

Birchlands Care Home

Enter and View Report 2025

Contents

Background.....	2
Details of the visit to Birchlands Care Home	3
Summary.....	4
About this visit.....	5
Findings.....	6
Environment	6
Quality of life.....	7
General happiness.....	7
Food and drink	8
Activities	8
Quality of care	10
Residents and relatives	10
Staff.....	10
Health checks	11
Raising concerns and issues	12
Family and friends: (5/5)	14
Staff: (4.75/5).....	14
Staff feedback	9
Overall ratings	10

Background

What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch York is the independent champion for people using local health and care services. We listen to what people like about services and 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 (volunteers) conduct Enter and View visits to local health and social care services to find out how services are being run and make recommendations 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.



Birchlands Care Home



Details of the visit to Birchlands Care Home

Service address	Moor Lane, Haxby, YO32 2PH
Service provider	Welford Healthcare
Date	12 February 2025
CQC rating	Good
Care home proprietor	Jackie Calpin
Contact number	01904 760100

Summary

Purpose of the report

In this report, we summarise the findings from our visit of 12 February 2025. We also share the feedback received in survey responses collected before and after the visit.

Purpose of the visit

- To visit and gather views of the residents, their relatives and friends and staff about the services and care provided.
- To observe the care environment, the care being provided for residents and their interaction with staff and their surroundings.

General information

Birchlands Care Home offers nursing, residential, dementia and respite care services for older people (60+). There are 51 rooms on three separate floors. When we visited the ground floor provided residential care for 18 people. The first floor had 20 residents receiving nursing care and the second floor had nine residents in an EMI (dementia) unit.

Key findings

At the time of our visit, our volunteers found that Birchlands Care Home was operating to a good standard. These findings were based on our observations and reflect the general happiness of residents, and the views of residents, their family members, friends and staff members.



Positive feedback

- The staff were friendly and welcoming and interacted well with the residents. There seemed to be enough staff when we visited.
- The activities coordinator was very good and our volunteers took part in a music session which was appreciated by the residents.
- While the home was undergoing refurbishment, the areas our volunteers saw were clean and in a good state of repair.
- Residents all looked clean, well dressed and well cared for.
- Most residents seemed to be happy. All those we spoke to had family or friends visiting and all had photos of family in their rooms.



Recommended areas for improvement

Our volunteers were generally very impressed with the care home. However, there were some things they felt could be done to improve the environment and residents' experience:

- Increase the size of the font and pictures on people's rooms on the ground floor.
- Where possible, add hand rails to walls to help people move around the home independently.
- Review the digital sign-in process to ensure it is accessible for everyone.
- If it doesn't already happen, ask residents' ideas and feedback on what activities they would like to see at the home.

About this visit

This was an announced Enter and View visit arranged in advance 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 observe the standards of working practice. Our volunteers did this by observing the interactions between staff and residents, observing their surroundings and speaking to residents to

understand their experiences. They asked relatives and friends and staff members to provide their experience and views of the care home through a survey. Copies of the survey were available in the care home before and after our visit.

On the day two Healthwatch York authorised representatives (volunteers) conducted observations and talked to residents. They spoke to 10 Birchlands Care Home residents. Conversations with some residents were difficult and not everyone fully understood. Those residents who were able to share their thoughts and experiences responded to questions focused on quality of life and care in the home.

Ten family members and/or friends completed surveys as did five staff members. Their responses are included as part of this report.

Not all respondents provided answers to every question and some respondents preferred not to answer all questions.

Findings

Environment

On the initial observation of the care home, our authorised representatives found the buildings to be in a good state of repair with building work ongoing to the home and gardens.

The home was easy to locate and there was a good-sized car park which had free spaces when we visited. There are bus stops close by.

The reception area was accessed by a locked door. It took a little while for staff to open the door to our volunteers, but the volunteers arrived before the reception staff member started work (9.30am).

The current reception area is temporary due to the building work. So it gives a different, but not unpleasant, arrival experience than usual. Staff were friendly and were busy with care tasks. The reception area had a noticeboard which included information about forthcoming activities.

When asked if they felt the home is clean and comfortable all family and friends said yes.

Accommodation

As above, accommodation is provided over three floors. The ground floor is residential, the first floor is nursing care and the top floor is for people with dementia.

Each floor has a lounge and dining area as well as residents' rooms. All bedrooms are en suite and are all spacious. Each room has the resident's name and photograph on the door and they have their own photos and ornaments as appropriate. Some people have their own phones and televisions in their rooms.

The home has gardens, but work was ongoing on these at the time of the visit. There are plans to create a vegetable garden as well as areas for residents to sit and enjoy the outdoor space.

Cleanliness and hygiene

Our representatives noted that the care home was clean, well maintained with no unpleasant smells.

Quality of life

General happiness

We asked residents what they liked about living at Birchlands Care Home.

They said:

- "I just like it."
- "I feel well looked after."
- "I like it – it is nice and intimate."
- "It is good. I like the routine."
- "It is not ideal but I can't manage at home."

Of the eight residents who responded to our question of how satisfied they felt with the quality of care, one said very satisfied, six that they were quite satisfied and one that they were neither satisfied or dissatisfied.

All ten of the family/friends who responded to our survey said their relative or friend was being well looked after and one added: "Staff are very attentive and kind. Care is brilliant."



Food and drink

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

The home has its own chef. The menu changes weekly and residents are shown photos of the meals available to help them choose what they would like. Many residents had soft or pureed food and many needed help with eating.

All the residents our volunteers spoke to were happy with the food. They all could choose where they eat (one man ate in his room with his wife when she visited twice a week) and all but one felt they had enough to eat and drink. All respondents said staff helped them if they needed it and all could have snacks or drinks when they wanted.

Residents said:

- "I eat in my room and sometimes in the lounge/dining area."
- "I like having toast and marmalade for breakfast at the table."
- "I like a cooked breakfast and enjoy lunch."
- "I like soup. There are options available."
- "The staff help me to choose from the menu."

All 10 family and friend respondents said the food is good most of the time. Nine respondents (out of nine) said their friend/relative gets enough food and seven of eight said the home caters well for special diets (the other person answered 'don't know').

Activities

Residents were asked if they spend their time doing things they value and enjoy.

There are activities five days a week at the home. We heard that the current activities coordinator is leaving, but a new one will be recruited. While our volunteers were there, there was a music activity in one of the lounges. Volunteers and residents enjoyed the session. Cubs, Scouts and choirs visit and

Musical Moments are there once a month. Volunteers also understand that a volunteer comes into the home to help with activities on a Saturday and this works well.

When talking to residents, our volunteers asked if they can do things they enjoy. Most respondents agreed and said there were activities in the home and that they find out about from staff. Volunteers also noticed posters up in the lounges and saw evidence of home-made Valentine's Day decorations that residents may have helped to make. No residents had been asked about future activities they would like to see.

We asked friends and family about activities. Of the 10 respondents, eight said there are always things for their friend/relative to do, one said there are sometimes things and one said there are not things their relative/friend would enjoy. However, the person who said no reflected that it is because his wife is no longer able to get out of bed. Of the nine people who responded to a question asking if they are invited to activities, eight said yes and one person said no.

Staff responding to our survey mentioned a range of activities in the home including:

- Arts and crafts
- Exercise
- Music
- Board games
- Singing
- Films
- Bingo/quizzes
- Outings with family

Contact with friends and family

Residents and their relatives were asked about their contact.

All the residents we spoke to had friends or family who visited or stayed in touch by phone.

All ten family/friends who responded to our survey said they can visit as much as they like. They also agreed that the home communicates regularly with them about their relative/friend.



Quality of care

Residents and relatives

Our volunteers observed whether residents looked well cared for during our visit.

Throughout the visit, all the residents our volunteers saw and met looked well dressed and cared for. The residents we spoke to said they could have a shower or bath when they wanted with support from staff if needed.

The ten family and friends who responded said they felt their relative/friend was being well looked after. All ten also said they were satisfied with the care their relative/friend received. One added:



“Brilliant, caring staff.”



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.

All the residents spoken to said staff provide the help they need and they can always ask if they require assistance. They all have bells in their rooms to use to call staff if they need help. All who responded said staff come quickly if they need help and they don't feel rushed by staff.

Staff

We asked what residents and family/friends think of staff.

All our representatives felt the staff were kind and friendly and interacted well with residents. The residents our volunteers spoke to said the staff were friendly and respectful. Most residents said staff explain what they are doing and check that it OK. One person said that staff don't do that.

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.

Our volunteers felt there were enough staff at the home when they visited. When we asked residents, three said there are enough staff and two that there are not enough staff and that sometimes you have to wait for help.

Of the family and friends who responded to our survey, eight said there are enough staff and two that there are not enough staff. The two said the impact of not enough staff is that their relative waits longer, but the care is still good and that the person doesn't get the attention they need.

We asked staff if they felt Birchlands has enough staff. Three respondents said yes and two no. Those who said no mentioned particular times when there are not enough staff:

- "Morning when the senior do the medication, there is only one staff member on the floor. The evening staff leave at 6 or 7pm and there is only one staff member on the floor (residents in bed)."
- "I work on the second floor and we have 10 residents but two require hoists and no-one is watching the other residents while we use the hoist."

Since the visit, the care home manager has now ensured that there are two staff on the second floor at all times in response to staff concerns.

We asked residents if they feel safe, and they all said they did. One mentioned that they feel less safe at night when it is quieter. We also asked family and friends and nine out of 10 said they felt their relative is safe. One was not sure.

Health checks

We asked residents and friends/family if they had been able to access relevant health checks.

Residents and family members said that their relative/friend had been able to see a GP, optician, dentist or someone about their hearing if needed. When our volunteers were visiting a speech and language therapist was at the home to look at support needed for some people to eat and drink safely, this included people already having pureed food.

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.

The residents who talked about raising concerns all said they would do that via their family. Family members and friends mostly said they had not had any reason to raise concerns or that they would speak to, or email, the manager, senior carer or other staff member and found them all receptive.

Other comments

We gave residents and family/friends the opportunity to add any other comments.

Friends and family members said:

- “Could not be any better.”

We asked our volunteer assessors if they would recommend the home and they said ‘possibly’. We asked staff the same question and all five said they would recommend the care home to friends and family. Staff members added:

- “Every staff member looks after the residents well and I would 100% recommend the home to my friends and family.”
- “Staff are friendly and do their job correctly.”

Staff feedback

How do they feel?

We asked staff about working in the care home.

We heard from five staff members with a wide range of roles through our survey. We did not speak to any staff members who were working when we visited.

All five said they enjoy working at the home and comments about that included:

- “Friendly environment.”
- “Very good workspace. Staff are very good.”
- “I am very pleased to be working here and be given a chance to work in care and learn.”

We asked staff if anything could improve their working experience. They said:

- “More storage space for equipment. Larger lift, so a stretcher can fit in.”
- “Speed up the building work.”
- “A training room for staff.”

All five respondents said they feel they are offered relevant training to help them do their job and no-one identified any missing training. All five people felt they are kept informed of changes in the home and that they can feed in and those who responded said their feedback has been acted on.

We asked if staff feel well informed about residents’ likes and dislikes etc. Three respondents said very informed, one said somewhat informed and one person said very uninformed. However, that person clarified that, as they are in an office-based role, it is not necessary.

When given an opportunity to add other comments, staff said:

- “Brilliant home and the management, manager and deputy, are very approachable and helpful.”
- “More parking is needed and storage is an issue.”
- “Just one more staff member on the second floor would help.”
- “Thank you for the opportunity to work here.”

Overall rating

We asked family and friends of residents and staff how they would rate the home out of 5 (with 5 being the best).

Family and friends: (5/5)



Staff: (4.75/5)



Acknowledgements

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



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