



# Enter & View

Bluebirds Neurological Care Centre  
Published November 2024

**healthwatch**  
Milton Keynes

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# 2 Introduction

## 2.1 Details of visit

Service provider	PJ Care Limited
Date and time	11 September 2024 between 10am and 2pm
Authorised representative	Helen Browse

## 2.2 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Milton Keynes would like to thank the service provider, staff, service users and their families for their contribution to this Enter and View visit, notably for their helpfulness, hospitality, and courtesy.

## 2.3 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.

# 3 What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families, and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists, and pharmacies. Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation – so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first-hand.

Healthwatch Enter and Views 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. If at any time an authorised representative observes anything that they feel uncomfortable about they need to inform their lead who will inform the service manager, ending the visit.

In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to the CQC where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

## 3.1 Purpose of visit

The purpose of this Enter and View programme was to engage with residents, their relatives, or carers, to explore their overall experience of living in Bluebirds Neurological Care Home. As well as building a picture of their general experience, we asked about experiences in relation to social isolation and physical activity.

## 3.2 Strategic drivers

Healthwatch Milton Keynes will be working in partnership with Milton Keynes Council, undertaking aligned visits so that a well-rounded view of the operation of the care home/service can be understood. Healthwatch Milton Keynes will be specifically focusing on the experiences of the services users and their loved ones.

Social isolation and/or loneliness has been recognised as having an impact on people's physical health and emotional wellbeing. COVID 19 increased and intensified loneliness and isolation by the very nature of the way in which we had to manage and reduce the spread of the virus.

It is important to understand the distinction between loneliness and isolation. Age UK defines 'isolation' as separation from social or familial contact, community involvement, or access to services, while 'loneliness' can be understood as an individual's personal, subjective sense of lacking these things. It is therefore possible to be isolated without being lonely, and to be lonely without being isolated.<sup>1</sup> There is a link between poor physical health and increased isolation as loss of mobility, hearing or sight can make it more difficult to engage in activities. It is, therefore, important to explore how residents of care homes in Milton Keynes are able to access physical activity alongside social activity.

Healthwatch Milton Keynes sees the legacy the COVID 19 pandemic has left on both services, and service users alike. We understand that the effects of the pandemic have been long-lasting and there are continuing pressures on the wider services that support Care Homes. It is our intention to be able to formally report the impacts of these on both services and those who use the services and their loved ones as part of this year's Enter and View Programme

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<sup>1</sup> <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2015/12/08/loneliness-and-isolation-social-relationships-are-key-to-good-health/>

### 3.3 Methodology

The visit was prearranged in respect of timing and an overview explanation of purpose was also provided.

The Authorised Representatives (ARs) arrived at 10am and actively engaged with residents between 10:00am and 2:00pm

On arrival the AR(s) introduced themselves to the Manager and the details of the visit were discussed. The ARs checked with the provider whether any individuals should not be approached or were unable to give informed consent. The Manager provided the AR with a thorough tour of the Home and introduced them to staff and residents along the way. The AR was subsequently afforded access to all parts of the Home for the duration of the visit.

The AR used a semi-structured conversation approach in meeting residents on a one-to-one basis, mainly in the communal areas. The checklist of conversation topics was based on the pre-agreed themes for the Care Home visits. Additionally, the ARs spent time observing routine activity and the provision of lunch. The ARs recorded the conversations and observations via hand-written notes.

Residents were approached and asked if they would be willing to discuss their experiences. It was made clear to residents that they could withdraw from the conversation at any time.

One resident and one family member took part in this conversation, the remainder of the visit comprised of observations.

At the end of the visit, the Manager was verbally briefed on the overall outcome.

# 4 Summary of findings

## 4.1 Overview

Bluebirds Neurological Care Centre is a purpose-built care home, opened in 2001, and registered to provide personal and nursing care for up to 25 residents. The home is a single-story building with 25 single rooms, set in a quiet location in a local community. Bluebirds supports adults with degenerative neurological conditions, including dementia, at all stages in the disease process. Residents of the home have complex neurological conditions with varied health conditions. The home welcomes visitors and family members.

## 4.2 Premises

The building entrance is at the central point, where the office and nurses' station are situated; to the left is the East wing and to the right is the West wing. The main dining room is at the centre of the home, just off the entrance, alongside the kitchen. There is a quiet seating area in reception for residents or visitors to use.

The dining room and both lounges have direct access onto the large, well maintained, gardens of the home which are designed to be used as much as possible. Patio tables have permanent games board overlays, there is a swing designed to accommodate adults and areas designed for people to sit and enjoy nature. The gardens and patio areas all one level so provide good accessibility for residents.



The majority of the bedrooms open onto one of the lounges, which allows those residents with low mobility to feel connected to the community in the centre even if they don't wish to leave their room.

There have been some recent updates and renovations to the property, one of which is the provision of a sensory room in the West wing. Staff told us that residents feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or irritated find this helpful as a one to one space, and sometimes two or three residents will use the room together.

Another upgrade has provided a staff room and separate staff entrance to the building, this has also improved lighting in the resident's corridor in the West of the building.



## 4.3 Staff interaction and quality of care

Staff were observed to be kind, caring, and responsive to resident's needs. Residents were all called by their names and spoken to in friendly and chatty tones. We saw residents communicating with care staff who were patient, allowing time for residents to speak, without rushing or completing words or sentences for them. This was observed throughout our visit as many residents have limited verbal communication skills.

There are also residents with mobility issues with the staff doing their best to get residents up and about in time for morning coffee, or at least by lunch time, with most residents spending some part of the day in the lounges. While this is not possible for all residents, and some choose not to participate, the staff were seen to be doing a good job of encouraging and mobilising as many people as possible.

There is a new resident on the West Wing who has been admitted from hospital and is bed bound. This resident has a one-to-one carer which will continue until they become more familiar with their surroundings and the staff. This is part of the usual orientation practice at Bluebirds for new residents

Wednesday is GP Day. Which means that the local GP visits the care home every week and meets with the nurse in charge and the manager to check which residents need to be prioritised that day before carrying out the patient visits. Bluebirds' residents are currently registered with the Watling Street Practice.

This was a positive visit. While no residents we spoke to were able to have a 'today' conversation, our observations and conversations with family highlighted the care and skill of the staff. We also noted that fluids, and encouragement, were proactively offered throughout the day.

During our visit we were able to observe, first hand, the care and skill of the staff during two separate moments across the day. In one instance, a resident became frustrated, impatient, and aggressive in one of the communal areas. We observed how one staff member focused entirely on the resident, calming them and speaking with them to resolve the issue quickly. Another staff member worked with the other residents to reassure them and ensure they were not affected or upset by the situation. We were pleased to see how well the staff worked as a team, and how quickly and competently the staff were able to calm a distressed resident.

The second instance involved a resident who required assistance with personal care but who was not agreeable to this. The staff member was able to persuade the resident that a visit to their room was a good idea.

To see the calm gentle manner with which these two very different situations were handled and resolved, in a way that did not distress either the residents involved or any other residents, was a positive end to the visit.

Relatives we spoke to told us they felt the care provided was marvellous and that the staff were fantastic.

*"[Resident] is happy here, calm and relaxed, so I can sleep at night"*



## 4.4 Social engagement and activities

There is an activity plan on display in the dining room for both residents and visitors to see. There are a variety of monthly activities each month including visits from the therapy dogs, trips out, resident's birthday celebrations, and themed days. The themed day for the month we visited was Roald Dahl day which includes a special menu based around his books.

As well as these monthly planned activities, there is an additional daily menu of alternative activities which means there is always something to stimulate and engage residents.

On the morning of our visit, residents were in the dining room playing a Bingo type game where the winner gets to keep the trophy until the next coffee morning. This is a regular, and very popular, event and the chef puts effort into making sandwiches, cookies, and quite a display of cakes. There were also savoury treats with a variety of sandwiches and a good selection of fruit juices and squash.

If the weather allows, this event takes place in the garden but on this day, it was held inside, with the tables laid with floral tablecloths, cake stands, plates and bowls that invite the residents to partake of the tea party. We saw the residents and staff having a lovely time, with five residents remaining at the table from 10:30 until the chef came lay out lunch.

The dining room and corridors are decorated with the art, created by residents during the home's group activities, that has been framed and hung.

In the dining room there is also an artwork birthday tree, so each new resident has a bird added to a tree (month) with their name so that their birthday can be celebrated by everyone.

A family member told us that, even though their relative's condition meant that they couldn't 'do' a lot, the staff got them into the lounge everyday so they could see what was going on and still feel included.



Additional Daily Activities		
(Subject to Change)		
Monday	AM	Nails
	PM	Karaoke
Tuesday	AM	Walk (Permitted to Weather)
	PM	Music
Wednesday	AM	Trip
	PM	Trip
Thursday	AM	Sensory
	PM	Sensory
Friday	AM	Bingo
	PM	Bingo
Saturday	AM	Reading
	PM	Reminiscing
Sunday	AM	Church on TV
	PM	Films



## Dining Experience

Lunch is served at midday and residents are encouraged not to eat in their rooms if possible. Over the lunch period we observed that 13 of the residents were having lunch either in the dining room or the lounges in their wing of the home.

One resident, who had been on a hospital visit, arrived back in time for lunch and chose to sit in the West lounge for lunch, two members of staff had accompanied them to the hospital. This meant that the home had two fewer staff than usual all morning, but we noted that this deficit had no noticeable impact on residents because of the excellent teamwork that we saw demonstrated by the staff, as well as the good standard of staffing levels.

Staff were observed helping all those residents who required assistance in the lounges and dining rooms, as well as those who needed help in their rooms. This is a very busy time for staff and is where the cohesive team-working is visible. All on duty staff support during mealtimes, ensuring residents are fed and hydrated, with everyone's medication administered on time.

Meals are prepared on site and the chef, who is well known to the residents, welcomes resident feedback on each day's menu. The menu caters for those who have no issue with swallowing as well as those residents with dysphagia. Family are welcome to join relatives at mealtimes. One family member whose relative has meals from the dysphagia menu, which looked and smelled appetising, told us that this resident eats everything on his plate.

Even though the dining room was cleared away, many residents were still eating their meals around the home. We noted that staff were not rushing people, just encouraging people to finish their meals at their own pace and offering fluids, most residents we observed eventually finished their meals.



The image shows a menu board for dinner. At the top, the word "Menu" is written in black, with a small decorative image of a plate of food and flowers to its left. Below the title is a table with two columns. The first column lists categories, and the second column lists the corresponding menu items.

Dinner	Sliced Gammon
VEGETABLES	Mash and Mixed Vegetables
DYSPHAGIA	Gammon in a sauce
DYSPHAGIA VEG	Mash Carrots Broccoli Cauliflower
DESSERT	Chocolate Mousse
HEALTHY DESSERT	Chocolate Mousse
DYSPHAGIA PUD	Chocolate Mousse



The image shows a menu board for lunch. At the top, the word "Menu" is written in black, with a small decorative image of a plate of food and flowers to its left. Below the title is a table with two columns. The first column lists categories, and the second column lists the corresponding menu items.

Lunch	Ham, Pepper and Tortilla, with patatas bravas
VEGETABLES	
DYSPHAGIA	Chicken in a cream sauce
DYSPHAGIA VEG	Mash Carrots Broccoli Cauliflower
DESSERT	Apricot Crumble
HEALTHY DESSERT	Yoghurt
DYSPHAGIA PUD	Blended Fruit and Cream

# 5 Recommendations

On the basis of this visit, Bluebirds Neurological Care was found to be a well-run establishment, supported by skilled and caring staff, with an impressive focus on creating a caring, safe, and stimulating environment for its residents.

# 6 Service provider response

Bluebirds team would like to thank Healthwatch for such a positive visit. We care for a unique group of residents, and it was lovely to see that all our hard work, care and commitment was recognised. As always, the visit was carried out in a very warm, relaxed but professional way.



## Committed to quality

We are committed to the quality of our information. Every three years we perform an in depth audit so that we can be certain of this.

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