

Finding out about our Residential Care Providers across St Helens

Report, 2025

Report produced by the
Healthwatch St Helens
Support Team



Background

At Healthwatch St Helens, we wanted to develop a better understanding of what our residential care providers are delivering and what would help them to enhance the care they deliver every day.

We deliver a very successful Enter & View programme across St Helens and we felt this work would complement this, in helping us to increase our awareness of what is standard practice across care homes, what is working well, and what isn't working so well.

With support from our colleagues at St Helens Council Adult Social Care Team, we developed a survey that we sent out to all residential care providers in St Helens. Our aim was to give providers the opportunity to highlight any areas where they feel they need further support to deliver the best possible care.

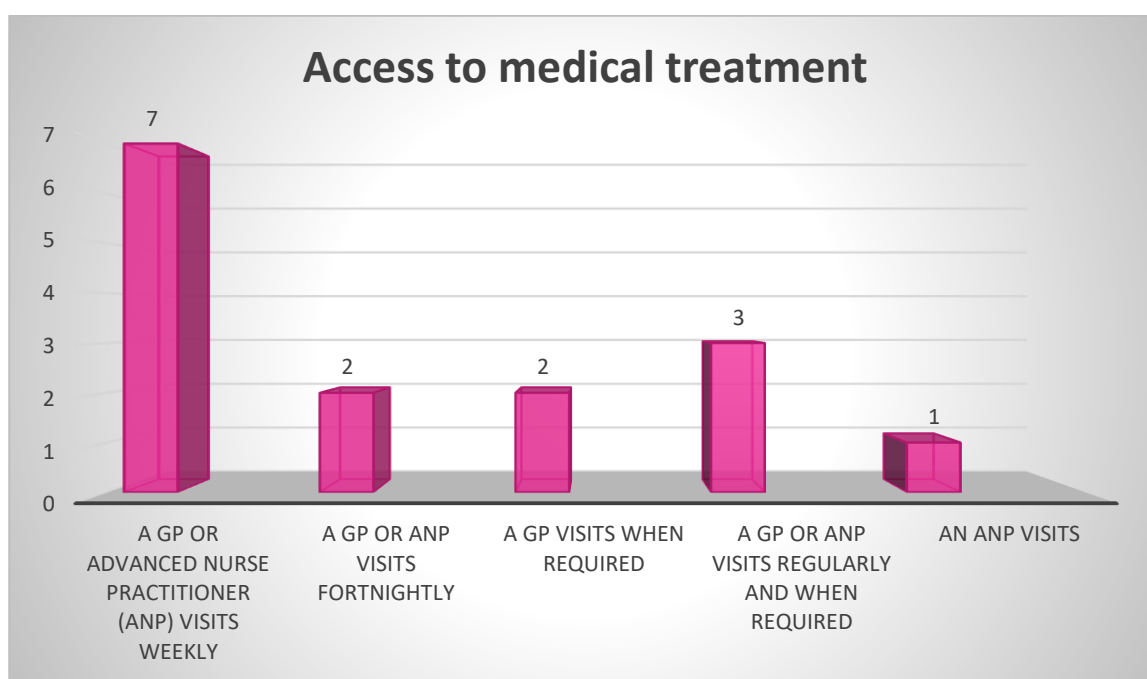
15 providers returned completed surveys to us.

What did we ask?

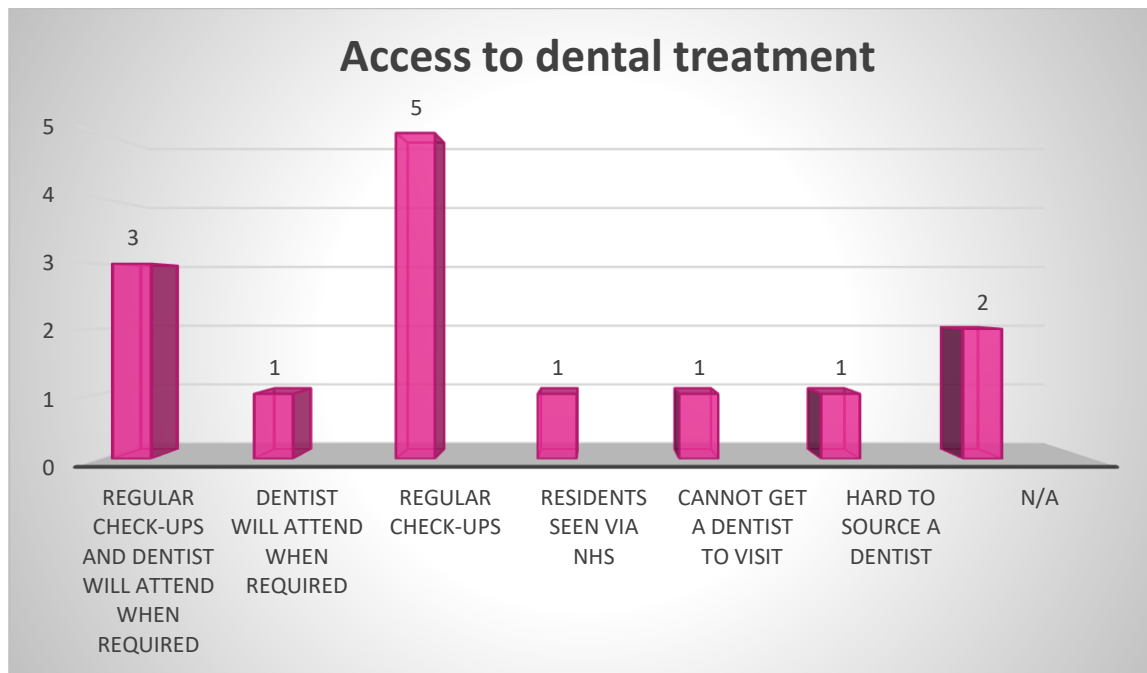
We wanted to know about issues such as access to medical treatment, managing falls, and access to other services that would improve the lives of residents.

What did they tell us?

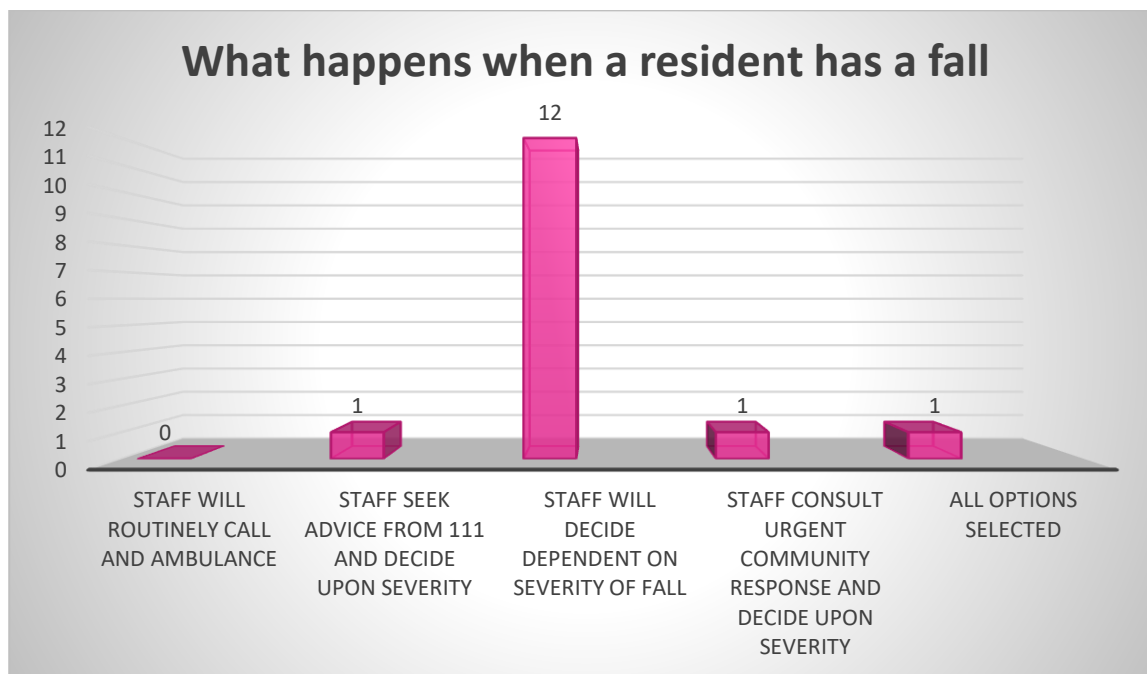
Access to medical treatment



Access to dental treatment



What happens when a resident has a fall?



We are aware of how much work has been done across the borough to provide other services that can help avoid a resident being taken to A&E. We found it very positive that in many cases, staff are using all options available, to seek advice for how to deal with a resident having a fall.

Particularly reassuring was that no-one reported routinely calling an ambulance and instead are using the other options available to them.

How is eye care managed at the Home?

All providers reported being able to access eye care for their residents, with some companies having their own opticians. Of all services, it appears that access to appropriate eye care is the most consistent across all Homes involved in this survey.

- Have our own opticians. Visits annually or when request a visit. We have a portal we can access for information or training etc.
 - We have a designated company called Eye Care on call where we can access the resident portal and request appointments if there are any concerns and access prescriptions or the team at Eye Care are on call schedule 6 monthly check-ups when required.
 - If residents are able to attend appointments, they will. If unable to attend, Specsavers will come to the home to complete eye tests.
 - Yearly eye checks from Vision Call
 - Regular check-up
 - Visiting opticians providing full range of services on site. Support regarding eye health under GP and NHS also.
 - Optician visits regularly throughout the year so all residents seen 12 monthly.
 - Opticians regularly visit the home to do eye tests and supply residents with glasses if needed.
 - We use a visiting optician who visits our care home on a regular basis, they visit a number of residents at each visit. All residents are seen every 12 months. Residents who are diabetic have an annual review by an NHS funded optician
 - Prescribed eye drops. Regular visits from Iris Opticians.
 - We have an Optician Iris, that visits when new residents come in, ask them do they have an Optician, if not, request that Iris visits. Other than that, they carry out 6 monthly reviews.
 - Vision Care is visiting the home on regular basis. At times visits are requested by the home if we think there are some changes to resident's sight or when we have a new resident in the home.
 - Routine eye tests are conducted at the home, residents attend hospital for more specific eye tests when under an Ophthalmic consultant.
 - We are registered with the outside clinic who will come to the Home to do yearly or two-yearly checks. Some service users who have diabetes are invited for retinopathy/split lamp test on a yearly basis.
-

- We have an optician of our own for Four Seasons Healthcare.

What additional services can residents choose to pay for?

Residents in 60% of the Homes can pay for a hairdresser and chiropodist. One reports that nail treatments can also be paid for, another mentions beauty treatments.

One provider only mentions chiropody as an additional service, while residents in another of the Homes can pay for a hairdresser, footcare service, escorts to appointments, theatre and day trips, newspapers and Sky TV or similar subscriptions.

How are vaccinations managed?

None of the respondents reported any issues with getting vaccinations for their residents.

Vaccinations for both Covid-19 and flu are managed via GPs, ANPs and pharmacies.

How do residents access physiotherapy if required?

The providers list a range of ways in which they can access physiotherapy services for their residents. These includes contact with the GP, OT teams and Contact Cares. There appears to be a very consistent approach to accessing this service if necessary.

How do residents acquire a wheelchair if it becomes necessary?

This question showed the biggest variation in responses, with some providers reporting no difficulty in getting a wheelchair for a resident and others saying it is virtually impossible.

One provider told us it was 'Absolutely impossible to get a wheelchair' and identified a difference between their experiences in St Helens and in a neighbouring borough.

Most providers mentioned obtaining wheelchairs via Contact Cares, OT team and via a GP referral. Some said their residents' families would be asked to purchase a wheelchair, some said this was only the case if the home did not have one spare, and others stated that residents/their families prefer to buy their own.

Healthwatch St Helens have been working to support providers with some of the issues raised in their responses to this survey.

What support can we offer?

Healthwatch St Helens offer a signposting service where we connect people with the services or individuals who can offer support with any issues they are having. This is available to both providers and residents, where necessary.

Our Complaints Advocacy service is available to anyone who needs support to make a formal complaint about an NHS service.

Our Enter & View programme

Healthwatch has legal powers to do Enter & View visits to health and social care settings. This is carried out by a staff member and trained authorised representatives who have been DBS checked.

Visits can either be announced or unannounced. The majority of visits will be announced by contacting the provider up to a week beforehand. This allows the provider the opportunity to ask questions and make sure that we don't arrive on a day or at a time that will be disruptive to the service being delivered. Unannounced visits will only be conducted in exceptional circumstances.

The purpose is to collect evidence through:

- Observing the nature and quality of the service
- Listening to the views of residents/service users and their families
- Listening to the views of staff

What are the benefits to providers?

- A chance to showcase and share best practice. We look at positive aspects of care such as activities that work well, not just the negatives.
- A chance for you to show CQC Inspectors and other regulators that you actively support patient/resident experience and engagement. This feedback can help in the development of your services.
- A chance for you to see Healthwatch as a 'critical friend' outside the formal inspection process.
- A chance to offer your service users and their family an independent and trusted lay person with whom they feel comfortable sharing their views. This puts the service user at the heart of the service.

In the past, providers have requested Enter & View visits, often in preparation for a CQC inspection or in some cases, to gain the perspective

of people who do not see the premises, or the care being delivered on a regular basis.

Healthwatch cannot recommend a care home but can direct people who are making enquiries to the Enter & View section on our website, for premises that have been visited.

Conclusion

We can see from the survey results that care homes are delivering a consistently good service across the borough. We would like to suggest that providers share good practice to help each other to develop any areas they might wish to.

We would like to encourage providers to contact Healthwatch St Helens if there are any issues we could support with, for both them and their residents.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank:

- The providers who completed the survey
- The Local Authority colleagues who supported with the design of the survey.

This report will be published on our website, and shared with key partners across the Borough, including commissioners, providers, Public Health, the Local Authority Quality Monitoring Team and Healthwatch England.

Disclaimer

Please note that the information contained in this report does not reflect the opinions of staff or volunteers from Healthwatch St Helens. It relates entirely to the information provided by the people who completed our survey.

Appendix

Residential Care Survey	
<p>At Healthwatch St Helens we are aware that we don't engage with our social care colleagues as much as we do with our health colleagues, and we'd like to increase the contact we have.</p> <p>We would like to gather a better understanding of what residential care providers are delivering. We would be very grateful if you could complete the enclosed survey and return it to us in the envelope provided.</p> <p>Thank you for your support with this work.</p>	
Q1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nature of the Home <div><input type="checkbox"/> EMI</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Nursing Care</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Residential Care</div>
Q2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to Medical treatment <div><input type="checkbox"/> A GP visits weekly</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> GP's will visit as required</div>
Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to dental treatment <div><input type="checkbox"/> A dentist will attend when a resident requires treatment</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Residents get regular checkups</div>
Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happens when a resident has a fall? <div><input type="checkbox"/> Staff routinely call an ambulance</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Staff consult the Urgent Community Response team</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Staff seek advice from 111</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Staff will decide what to do depending on the apparent severity of the fall</div>
Q5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How is eye care managed in the Home? <div></div>
Q6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What additional services can residents choose to pay for? <div></div>

Q7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How are vaccinations managed?
Q8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How do residents access physiotherapy if required?
Q9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How do residents acquire a wheelchair if it becomes necessary?



Contact us

Healthwatch St Helens

The Beacon, College Street, St Helens, WA10 1TF

Telephone: 0300 111 0007

Email address: info@healthwatchsthelens.co.uk

Website: www.healthwatchsthelens.co.uk

Facebook: facebook.com/@Healthwatchsthelens

Instagram: [hw_st_helens](https://www.instagram.com/hw_st_helens)

X: [@HWStHelens](https://twitter.com/HWStHelens)

Independent Complaints Advocacy service

Telephone: 01744 456 105

Email: advocacy@healthwatchsthelens.co.uk

