is offered, an example of a food menu etc.
- More personalised; e.g. a section about the management team, with images and a short profile of how long they have been at the home, what is important to them when it comes to the delivery of the service etc.
- Quotes from residents and / or family members regarding the quality of care delivered and from staff about why they enjoy working at Westdene Residential Care Home.
- (With permission) a section that gets updated when events in the home take place with pictures of residents, family and friends, staff part-taking etc.

The residents that we spoke to were not aware that they had a key worker, it may be beneficial to place a picture and the name of the resident's keyworker in their personal room and prompt the resident from time to time to remind them.

We would recommend the care home reviews the procedure for the PCR tests due to some staff not being able to pick up the tests as per current procedure.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Kingston upon Hull would like to thank Westdene Residential Care Home, Jill the Registered Manager, all the staff members, residents and family / friends who participated in this Virtual Engagement and our volunteers for helping us to make this a success.

Distribution

This report has been distributed to the following:

- Healthwatch England
- Hull Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Hull City Council
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Westdene Residential Care Home
- Healthwatch bodies within the Humber Network