

# Alma Barn Lodge Care Home Didcot

## Enter and View Report



May 2024

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## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Oxfordshire would like to thank all the people we spoke to and heard from, and all staff at the Alma Barn Lodge Care Home, Didcot for their support and contribution to the Enter and View visit.

## 1. Visit details

### 1.1 Details of Visit

<b>Service Address</b>	Alma Barn Lodge Care Home Didcot Rd Harwell Didcot OX11 6DN
<b>Service Provider</b>	Advinia Healthcare Ltd
<b>Date and Time</b>	January 23rd 2024, 10am to 1pm
<b>Status</b>	Announced
<b>Authorised Representatives</b>	Amier Alagab, Tania Wickham, Paul Walker
<b>Contact Details</b>	01865 520520 Healthwatch Oxfordshire

### 1.2 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

## 2. What is Enter and View?

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The Health and Social Care Act 2012 legislation allows Enter and View activity to be undertaken on premises where health and social care is publicly funded, such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. We visit:

- To gather the views of health and social care service users, families and carers.
- To report what we see and hear to improve the quality of health and care services.

More details about Enter and View visits can be found on our website

[www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-work/enter-and-view](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-work/enter-and-view)

### 2.1 Purpose of the visit

- To observe how the facility operates and provides its services.
- To collect views from residents, volunteers, and staff on services.
- To identify 'Best Practice' and highlight any areas of concern.

### 2.2 Strategic drivers

Healthwatch Oxfordshire commenced a programme of planned Enter and View visits to care homes in Oxfordshire to look at the quality of life of residents from a resident, care and relative point of view. The visit to Alma Barn Lodge Care Home at Didcot was part of this programme, as a planned visit.

### 3. Summary of findings

Please note these findings represent a portrayal of what we observed and heard about the experiences of the service users and staff on the day that we visited.

Alma Barn Lodge Care Home is located in South Oxfordshire, situated in the village of Harwell, with views of the surrounding countryside.

- We were welcomed by the care home manager and the admin staff.
- We spoke to six members of staff, six residents and two family members on the day of our visit.
- The main reception area of the care home was calm and had a welcoming environment for visitors and residents but looked a little bare.
- The presence of residents enjoying the communal lounge area and watching TV reflects a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere within the care home, allowing residents to engage in recreational activities and socialise with their peers.
- The care home offers bedrooms with ensuite wet rooms decorated to a good standard, providing residents with comfort and tranquillity. The care home is newly built and state-of-the-art, offering various care services, including nursing, residential, dementia and respite care.
- Residents had praise for the staff and valued the care and support they received.
- The first floor rooms at the care home have not been used to date, however, they are well-furnished, and the decor is new.
- The residents we spoke to did not know how to complain, how to give feedback, or how to make suggestions. The residents were willing and able to talk to staff if needed which highlights the importance of establishing clear communication channels and feedback mechanisms within the care home environment. This would enable residents to more clearly feed into giving suggestions about the home, activities and care. It was also not clear how comments and suggestions were acted on by the home.
- Residents could be engaged in suggesting activities, and gave ideas such as dog therapy, cooking, and going out on trips to garden centres as well as growing vegetables.
- All staff members wear name badges which is a positive practice that contributes to creating a transparent and person-centered environment within the care home.

- Alma Barn Lodge Care Home is managed by a dedicated staff team whose aim is to deliver excellent person-centred care and who are working hard to make it possible.
- Residents and family members generally feel able to raise concerns with the staff team verbally or during the care plan meeting about their loved one's treatment and care.
- The care centre in general was very clean; the carpets, paint, kitchen, and the entrance area were tidy, clean, and smelled fresh.
- The quality of the laundry service and the time taken to wash the clothes could be improved according to residents' comments.
- Introducing more outdoor activities, such as trips to garden centres or other locations, could greatly enhance the quality of life for residents in the care home.
- A lower staff-to-resident ratio may result in reduced supervision, which could have an impact on safety, quality of care, and overall resident satisfaction.

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## 4. Recommendations

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- Provide a suggestion box at the reception area for relatives and visitors to leave their suggestions and comments.
- Provide mechanisms through which residents can share their overall satisfaction.
- Support residents to have input into planning activities, including possible external trips, if feasible.
- More staff available in the morning and evening could help in more support and benefits to residents.
- Improving the quality of the laundry service and reducing the time taken to wash clothes can have a significant impact on the overall satisfaction of residents in the care home.
- Recruiting more staff could help them to have more contact with residents.
- A staff photo board and maybe a notice board with feedback comments or a "What we do well, what we would like to improve" would give the reception area more of a community feel.
- Develop a more varied menu for meals, particularly for meeting special diets such as for vegetarians.

## 5. Service response to recommendations

Response received by email on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2024

Good afternoon, Amier,

Firstly, please accept my apologies for not responding to your email.

Since your visit of the 23<sup>rd</sup> January many things have been implemented at Alma Barn – many improvements have been made, the staff now feel more supported and are now more organised – feedback in supervisions is good and staff say they are happy working at the home.

- A suggestion box is now at reception, for visitors and relatives – we also have 8 weekly residents and relatives meeting.
- I have an open-door policy, and residents and family's often visit and give me feedback, as do other health professionals – I work until 8pm Mon – Friday.
- The activities co-ordinator has a very good relationship with the residents and does room visits daily to residents that choose not to leave, actively encouraging them to join in. We now have a regular baby group every week which the residents thoroughly enjoy, and the residents get to cuddle the babies and toddlers. We have had baby chicks and ducklings hatch in the home which has been very successful. The activities co-ordinator has taken some residents to the garden centre, which they enjoyed. We now have two volunteers that are very active in the home and contribute on a very regular basis.
- We are conducting staff, relative and resident surveys in the month of May.
- Staffing levels have increased, and staff now feel they are not under pressure, for example for 24 residents we have one nurse, one medication trained senior carer, and 4-day carers, and at night we have one nurse, one medication trained senior and two carer – these are very good staffing levels for this number of residents. We are fully staffed currently.

- We now have two housekeepers per day and the laundry has improved immensely, and people are receiving their clean laundry in a timelier manner .
- We have a new head chef who has been in post for the past 6 weeks , who has transformed the meal experience – the residents adore him, he is also very hands on and visits all the residents. There is always a vegetarian option for lunch and dinner. The chef visits the dining rooms at lunch and the evening meal to get feedback from the residents. The chef is fully aware who has a modified diet, who is a diabetic, who has food allergies, who requires extra fortification in their food. We have white boards in the kitchen with this information, and a file in the chef's office.

We have implemented resident of the day, whereby all the residents have their room deep cleaned monthly as minimum and, the chef visits them and asks them if they would like a special meal that day.

- We have a board in reception with all staff pictures and names.

Kind regards

Su

Su Heller  
Interim Manager

## 6. Report: Visit to Alma Barn Lodge Care Home on January 23rd 2024

### Methodology

We follow Healthwatch England guidelines for Enter and View visits. The steps below summarise the process:

- **Plan:**
  - Appoint an Enter and View lead for the visit.
- **Communicate:**
  - Inform the provider of the visit, and relevant details including the purpose, date, time, estimation of how long it will take, how many people will be carrying out the visit, and the name of the lead person.
  - Prepare visit posters including the purpose of the visit, time and date, and dispatch these to the provider for display, so that people using the service are clear why the visit is taking place.
  - Include information about how members of the public can contact Healthwatch Oxfordshire if they are not able to when the visit is taking place.
- **Prepare:**
  - Prepare resources such as surveys and questionnaires.
  - Identify any requirements for special support necessary to facilitate the visit such as access or security. This must be done before the visit, as you may be refused entry.
  - Meet with the service provider before the visit.
- **Report:**
  - On completion of the visit a draft report is shared with the service provider requesting comments on factual accuracy and responses to any recommendations within 20 working days.
- **Follow up:**

The final report is published on Healthwatch Oxfordshire website and shared with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and service provider.

The visit took place from 10am to 1pm on January 23rd 2024 with three authorised and trained Enter and View representatives, including one lay member.

During the visit, the team were able to spend time observing the daily work of the care home, noting the general environment such as cleanliness, comfort, and information displays, and to speak to residents, family members and staff.

## **Service background**

Advinia, the service provider for The Alma Barn Lodge Care Home, Didcot, was founded by Dr Sanjeev Kanoria and his wife Sangita in 1998, with the purchase of Roseacres Care Home in Barnet and has now grown to running 36 care homes providing nearly 3,000 rooms in England and Scotland.

The care home has 85 well-equipped rooms, and on the day of our visit there were only 29 residents at the care home.

Before entering the care home, we were each required to sign in. The wearing of face masks was optional.

The home provides the following services:

Nursing Home – privately owned, for a maximum of 85 service users

- **Primary care categories**

Dementia, older person care, physical disability, respite care, sensory impairment, and younger adults.

- **Care offered**

Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease, stroke, and visual impairment.

- **Other care provided**

Convalescent care, own GP if required, and palliative care.

More details about the care home can be found on their website here

<https://www.advinia.co.uk/care-homes/alma-barn-lodge/>

## **Medical support**

The care home provides support to residents. Nurses and assistants were looking after the residents, delivering medication, and other caring duties.

The regular communication and involvement of families in the Alma Barn Lodge Care Home plans of the residents, as well as the opportunity for discussions on a periodic basis, are important components of providing person-centered care within the care home setting.

There is a GP surgery nearby; the surgery day at the care home is every Thursday.

## **Activities**

At the time we were visiting Alma Barn Lodge Care Home, a group of five residents were gathered in the main lobby area at reception, and a member of staff was playing snooker with another resident.

There was a new dedicated activity co-ordinator, who joined during the last three months and there is a variety of activities for residents to engage in, such as therapy dog, arts sessions, morning coffee and catch up, Monday quiz and baking.

There were gardeners landscaping in the garden while we were there, and the plan is to make more use of the garden by growing more plants and vegetables as suggested by residents.

### Activity Board



The availability of a well-equipped cinema in the care home with comfortable seats is a valuable amenity that contributes to the overall satisfaction of residents.

The care home also offers music playing once a week which is performed by a qualified volunteer.



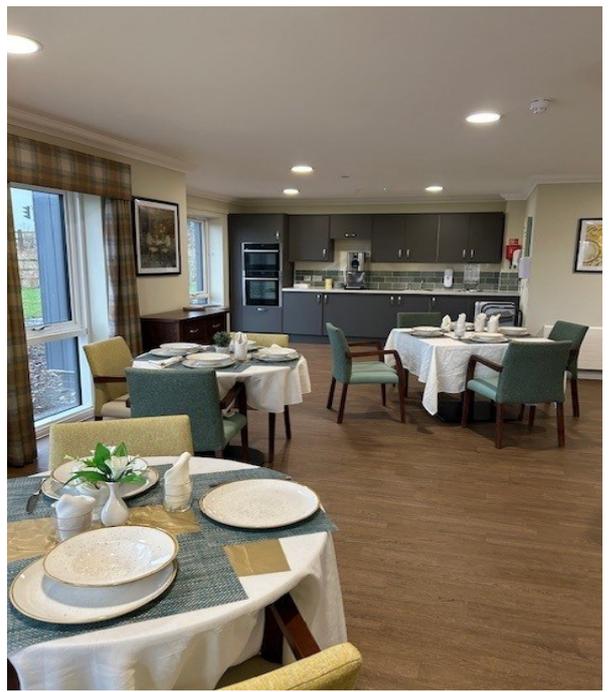
The Cinema

### **Mealtimes**

During the visit, we observed lunchtime in the dining room. There were six residents eating together and the others had lunch in their room. The food looked nutritious.

Residents engaged with each other in a social environment. There were good facilities available and support from staff who provided food for residents.

Overall, the dining room was very clean, well-organised and tables were laid ready before residents' arrival time.



The Dining Area

### **Resident movement and safety**

Whilst the home is divided according to care specialty to help care management, residents in the care home are free to move around alone or with staff support if needed.

We observed very few staff on our visit but those that we saw seemed confident in their work.

### **Complaints and communication**

The manager mentioned that her "door is always open" for residents and staff to come and speak with her. This open-door policy is a valuable approach to encourage open communication, trust, and transparency within the organisation. It allows residents and staff to feel comfortable approaching the manager with any questions, concerns, or ideas they may have.

Residents we spoke to said they felt able to speak and discuss any concerns they had verbally to any staff member or the manager but were not familiar with any complaints procedure.

### **The environment**

The building is new, spacious, and the lounge area was bright. Rooms are large and ensuite with shower. Sadly, a lot of the rooms in the home have never been used.

The main entrance is controlled by reception staff and well secured. The lounge was very clean with comfortable seats. Staff were welcoming and staff resident interactions were friendly.

All rooms were well designed and decorated for residents' privacy.



The main Lounge

There is a hairdressing unit which was not functioning during our visit. We saw a laundry service in action.



The Hair Salon

The garden was newly planted, very clean and well maintained, but there were not many seats for residents.



The garden view

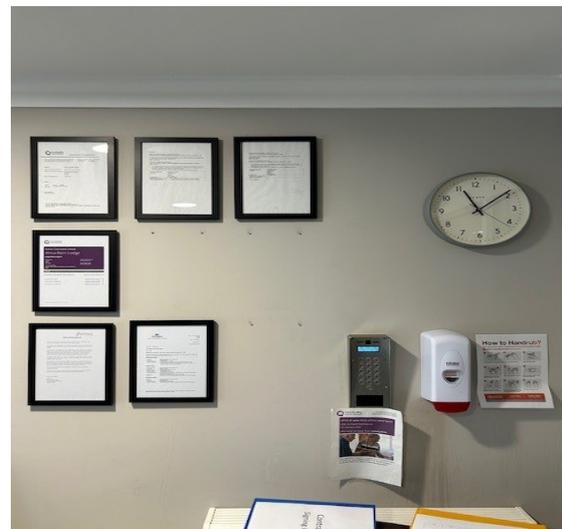
### Information on display

The main building has information displayed at reception and in the unit's waiting area.

The care home had a range of information on display, within waiting areas, reception, and residents' sitting rooms.

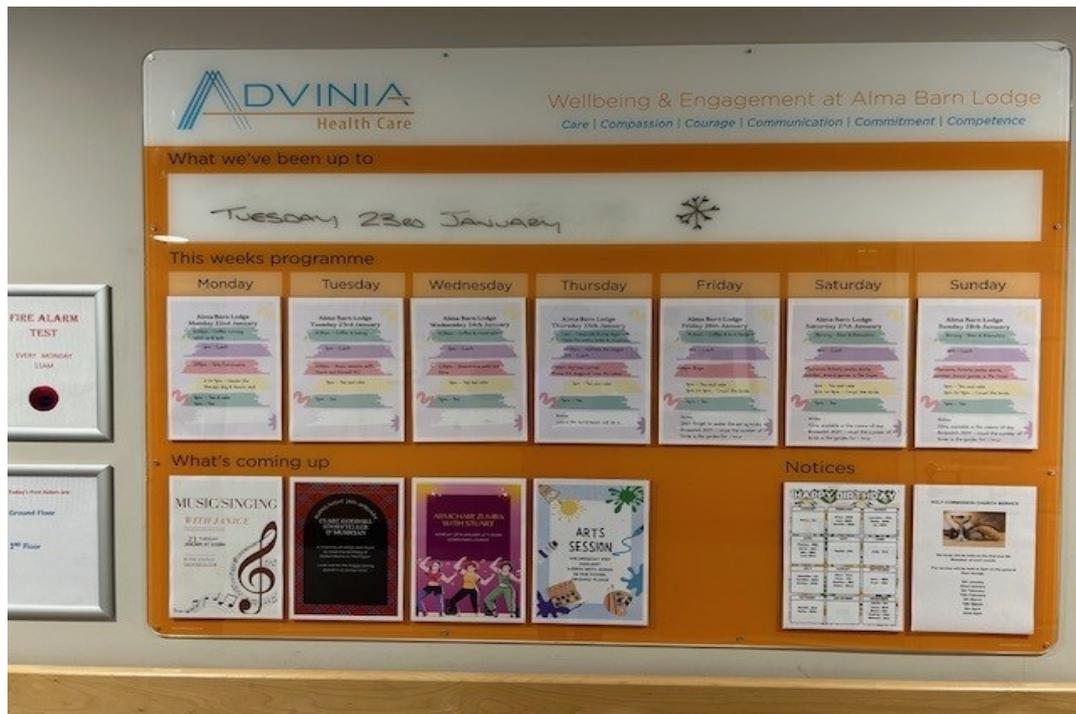


Resident information



Certificates including CQC

At the entrance hall, there was a range of useful information on display. We saw a Care Quality Commission (CQC) report, activities board, residents' information, carehome.co.uk review of 9.5, and wellbeing and engagement board with events, activities, and daily plans.



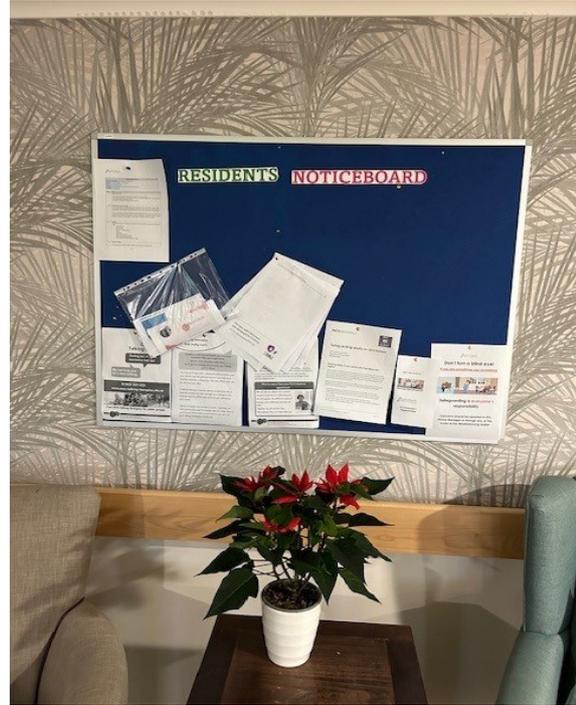
Wellbeing and Engagement Board

We did not see information displayed on the complaints process or a way that residents could give suggestions or feedback to the home. A 'suggestions box' for residents or family members was not seen, and there was no indication of how comments and suggestions could be made or responded to.

The residents' noticeboard currently did not have much information on display.



Statement of Purpose



Residents Noticeboard

## Residents' feedback

We spoke to six residents on the day of the visit to gather feedback and insights about their experiences in Alma Barn Lodge Care Home.

When asked how they felt about living at Alma Barn Lodge residents informed us that:

*'I have been here 2 years. It's nice. I like it, people are friendly.'*

*'I don't get involved with many of the activities. I get support once a week. I'm desperate to know what the long-term plan is – it's not clear.'*

*'It's lovely. I'm quite happy.'*

Feedback about staff was varied. . . Residents told us that staff are:

*'Very kind. Yes – they have a chat and laugh.'*

*'Very friendly and approachable. They will talk but don't seem to have a desire to talk.'*

*'The people who look after you are nice. They will do anything for you.'*

*'They look after the long-term patients very well.'*

*'The best thing about the home is the friendliness. You don't hear a lot of arguments.'*

Most but not all residents were happy with the food provided and told us:

*'We have got a new menu – it's very nice. I eat in the dining room all together.'*

*'Overall, the food is ok, but some of the meals I can't eat, and they will provide an alternative.'*

Two of the residents we spoke to were vegetarian and told us the choice of vegetarian food was limited:

*'It's ok on the whole, but more variety would be nice.'*

*'I'm a vegetarian and I have a lot of cauliflower cheese!'*

We heard from some residents about the activities. (Note the activities co-ordinator has been in place three months)

*'I have done a lot of activities – cooking, games, and I go out to the garden when it's nice.'*

*'We don't go out anywhere other than round the building. I get a bit bored.'*

*'There will be a good range now. Before we just used to sit and look at each other. Now there are daily activities. I like sewing/knitting. I try and get out and go as far as I can.'*

*'I would like to do some exercises.' (Physical exercise – arm/leg exercises)*

When asked about how they would make a complaint, comment or suggestion; residents told us they would speak to the staff or manager. Not all residents we spoke to were clear about how to give feedback and suggestions, and how to feed into decisions.

When we asked residents about anything they would like to change, they said:

*'More staff in the morning and evening to help wash and dress.'*

*'The laundry, the quality of cleaning needs improving. I would like my clothes returned all the time, sometimes the washing has gone over a week.'*

*'Set up a book club.'*

## **Relatives feedback**

The two relatives we spoke to on the day of the visit were happy with the care provided to their loved one. They told us they felt safe, and the care provided by the care home was good and everything well maintained.

They said families go through a health care plan and are always kept up to date with any process and the care services.

We heard from relatives that staff are doing multiple roles: cleaning and caring, due to staff shortages.

We heard there is no restriction now (post COVID-19) for visiting their loved ones apart from lunch time.

## **Staff feedback**

We received feedback and comments from six members of staff on the day, representing a cross section of roles within the care home.

It's wonderful to hear that the staff members we spoke to have a positive outlook on their work in the care home and value the interactions with residents and their family members; it is encouraging to know that the staff members recognise the importance of these interactions and find value in them.

The management have been creating and supporting the learning culture and providing effective induction training.

We heard that all staff members in the care home feel they have received the basic required training to support them in their roles, and they mentioned that there are no barriers to training.

We heard from staff that there is a good teamwork and collaborative environment within the care home regardless of what job role is.

The staff in the care home are happy and engaged in their work, and they prioritise providing the best care possible to every resident. This level of dedication and commitment is crucial in ensuring the well-being and satisfaction of the residents.

The present manager is open to any suggestion, feedback and always listens and takes staff concerns seriously.

Staff said they are making families feel welcome, involving them in the assessment and care planning process, and keeping them updated. Doing this, the care home staff demonstrate a commitment to person-centered care and family engagement. This approach not only benefits the residents but also enhances the overall care experience and satisfaction for families.

It is great to hear that staff members are open and approachable, allowing relatives and family members to speak freely about their loved ones and receive

updates on their care and general conditions. This open communication and transparency between staff and family members have several positive effects.

### **Residents and individual needs**

We asked staff how they meet the residents' needs. Staff seemed aware of principles of person-centered care including individuals' care plans, offering choice and help to residents to achieve their aims. They do this by getting to know the individual and their choices, by talking to their loved ones, and through care planning. The home offers monthly church services.

Staff told us they have undertaken various surveys, including about food and the quality of care with residents, relatives, and staff.

### **What are the challenges staff raised?**

We asked staff to tell us about any frustrations or challenges with their work. Comments included the challenge of staff recruitment, and managing staff sickness.

### **What suggestions did staff make?**

Staff suggestions included:

- Having an adequate number of staff members is crucial for maintaining a high level of care and ensuring the well-being of residents. The staff are currently working under pressure with staff shortages.
- Offering a diverse menu ensures that residents receive a well-balanced and nutritious diet.
- Good links with transport companies; residents asked about going out on trips such as garden centres, for example.



**Healthwatch Oxfordshire** – our friendly staff are here for you to help answer questions or give you information on health and care services in Oxfordshire. If you need more information or advice, call us on **01865 520520** from 9am-4pm Monday to Friday.

To find out more about Healthwatch Oxfordshire please see **[www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk)**

If you would like a paper copy of this report or would like it in a different format or language, please get in touch with us:



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