

Enter and View report

Thistle Hill Care Home, Knaresborough

August 2022

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Background

What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch North Yorkshire is the independent champion for people using local health and care services. We listen to what people like about services, and to what could be improved. We share these views with the people who have the power to make a difference.

What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to undertake Enter and View visits. Our team of authorised representatives conduct Enter and View visits to local health and social care services to find out how services are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. Healthwatch Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies.



Details of the visit to Thistle Hill Care Home

Service address	Thistle Hill, Knaresborough, HG5 8LS
Service provider	Barchester Healthcare Homes Ltd
Date	11.08.2022
CQC rating	Requires improvement (27.01.2022) in the areas of (1) safety (2) well-led
Care home manager	Mandy Scott
Contact number	01423 869200

Summary

Purpose of the report

We summarise the findings gathered during the visit on 11 August 2022 and feedback shared through survey responses gathered before and after the visit.

Purpose of the visit

- To visit and gather views of the residents and their relatives and the experiences of the services provided.
- To observe the ongoing care being provided for the residents and their interaction with staff and their surroundings.

During the visit

Our authorised Enter and View representatives visited the home and spoke with residents, residents' relatives and friends, and care home staff.

We heard from 17 residents, 11 residents' friends or family members, and 10 members of staff including volunteers, whose feedback forms this report's basis.

Key findings

We found that at the time of our visit Thistle Hill Care Home was operating to a good standard. These findings were based on our observations, and reflects the general happiness of residents, family and friends of residents and staff members.

However, there were a few issues highlighted and we have made suggestions for review and improvement. One of the main areas we identified for improvement, which impact the quality of life and care in the home, are to increase the number of staff available during the night, improve food quality and provide activities that are inclusive to everyone.

Positive feedback

- Overall, the residents and their family and friends were generally happy with the home.
- The residents felt positive about the cleanliness and hygiene of themselves and the home.
- Staff enjoy working in the home and are kept informed of any changes.
- The care home communicates well with family and friends of residents, and they have a clear understanding of where to go to raise concerns and issues.

Recommended areas for improvement

- Promote the ratio of staff at the home to satisfactory levels to meet the needs of the residents particularly during the night.
- Ensure when using agency staff, they receive induction training to highlight the care needs of the individual residents and provide name badges.
- Provide activities that are inclusive for everyone and tailored to individual requirements.
- Improve quality and variety of food to a good standard.
- Enhance the staff notice board in the reception area with name labels.
- Review sensory health checks to ensure they are up to date.

About this visit

Thistle Hill Care Home is run by Barchester Healthcare Homes Ltd and provides care to its residents in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire. The home has 85 beds, and at the time of the visit, 83 people resided there and had been resident for between one week and six years. The current manager has been in post for nearly five years.

This was an announced Enter and View visit arranged with the care home manager. The purpose of this visit was to capture the experience of life and care within a care home environment and to identify examples of positive working practice. We did this by observing the residents engaging with staff and their surroundings and by speaking with the residents to understand their experience. We asked relatives and staff members to provide their experience and views of the care home by completing a survey.

Prior to our visit, we provided information about the Enter and View visit which was made available for people to read in the reception area in the home. It included surveys for staff and relatives to complete and how to access the survey digitally. The survey was available up to ten days after our visit.

On the day, four of our authorised representatives conducted observations. We spoke with 17 care home residents, who shared their thoughts and experiences of living at Thistle Hill Care Home. During our insight gathering, we used a survey to help our discussions which focused on quality of life and care in the home, and the impact of COVID-19.

Eleven family and friends responded with their experience and views of the care home, and we heard from 10 members of staff who work in the home. Most of the staff respondents had worked at the home for more than a year.

Of these respondents, not all of them were able to provide an answer to every question and some respondents preferred not to answer the questions.



Findings

Environment

On the initial observation of the care home, our authorised representatives found the building to be in a good state of repair with easy access for visitors. We noted parking may be limited at busy times. The care home is located off the main road with no traffic noise.

There are large gardens on all sides with a wheelchair friendly path that leads to a wooded area providing outdoor seating. Some of the gardens are secure and readily accessible for residents' use. Our representatives observed some of the residents in the garden cooling off using a paddling pool during the hot weather. We were informed during our visit that the large garden was used for events such as summer fayres.

On entering the home through a locked main door, our representatives found a pleasant reception area which was clean and tidy with no unpleasant smells. The receptionist was welcoming and friendly. The information available in reception area was quite limited with no names on the staff board. Access to the lifts were visible from the reception area.

Accommodation

The care home is split into three units, the Farnham, Ripley, and Deighton. With around half of all the residents in the Memory Lane community (Deighton Unit) upstairs. Ripley unit on the ground floor provides general nursing care and Farnham unit provides more specialised care for young adults with acquired brain injury.

A lift was available for staff to accompany residents to other floors and the dementia unit was secured for residents by internal locks. The corridors were observed to be well decorated with landmarks to help residents with cognitive impairment find their way around the home. Signage to communal areas was clearly marked with appropriate pictures and residents' rooms were easily identified with large writing in differing colours and some had a photo on the door. The care home said they have dementia champions and follow a dementia framework.

Our representatives observed a sensory room with lights and was available for residents use as a quiet area. They noted that the communal living spaces were generally good.

The residents' rooms were single use with ensuite bathrooms. They were generally well decorated, clean, and tidy with enough space around the bed for movement.

The rooms we visited had hospital beds, sensor pads, hoists, and wheelchairs available and the care home has a shower bed.

Cleanliness and hygiene

Our representatives noted that overall, the care home was clean, however, some unpleasant smells were detected in two of the three units (Farnham and Deighton).

We asked residents about the cleanliness of the home.

Overall, most residents that responded felt the home was clean and comfortable. With one resident commenting that the cleanliness is very good.

Quality of life

General happiness

Residents were asked whether they were happy living in the care home and how much choice they had over their daily life. (By choice we meant could they get up/go to bed when they want, can they go where they like in the home, do they choose what to wear each day etc).

Of the 17 residents we spoke with, 15 responded to our question. Nine said they were happy living in the care home, three respondents explained they were somewhat happy, and three told us that they are not happy. One of the residents was not happy because they wanted to be able to access physiotherapy to be able to walk.



"I am happy here; it's like a family overall plus a relative has been included with a birthday celebration."



Most of the residents that responded (16 out of 17) told us they have adequate choice over their daily life, but four respondents explained whilst they had some choice it was not enough. One of the respondents mentioned wanting to get in the garden more.

Food and drink

Residents and relatives were asked to share their views on the food and drink. Our representatives observed a mealtime in the home.

During the visit, our representatives observed some of the residents eating together and enjoying their food. Although it appeared a few residents were unable to feed themselves had a long wait before they had assistance.

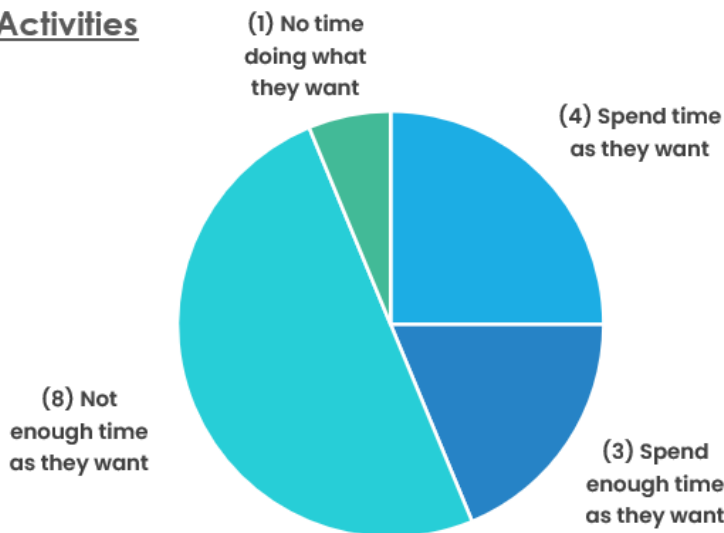
Many residents shared their views on food and drink (16 out of 17) and most (11 out of 16) explaining they received adequate food and drink at OK times, but five felt the quality and variety of food had deteriorated in the last year. This was mirrored by staff, and we observed food that was over processed with no vegetables or fruit.

Activities

Residents were asked if they spend their time doing things they value and enjoy. Relatives and staff were asked if residents have regular access to activities in the home.

There was a mixed response from the 15 residents we heard from.

Activities



Of those residents that felt they did not spend enough time doing things they enjoy they explained they would like more opportunity to walk and visit the gardens independently.

Our representatives during the visit observed a singer entertaining the residents in the dementia unit (Deighton) as part of a coffee morning, and we noted the singer knew residents by name. We also noticed a magic table in the communal area of the unit. Our representatives did not observe any activities in other units; however, the staff informed us they could join in with the entertainment in the Deighton unit.

We also heard from eight residents' friends and family, six of which felt their relative has regular access to activities and of the remaining two they commented that this was due to a medical condition. When asked if they receive invites to activities six out of the seven respondents answered yes.



"Sometimes they do events and invite families. There is a summer BBQ coming up soon."



Social contact

Residents and their relatives were asked about their social contact and our representatives observed interactions between residents, relatives, and staff.

During the visit, our representatives observed interaction during a coffee morning with staff and the singer. We also observed interaction between residents and staff in the Farnham unit during lunchtime. The staff interacted with residents appropriately and appeared cheerful and helpful.

Of the 16 residents, the responses were mixed. Three have as much social contact as they want, six have an adequate amount, six have some but feel it is not enough and two explained they have very little contact and feel socially isolated. One resident said "not enough time for staff to talk to me they are too busy" whilst another noted staff would have a laugh and joke with them.



"There were lots of communal activities to join in with if I wanted social contact."



Nine of the family and friends said they can visit whenever they want with the most of them able to visit regularly.



Quality of care

Residents and relatives

They were asked whether they felt they/their relative was well cared for. We also observed whether residents looked well cared for during our visit.

Our representatives noted during the visit that the residents were dressed and well-groomed. Out of the 14 respondents, half felt clean and able to present themselves in the way they liked, and half felt adequately clean and presentable. One resident mentioned they particularly liked the shower bed.



"It is a proper shower where you lay down in a lovely room with coloured lights, bubbles and music."



Friends and family were mostly satisfied with the care their loved ones received. Out of the nine respondents, four were very satisfied, four somewhat satisfied and one was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Also, many respondents (five out of six) felt their loved ones had access to all they need in the home.



"They look after my relative very well. The staff go out of their way to ensure that they are comfortable and content."



We also wanted to know whether residents feel like they need additional help with anything, such as help to eat or drink, and if they receive enough help.

Most respondents (9/12) felt that they receive enough help. Out of the three that replied that they did not receive enough help, one said the help they received by carer was somewhat rough.

Relatives and friends were asked if they contribute to individual care plans.

Most of the respondents (5/7) said they were asked to contribute to a relative's care plan.



“When my loved one first moved to Thistle Hill we were involved with their care plan and even though their condition has deteriorated significantly since then we are always contacted should there be any changes.”



Staff

We also wanted to know how well informed the staff are about the residents they look after in terms of their individual likes and dislikes, food/drink requirements, hobbies/interests.

Seven members of staff responded, and the majority (6/7) said they were kept very informed. One staff member commented that part of the induction training was to put emphasis on individual likes and habits of the residents.

Safety and staff levels

Residents, relatives, and staff were asked whether they feel there are enough staff, and we asked the residents if they felt safe in the home.

Most residents we spoke with answered this question. Of those that responded six felt there were adequate staffing, however, ten explained that there were insufficient numbers of staff within the home. One person said it's a bit scary when there is no support at night and the another said they felt the issue mainly at night as it takes a long time to get a response when he needs the toilet.

Of the eight residents' friends and family that responded the majority said there were enough. They did also comment that there are often a lot of new faces from agencies which is sometimes confusing and there may be a lack of carer experience. Those that responded no to the question mirrored some of the residents feeling that not enough staff were available at night.

Only six staff responded and of those four felt there were enough staff. The remaining two noted that numbers were insufficient and agency staff were being used to fill the gaps which can sometimes be difficult working with new staff when units are very specialised.

Most residents said they felt safe in the care home and of those that felt safe, but not as safe as they would like, they explained concerns that temporary staff could bring a virus and one person found a carer not very friendly.

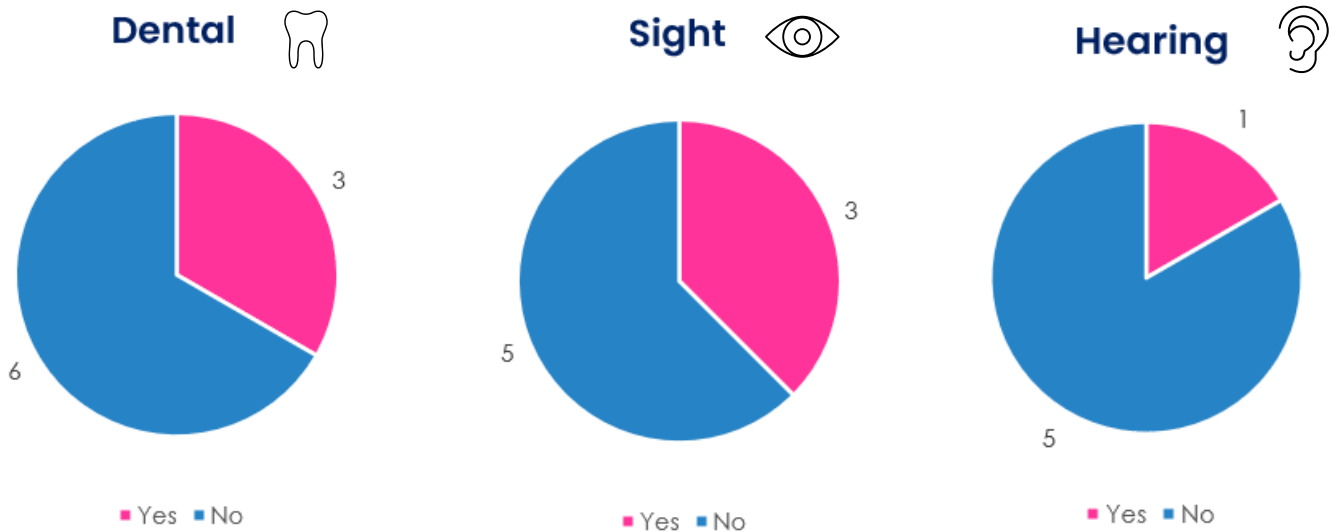


"The staff at Thistle Hill Care Home can't do enough for you."



Sensory health (including oral health, sight, and hearing)

We asked residents and relatives/ friends if they or their loved one had been able to access relevant health checks during the pandemic.



Of the sample, not all the residents answered this question and of those that did respond the majority were unable to access sensory health checks during the pandemic. This mirrored the response from the relatives with 4 out of 6 unable to access health sensory health checks. One relative said their loved one was still waiting for an appointment. However, it was noted that of those residents that said they had not received a sensory check 7 of them did not feel they needed one.

It is not unexpected that very few residents were able to access sensory health checks during the pandemic as services were severely restricted.

Of the staff sample, less than half responded to the question about recording sensory health needs in care plans and of these respondents the majority said that residents' care plans record their oral health, sight, and hearing needs, and provided information about communication needs.

Care during COVID-19

Staff

What is your overall experience of working in a care home during the pandemic?

The response we received from six of the staff members was mixed. Two people found it good whilst demanding, one person said it was OK and another staff member found it difficult.



“The overall experience was OK. These are the measures we would generally take in infection control.”



Residents

Do you feel safe against COVID-19 in the care home?

All 14 respondents said they felt safe against COVID-19. One resident said it was a very difficult time and another said that since restrictions were lifted all the residents on one unit had caught COVID-19.



“It was a very difficult time during COVID.”



Residents and family and friends

Has the home implemented any changes to make sure you/they are able to contact loved ones during the pandemic? Could anything have been done better?

Only five residents responded and of those the majority said that changes had been implemented. One said a nurse had set up virtual call for them or went on walks with them. We only had one respondent to our question about what could be done better, and they felt more psychological support was needed.



“More psychological help was needed as I was in isolation at times.”



We also heard from seven relatives that were all able to maintain contact with their loved ones. They noted that staff had helped with technology and organised outdoor visits and use of a visiting pod.



“Throughout the pandemic, very regular and good e-mails were received from Barchester. Emails direct from Thistle Hill were occasionally received to announce lockdowns and visiting regimes.”



Staff

We asked staff if there have been any positive changes in how your care home communicates with and between different groups during the pandemic.

Only two staff responded to this question, with one saying yes positive changes had been made in how they communicate, and the other felt no changes had been made.



Changes implemented since COVID-19

Staff

We asked for their views on whether any positive changes were implemented in the care home during the pandemic.

The two staff members that responded explained the only positive changes that were continued was the use of video calls for relatives to stay in contact and the wearing of masks.

Raising concerns and issues

Residents, family, and friends

We wanted to know if they had any concerns about the service, would they know what to do.

Most of the residents and their friends and family said they knew what to do and would speak to the nurse in charge of the unit or care home manager. One of the residents felt they could raise concerns through meetings as they act as an ambassador for the other residents.



“If I had any concerns, I would speak to the nurses at the unit at the first point, or then speak to the manager who is very appreciable.”



We also asked if they had been happy with how the concern had been dealt with in the past.

Of the sample, 10 residents answered and nine said they were happy with how any issues had been dealt with. One resident explained they were not happy because they had to wait for the issue to be dealt with.

The three friends and family that responded all found the care home response positive to any issues they and raised.



“I have shared concerns during the pandemic, and it was dealt with very well by head office and management.”



Staff

How do they feel?

We asked staff about working in the care home.

Of those seven staff we heard from all of them enjoyed working in the home and they would recommend the home to their own friends and family.



"I feel that this home compares well with others I have been to. It has a good team atmosphere and staffing/operations are well organised."



We wanted to know whether the staff feel well informed about changes to services in the home.

Of the respondents, five staff told us they were kept informed about changes in the home and the remaining one felt uninformed. One staff member said they feel there should be more team working and some meetings should be across the whole of the team.



Overall rating

We asked residents, family and friends of residents, and care home staff how they would rate the home out of five (with five being the best)

Residents: (3.7/5)



Friends and family: (4.4/5)



Care home staff: (4.3/5)



Acknowledgements

The Healthwatch North Yorkshire Enter and View team would like to thank the manager, staff, friends and families of residents, and residents for letting us access the care home, and for sharing their views with us. Thanks also to our dedicated volunteers who helped support this Enter and View visit.

Disclaimer

This report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all patients, relatives, and care home staff, but an account of what was observed on the day of the visit and shared with us by those who completed our survey. Note: Some of the residents we spoke with have cognitive impairment which can impact their ability to answer the questions.



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