

Foxton Court Care Home

Findings from our Enter and View visit, 28 August 2024

Acknowledgements, disclaimer and context

Healthwatch Northumberland would like to thank the residents, relatives and staff of Foxton Court Care Home for their contribution to this Enter and View visit.

Healthwatch Northumberland is the health and social care champion for people who use care services. We gather feedback about the experience of care and share this with providers and commissioners with the aim to improve care for everyone.

When Healthwatch was established in 2012 we were given the power to 'Enter and View' health and social care premises as a way of engaging with people and gathering feedback. Our [website](#) will tell you more about this, including constraints and decision making.

This report relates only to the Healthwatch Northumberland teams' observations during the time of the visit and is not a representative or comprehensive portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff. It is an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

Healthwatch Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues but in the event such concerns should arise, they would be reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies. Any concerns would be reported to the team lead and the service manager informed, concluding the visit.

Foxton Court Care Home

Foxton Court is a purpose built care home just outside the centre of Morpeth. It is owned and run by HC-One, a national provider of care homes. It has 77 beds and provides both residential and residential dementia care.

Accommodation is over three floors. The space is divided into areas providing residential care which are open access and the secure Grace Unit caring for residents with more advanced dementia.

Purpose of the visit

In 2022 as part of our work to increase public understanding of care homes, we produced a guide of simple things to be done to help people settle into [care home life](#).

We want to build on this to explain the day-to-day experiences of care home residents and their families. Our aim is to identify and showcase good practice as well as suggested areas, which might enhance how the service is delivered, exploring what is working well and areas that may be improved, so key themes may be shared and to give useful insights to potential residents and their relatives.

Foxton Court Care Home is one of four homes owned and run by HC-One in Northumberland. We visited two other homes in summer 2024.

This was a planned and announced visit to observe and obtain information.

Planning and preparation

Derry Nugent, the Project Lead for Healthwatch Northumberland, produced and discussed a brief for the visit with the Joanne Bulford the registered Home Manager and Graeme McConnell HC-One's Area Director.

To prepare for the visit all Healthwatch Authorised Representatives attended Enter and View training and briefings to ensure they understood Healthwatch Northumberland's remit, the purpose and context of the visit, guidelines for how to proceed in a care setting and had the skills to effectively engage with residents and family members.

We sent letters to the home in advance for residents and relatives of residents to explain the purpose of the visit, date and time of the visit and links to an online survey. We provided posters to display in the home. Residents and relatives had access to an online survey or paper version if they were unable to be present or preferred to give feedback this way.

Information gathering

Five Healthwatch Northumberland Authorised Representatives visited Foxton Court:

- Derry Nugent
- Mike Allport
- Anne Armstrong
- Gillian Robinson
- Sue Taylor

We spoke to 15 individual residents and two relatives using a set of questions to prompt people to describe good practice they had experienced or seen.

Healthwatch Representatives completed an observation sheet during the visit.

We received eight survey responses from relatives unable to attend on the day. No residents responded via the survey.

What people told us

People shared their experience and opinions of the care home.

Overall both residents and relatives were very positive about Foxton Court.

Residents really like Foxton Court. They feel very good about it:

"Nobody does not like being in their own homes, but this is good." (Resident)

"The care is of a very high standard." (Relative)

" Nothing could be better I have everything I need. " (Resident)

Several spoke about living at other care homes or looking at other homes and making a positive decision to live at Foxton Court.

Relatives said:

"Foxton Court is a very well run care home and my (relative) is very happy there."

"I am though generally really pleased that (the relative) are at Foxton Court. Most of the staff are amazingly kind and professional. It seems really well led. I feel very happy in my choice of care home for my (Relative)."

Care

Residents were complimentary about staff and how caring and kind they are. They noted the staff are very busy.

Residents and relatives were positive about the care given by staff. A resident said:

"They are all friendly and do what they can. I cannot say one bad thing, from cleaning staff to cooks, all staff are great."

Another said they moved to Foxton Court as they could not look after themselves and valued being at Foxton Court as they feel safe here.

Relatives commented:

"Found the staff very responsive when (relative) appeared ill and paramedics were called, we were contacted straight away. We arrived an hour later to find a member of staff sitting with (them) which was very reassuring for us."

"I have had many questions about the day to day running of the home, what happens and basic logistics; all staff have been helpful and approachable. That has certainly helped (my relative) to settle in and myself to understand what goes on in the care setting."

"Any problems that have arisen have been dealt with promptly and efficiently."

The hairdresser was mentioned by residents and relatives as a positive service which was missed when the hairdresser is on holiday.

Availability of podiatry, audiology and dentists was mentioned with some relatives reporting the need or preference to arrange for these services separately. GP services were seen as positive by residents, relatives and staff.

The Home Manager confirmed that dentistry and audiology services are difficult to access and, on occasion, mental health services too.

Some things that relatives thought could be better were:

"I would like to see the carers being more interactive with residents at meal times."

"Mostly but sometimes my relative is not always wearing matching clothes which upsets me as (resident) was always quite particular. They often don't put on (their) socks either which I think (they) would prefer."

"My (relative) is happy in Foxton Court. I just wish that they could socialise more with folk on other floors. (They are) on a very sleepy floor!"

We noted signs indicating that some relatives were doing residents' laundry. This may be an individual choice. Feedback from the relatives survey was mixed:

"Laundry system works well and when items are lost they always seem to return eventually. Ladies are really caring."

Sometimes (resident) ends up with clothes that aren't theirs which have not been labelled.

"(The home) is also happy to discuss and help make arrangements for the family and others to help with this task."

Regarding dementia care specifically, relatives said:

"I'm not certain they fully understand the best ways to recognise or support someone who has dementia and is becoming distressed. Not everyone presents in the same way and I think training around this would be helpful alongside individualised meaningful activities such as music therapy."

"Not all of them understand because (my relative) is sociable so (their) dementia is not always known especially to new staff."

Response from Foxton Court: There is regular music therapy for residents; this is on the activity sheets. All staff receive training in dementia.

Food

Food at the home was generally thought to be good with choices and different dietary requirements catered for. One resident described the food as:

"hotel standard, but as with all hotels there are variables."

Residents can choose to eat in a dining room or have a tray in their rooms if they prefer. They can order directly from the kitchen if they need to. Drinks are available on request.

A resident and relative separately mentioned that because of the location of rooms sometimes food is cold or cakes etc. have run out by the time it reaches them.

A relative highlighted: *"Cook at breakfast is particularly kind!"*

Two Authorised Representatives joined residents for lunch. They saw good interaction between residents and staff and social contact was encouraged at lunchtime.

The lunch menu had three main course choices including a vegetarian option. We were told if someone didn't like the choice they could ask for a lighter option. One resident said they found the lunches rather heavy and would have liked the lighter option which is available in the evening, however, this wasn't available on this day.

Response from Foxton Court: There is always a lighter option, however, on the day of the visit the bistro was used to accommodate Healthwatch Northumberland, and the express menu isn't present there, they are in all other dining rooms.

Activities

Foxton Court has dedicated Activity Coordinators and activities are advertised around the home and via the newsletter. The plan is to extend activities over seven days as opposed to week days. All planned activities are for groups.

During our visit we observed a singing session, an art class and an exercise class.

Residents who are able can leave the home independently and visit Morpeth. One resident goes out to give history talks to other organisations/homes, another to meet friends.

There is a minibus twice a day on Thursdays to take people out. One person wondered if their relative was not invited to go on trips because of their need for continence care.

Comments from relatives included:

"I love that there are two activities a day most days of the week. So important to engage my (relative), keep them active and their brain active, as well as socialising."

"Providers are very caring and it's a huge job to provide activities for such a wide range of interests and activities."

"I would like there to be more opportunities for the residents to get out in the fresh air at the home."

"I would like to see more musical activities."

"(My relative) goes to activities but I'm not sure how much opportunity there is for casual talk and chatter. The dining room can be almost silent. When (they) first started carers sat with groups but I don't see much of that now. (They) say that (they) are sometimes lonely. Evenings are long for them as the meal is at 4.30pm. This is my only concern."

Response from Foxton Court: We are limited to numbers, so it takes a while to get round the full home, all residents needs are prioritised for outings but relatives would be welcome if there was a space – no one is deliberately excluded in this way. Another consideration is that we staff to meet the needs of the residents so meeting other people's needs would need to be commissioned.

Interactions with other residents and staff

Our overarching impression was of a staff team who involved residents in the decision-making process wherever they could and responded to suggestions. The residents we spoke to felt engaged and valued this aspect of the home.

There are several resident committees that inform the home on issues such as food, wellbeing, fundraising etc. Residents also have volunteer roles for example, champion – introducing etc. Some committees are reported as more formal than others. We were 'hosted' on the visit by one of the Resident Champions. It was clear this is a role that is respected and supported within the home.

Suggestions are always considered and if viable are acted on.

We were told of examples of the home enabling residents to join in with family occasions via video links.

Relatives' feedback about interactions with staff were mainly positive but comments included:

"Depending on the issue I am aware of senior carers, deputy manager and manager and have raised an issue previously which led to a meeting and feedback."

"I have learnt who to talk to. It wasn't always obvious."

"Usually go to the senior on duty (if we can find them)."

"Very little interaction with staff only when laundry etc. being delivered or tea and coffee rounds. Staff tend to gather outside the dining room."

There were comments from both residents and relatives that more could be done to improve interaction between residents living on different areas or 'units'.

Regarding Residents and Relatives meetings, residents found them positive and reported changes that had happened, for example, it had been routine for daily menus to be put on noticeboards, but at a residents meeting, residents said they preferred them to be on the tables. This change was made by the home.

Relatives welcomed the minutes from the meetings as a way of keeping in touch. Several mentioned they would like flexibility over times and dates to allow people who are working to attend.

Response from Foxton Court: Residents go to all floors for activities or just pop to other floors to see others.

Overall safety and happiness with living at this home

Residents and staff appeared very proud of the home they were creating together. Comments from residents were:

"Safe and comfortable."

"Staff levels generally good, very occasionally not perfect, during staff holiday periods etc."

"I've never felt isolated."

"Plenty of assistance, like a good hotel."

Health and safety is good according to residents. One person recalled falling in their room and could not reach the emergency button and had to shout for help, which arrived swiftly.

We received extensive feedback from the family of a former resident who are very much still involved with the home and were extremely happy with the care their relative received. The resident had a dog, Ted, who visited them and still visits the home several days a week, including on the day we were there. This friendly little dog seemed to offer the residents some comfort and a positive feature, adding to the homely feel of the care home.

A former resident also told us how the home had supported them through a traumatic illness and now that they are back at home they still visit and support the residents' committees.

A theme in feedback from relatives and residents was about one-to-one contact. For residents this was about not always wanting to do group activities but having the opportunity to talk to one person.

One resident suggested that volunteers could be enabled to come into the home to spend time with those residents who would like that contact. She feels there would be many benefits to residents having someone to spend time talking to and maybe helping with a few personal tasks like writing letters.

One relative who would like to see some more individualised attention for their relative said:

"I am though generally really pleased that (relative) is at Foxton Court. Most of the staff are amazingly kind and professional. It seems really well led. I feel very happy in my choice of care home for my (relative)."

Things people identified as improvements or changes:

- Review 'tea rounds' to ensure same residents not always the last to be served
- Review access to Relative meetings with relatives to encourage attendance
- Consider ways of introducing a volunteer visiting scheme to encourage more one to one interaction for residents



What we observed

Our observations considered the physical space and how it was managed, as well as communication with staff and residents.

Key areas of observation were:

Effectiveness of the physical space and layout (environment)

The home presents as a modern, attractive building. It is located next to a private housing estate sharing an access road with these residents. A private car park is situated next to the care home offering a good amount of parking space, which was not too busy at the time of our visit. There are accessible spaces near the front door. The entrance to the home was open and pleasant with well-maintained shrubbery and plants. There were no unpleasant odours.

The care home is accessed to the front via an entrance lobby, which has a viewing window into the office enabling staff to control access into the building. Visitors sign in and out before entry. Fire safety information including escape routes are on display here. There is a screen, which provides a 'have your say' opportunity. This lobby was tidy and clean. It was not cluttered or overloaded with displays or instruction. Visitors are made aware that a dog is on the premises.

Signs/notices were not displayed in larger print or different languages including easy read information about staff on duty.

Internal signage was minimal and it felt easy to get disorientated in 'wing' areas, with no information regarding room numbers as a guide. One resident described using the wall art to orientate where they were within the home.

Upon entering the reception area, we were warmly greeted by the manager and one of the residents who acted as our host throughout the visit.

The care home appeared to be well maintained and recently decorated in light/dark grey tones. We were taken into a downstairs lounge. Every effort has been made to create a homely and inviting space. The room had curtains, cushions and two-toned chairs, which acted to provide warmth and colour to what might have been a clinical paint scheme. There is a fish tank in this room, a coffee table with book storage underneath, ornaments and plants.

Dining rooms and areas were well laid out, spacious and clutter free. Tables were laid with brightly coloured napkins and floral arrangements.

Foxton Court's response: Unfortunately the foyer is not large enough to accommodate large print, however we can accommodate this, along with alternative languages, on an individual request basis.

Corridors and communal spaces including lounges and dining areas

The home has a big selection of communal areas which vary in size and formality. The residential care areas are decorated to a high standard and residents can have access to all locations. However, some of this is determined by mobility and as such some residents said they preferred to use the facilities which are located next to their rooms. Residents in Collingwood Suite on the lower floor have easy access to the gardens.

Despite the uniform paint scheme, areas were differentiated by paintings and wall hangings along the corridors. One resident told me this was how he knew where he was in the home. We were not sure how easily someone with dementia might navigate the building.

The corridors in Grace Unit (dementia care) were more plainly decorated, had laminate flooring giving a slightly less luxurious and 'homely' feel.

Residents rooms

Room sizes vary but are quite spacious. In the residential units there was extensive evidence of personalisation with residents own furniture, books, ornaments, bed linen and curtains.

This was less obvious in Grace Unit. Rooms are more functional; not so 'homely'.

One relative spoken to had put up a picture of her mother on the room door and a larger sign to help her mother find her room. This was noted by another resident who asked for the same thing for her door.

The relative had also made helpful signs for inside the room, for example, signs for the contents of drawers.

Adaptations for sensory or memory loss in communal and residents space

The overall colour scheme is pale and there is colour differentiation on residents doors. Large print and picture door signs were observed, particularly in Grace Unit.

We noted a plug in speaker system in lounges to help people with hearing loss.

Information

The monthly newsletter was well received, and residents liked the personal profiles of staff as this helped them to learn about cultures they had not previously known.

Noticeboards had information about activities, residents meetings, Resident Champions etc. Noticeboards were neat and uncluttered.

Suggestions for Foxton Court Care Home

We have listed suggestions based on what we heard and observed during the visit, and from the surveys.

Suggestion	Response/action by Foxton Court
Appropriate directional signage to rooms.	
Information about on duty staff including roles, in relevant communal areas.	This has been implemented.
Consider signs and pictures on residents doors in Grace Unit.	Personalisation of each room is led by the resident and their family members.
Relevant refresh/tweaking of Grace Unit décor to improve feel comparative to rest of home.	The home is decorated the same except non slip lino flooring.
Review 'tea rounds' to ensure same residents not always the last to be served.	The same residents receiving tea last on tea rounds was addressed immediately and is checked regularly
Review Relative's meetings with input from relatives to encourage attendance.	Residents chose time of meeting that suits them best. Relatives can email anything they wish to add to agenda, there are always some relatives present. The time of meeting has been set by the residents but we will revisit this.
Consider ways of introducing a volunteer visiting scheme (linking with local voluntary sector) to encourage more one to one interaction for residents.	We do have volunteer groups who visit the home on a regular basis. Regarding the one to one visits with residents, we would be happy to have further discussions with Healthwatch Northumberland about what is possible.
Work with Healthwatch Northumberland to gather experience of accessing community services, particularly dentistry and audiology to bring to the attention of the service providers.	We are happy to pass feedback on the wider concerns around health and care services and can discuss with Healthwatch Northumberland about how we can do this more routinely.

What Foxtan Court Care Home said in response

We at Foxtan Court welcome this report, and we are grateful to the residents and relatives for giving their time to share some excellent feedback about our home.

Our work, in striving to deliver an ever better service, will never be finished, which is why we also welcome the suggestions provided in this report, to continually improve the service we have the privilege to deliver to all who depend on us.

We would also like to thank the Healthwatch Northumberland team for their respectful approach to visiting our home.



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