

**Enter & View  
Report**

**Austen Ward  
The Harbour**

**25th June 2025  
10am – 12:00pm**



**DISCLAIMER** This report relates only to the service viewed at the time of the visit and is only representative of the views of the staff, visitors and service users who met members of the Enter & View team on that date.

### Contact Details

Harbour Hospital, Windmill Rise, Blackpool, FY4 4FE

### Person In Charge on day of visit

Paul Jebb – Associate Chief Nurse, Patient Experience, Engagement & Safeguarding

Kyle Worthington – Ward Manager

Sophie Humphries – Ward Matron

### Healthwatch Blackpool Authorised Representatives

Charlotte Knight

Mike Verity

### Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Blackpool would like to thank patients and staff for making us feel welcome during our visit to the Austen Ward.

### General Information

- The Harbour is run by Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust.
- Female older adults ward at the Harbour Hospital.
- 18 bedrooms with en-suites on the ward.
- 18 patients were occupying the ward at the time of our visit.
- The latest CQC inspection and review confirmed that the Harbour Hospital is overall: Good

**Announced Visit**

## What is Enter and View

We have the statutory right to carry out 'Enter and View' visits which allows trained authorised representatives of Healthwatch Blackpool to enter those premises where health and care is provided, to observe the nature and quality of the services. These visits are an opportunity to collect views directly from patients and to observe the environment and the quality of the service provided.

The visit was part of our programme of Enter and View visits to healthcare facilities in Blackpool. The aim of the visit was:

1. To find out about patients' experience of the hospital in relation to:
  - Daily Life
  - Quality of Care
  - Activities
  - Involvement of Patients
2. To identify examples of good practice
3. To highlight any issues or concerns from patients and any ideas for improvements



# Service User Feedback

Healthwatch Blackpool engaged with **8** patients during the visit. It is important to note that patients within the ward had varying levels of capacity. Healthwatch representatives had numerous conversations on the day of the visit and below is some feedback directly relating to the ward and patient feedback.

## Daily Life

**During the visit, Healthwatch Blackpool representatives observed patients carrying out activities. Staff mentioned that everyday is different for patients, offering a varied daily schedule supported by a multidisciplinary team. There is a consistent activity programme running in the sports hall, accessible to all patients and adapted for older adults with both seated and standing options. Occupational therapists deliver rehabilitation focused on memory, motivation, and social engagement, and patients also benefit from outdoor access, including gardening and growing vegetables like strawberries.**

**Patients shared a mix of feelings, with some expressing frustration, boredom, and a desire to go home. Patients shared a few challenges including, dealing with negativity from others, limited mobility due to oxygen dependence, and poor entertainment such as the TV. Some shared that they have friendships on the ward, while others preferred keeping themselves to themselves. Individuals shared that they found activities enjoyable.**

*"Fed up , I want to go home."*

*"People coming to me with negativity and it gets me down. I need positivity in my life and I have to go to my room."*

*"I'm reliant on oxygen to help with my breathing but I find it difficult to manage the heavy oxygen cylinders that I have to have with me. This limits many of the activities that I would like to do and prevents me from going on walks outside the hospital grounds."*

*"I have several good friends on the ward and I always enjoy their company."*

*"I like to keep myself to myself. Some of the other patients try to talk to me but they are irritating."*

*"I'm bored most of the time - the TV is rubbish. A lot of the other patients ignore me."*

*"We do so much."*

*"They put my washing in the washer one time, and it came back pink - don't trust them washing."*

**“ Yes, all the staff ”  
are great!**

## Quality of Care

Staff informed Healthwatch Blackpool that the ward supports older adults with functional needs but no specific specialisms. Two female residents currently require 1:1 support. Staffing follows a 7:6 model plus early twilight cover, with five staff on at night and a minimum of two nurses per shift. Training is comprehensive and includes mandatory training such as moving and handling, falls simulation, RAID, and both physical and mental health training. New staff undergo a structured programme with simulation exercises, and refresher training is provided. Staff mentioned that recovery support is a key focus, with personalised assessments and mobility aids provided based on individual needs.

Patients shared positive feedback about staff, describing them as "great", while acknowledging that they are busy, especially with 1:1 support needs. Patients raised some concerns about noise, particularly at night, affecting sleep. One issue mentioned was a loud banging bathroom door caused by an open window and staff talking loud at night.

*"Very good, they're great."*

*"Noisy - sleeps terrible."*

*"Assisted bathroom door making a loud bang at night due to the window always being left open, it wakes me up from my sleep."*

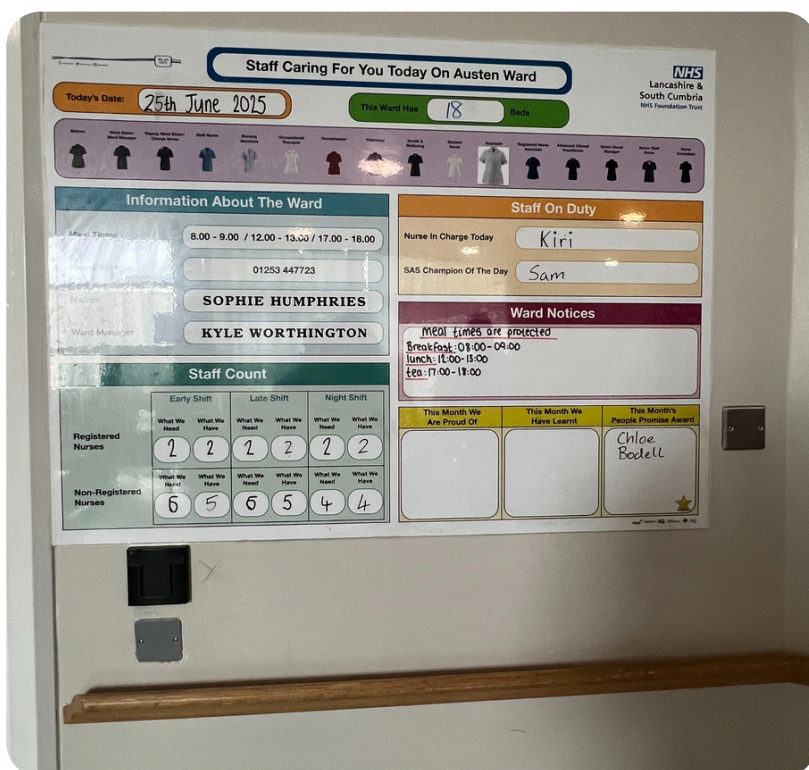
*"Yes, all the staff are great!"*

*"I can hear staff talking really loud at night."*

*"Not staffs fault, they're busy and some need 1-1 support."*

*"The care I have received has been OK but I don't want to be in here."*

*"The staff are not bad but they always seem to be very busy."*



## Staff Manner

**Feedback from patients was mixed. Some described the care as "very good," while others raised concerns about staff shortages and feeling ignored. Patients noted that staff were often too busy, though not at fault. There was some confusion around discharge information from doctors, and difficulty accessing senior staff like the ward matron.**

*"Not enough staff."*

*"Very good."*

*"1 doctor ok, some say going home then not."*

*"Too busy, not their fault."*

*"The staff tend to ignore me."*

*"Getting to see the ward matron is very difficult."*

## Activities

**Staff informed Healthwatch Blackpool that the Harbour provide a busy and popular activity programme and it is very individualised. Staff tailor activities based on each patient's preferences, offering flexibility. Recovery support workers adapt activities as needed, recognising that not all residents choose to join in on scheduled activities. The programme includes regular use of the sports hall for badminton and boccia, gardening in the outdoor area with growing of flowers, fruit and vegetables, and 'animal days' featuring a variety of small animals for residents to interact with such as rabbits, guinea pigs, snakes, and budgies.**

**Patients shared a mixture of views on activities. Many patients appreciated the wide selection of activities available, mentioning netball, boccia, quizzes, gardening, and gym sessions. Some patients found the activities helpful for their mental health and enjoyed participating in what they could. However, a few patients shared that there are limitations due to physical issues like breathing problems or personal preference, with one patient choosing not to join in at all. A further individual shared a desire for even more activities.**

*"More activities."*

*"I do netball."*

*"I do boccia- its like bowls."*

*"I am limited to what I can do."*

*"the quizzes."*

*"we're growing all sorts here in the garden, even flowers too in the allotment."*

*"I did the gym the other day."*

*"Im not tall enough for netball so I can do it but I do lots of other things on offer."*

*"The activities get me through the cruelty in my head."*

*"There are lots of activities organised and I take part in those that I can. But it is frustrating when I can't join in some of the things I want to do because of my breathing problems."*

*"There a lot of organised activities but I stay away from them."*



## Food

Staff informed Healthwatch Blackpool representatives that there is a varied and improved menu, with a four-week plan displayed on the wall for patients to see. Each day, staff use an iPad (Maple system) to take meal orders for the following day, offering options like curries, sandwiches, and vegetarian/vegan dishes. Staff mentioned that portion sizes are good and can be adjusted on request. Staff shared that while the menu is extremely varied, Halal options are more limited, though families can bring in food, and the chef is flexible and willing to prepare specific meals if given recipes. Visual aids with food pictures also help support patients with language barriers.

Patients shared mixed feedback about the food with some mentioning they can request what they want and receive it the next day, while others felt they don't always get their chosen meals. Patients shared a few complaints including a lack of decent desserts and limited fresh fruit, with some feeling the portions are insufficient. Overall patients described the food as "just about OK" or "not too bad," and some noted it has declined compared to before.

*"Ask what you want and get next day."*

*"We don't get what we choose."*

*"No decent deserts – just yogurt or tinned fruit, I'd like fresh fruit."*

*"We want fresh fruit, there has been bananas but only a few provided and theres lots of us so isn't enough to go around."*

*"I am sure we get the scraps from the hospital."*

*"The food is just about OK."*

*"The food is not too bad but it used to be better."*

**“The food is not too bad but it used to be better”**



## Safety, Privacy and Wellbeing

Staff informed Healthwatch Blackpool representatives that the ward has a maximum capacity of 18–20 patients. There are 18 bedrooms in total, 4 of which are larger for accessibility needs and can accommodate swing beds. The decor was updated about 18 months ago with patient input, using calming, neutral colours and personalised wall pictures. Staff shared that upon admission, every patient receives a physiotherapy assessment within the first few days to provide mobility aids. Rooms are adapted with handrails by toilets and corridors, hospital beds with adjustable features, and a variety of hoist options. There is a bath equipped for mobility needs.

Patients shared that they feel safe while others rarely felt safe. Patients expressed that sleep disturbances were common, particularly at night when staff carry out patient checks, shining torches through door windows and staff engaging in loud conversations.

*"No I very rarely feel safe."*

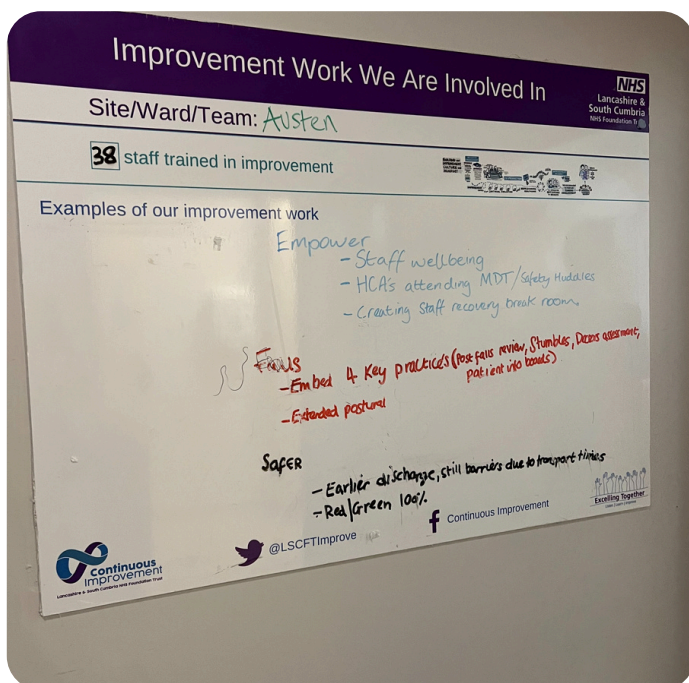
*"I feel safe."*

*"Staff shine a torch through window or come in the room at night – this wakes me up."*

*"I can hear staff talking very loud at night, this disrupts my sleeping – I don't get much sleep as it is."*

## Patient Involvement

Staff informed Healthwatch Blackpool that patient meetings are held weekly with a rotating agenda over four weeks to encourage feedback. Friends and family can also provide written feedback during discharge. Feedback is reviewed monthly to identify areas for improvement. To promote patient choice, rooms are decorated in plain pastel colors agreed upon with patients and can also personalise their bedroom with their own pictures and decorations.





## Visits, leave, and contact with loved ones

Staff informed Healthwatch Blackpool that visitors and loved ones are welcome anytime, with flexibility around mealtimes to allow family members to eat together. Special visitor and family rooms are available on the ward. Residents can freely go out on hospital grounds with nurse supervision, while other trips beyond the grounds such as shopping require consultant approval after risk assessments. Informal patients also undergo assessments for outings. Visitors often take patients to nearby shops and cafes, with popular places like Tesco, Matalan, and Next. Staff shared that feedback from friends and family is encouraged.

Patients shared that they have regular visits from grandchildren, while others have limited contact due to family issues. Some receive differing frequency in visits from family members.

*"My grandchildren come to see me which is nice."*

*"I don't see much family as we fell out many years ago."*

*"My family is in Ormskirk. They do visit me but not very often."*

*"I have a difficult relationship with my husband. He visits me sometimes but we are not getting on very well."*



# Visit summary & observations

## Pre visit

The visit to was prearranged as per the Healthwatch Blackpool work plan. The ward was notified via letter ten working days before the visit. The ward was asked to display posters and make patients aware of the planned visit. The visit was conducted in line with current infection prevention control measures.

## First impressions

Austen Ward is situated within The Harbour Hospital, accessible via a main road and close to the motorway. The external signage is clear to see when approaching the ward via the main corridor of the hospital. There is a car park to the front of the hospital, with disabled bays, and overflow parking available. As well as this, there are public transport links, with a bus stop directly outside the hospital. There is a locked-door policy on the ward and a reception area at the entrance, with a bell to alert the ward of your arrival. Visitors are greeted by staff and Healthwatch representatives were welcomed by Paul and taken onto the ward. When entering the ward, we were welcomed by Kyle and Sophie.

## Environment and communal spaces

At the time of the visit, 18 patients were occupying Austen ward. All bedrooms have en-suite facilities, as well as shared bathroom facilities with specialised baths and showers to ensure accessibility. Staff mentioned that their capacity can reach up to 20 patients due to having 18 bedrooms, with 4 being much larger for accessibility needs. Patients are able to decorate their bedrooms to suit their preference, and these were recently decorated 18 months ago.

When entering Austen ward, there were ample family rooms, offering privacy for patients and loved ones during visits. During the visit, many patients were engaging in morning activities in the main communal area of the ward. Other patients were spending some time within their own private space or engaging with staff. The communal area consisted of a comfortable living space with ample seating. In adjacent to the living room, there was a dining room where patients can eat their meals, which consisted of tables and chairs. Staff offices were close to the living and dining rooms. Patients had access to the main communal TV which at the time was off. Away from the living space, down the main corridor, there were patient bedrooms, bathroom facilities, and sensory rooms.

Austen ward has a relatively large garden and this is available anytime for the patients to use. At the time of the visit, access doors to the garden were closed due to activities occurring in the main living area. Staff informed Healthwatch Blackpool that the garden consists of flowers and vegetables and patients are able to engage in gardening activities.

## Observations of patient and staff interaction

On the day of the visit, it was observed that staff were engaging well with patients during activities and were providing patients with compassionate care. Staff and patients were very welcoming to Healthwatch Blackpool representatives and were more than happy to chat.

## Patient Support

All staff complete mandatory training, with additional monthly falls prevention sessions, utilising simulation training. New starters and existing staff receive Health Care Support Worker training, covering both physical and mental health, including RAID (Reactive and Intensive Development) training. Recovery Support Workers play a key role in patient rehabilitation, working closely with individuals. Every resident is assessed on admission, with physiotherapists providing mobility aids and follow-up support. Most rooms are fully adapted with hospital beds, handrails, hoists, and mobility-friendly bathrooms and bedrooms for better accessibility. Staff shared that overall feedback has been very positive, and the latest CQC report rated the site as 'Good', with only minor recommendations around leave and displayed information. Staff praised the support of the Blackpool Advocacy Hub, with regular visits from their dedicated advocate, whom they have great communication with.

## Challenges

Staff shared that a recent challenge has involved managing restricted items, specifically plastic bin bags, as some residents prefer private personal care and having bins in their rooms. To address this, the team has been working on implementing bins without plastic liners and providing alternative solutions. Alternative waste bins have recently been introduced for use in residents' rooms, helping to balance privacy and safety protocols.



# Overall visit summary



Healthwatch Blackpool had a positive experience overall on Austen ward. Staff and patients were extremely welcoming and the atmosphere was very calm and supportive. The majority of the patients we engaged with were happy with their care, praising staff as great, very good, and caring, although some patients highlighted staff shortages, feeling ignored, and difficulty accessing senior staff such as the ward matron. Discharge communication from doctors was also noted as unclear. Concerns were raised about night-time noise and sleep disturbance, including loud staff conversations, banging doors caused by open windows, and bright torch lights during night routine checks. Patients shared the good variety of activities, with patients enjoying options like netball, quizzes, gardening, and gym sessions, though some reported barriers due to health issues or personal preferences. Opinions on food were varied, some appreciated being able to request meals in advance, while others reported not always receiving their choices, with complaints about portion sizes, desserts, and limited fresh fruit. Overall, feedback reflected both positive experiences and areas needing improvement.

The main areas for improvement related to a need to reduce night-time noise, sleep disturbance and using an alternative option to bright torch lights during night time checks. Some patients mentioned that staff were often too busy, leading to feelings of being ignored or delays in support. Ensure staff are available to support patients when needed. Improve communication, particularly surrounding discharge information and availability for patients to speak with the ward matron. Ensure consistency of requested meals and implement options of fresh fruit and desserts, as desired by patients. Provide consistent alternative activities for patients with physical health issues to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.

Overall, the environment was clean and noticeboards were varied and contained lots of information. Austen ward can celebrate the many positives detailed throughout this report, and there are a few areas for improvement, detailed as recommendations. Healthwatch Blackpool would like to thank staff and patients for accommodating our visit and for taking the time to talk with the team.

## Observation/Feedback

Reduce night time noise and disturbance relating to loud conversations, banging doors and bright torches during night routine checks.

## Management/Provide Response

Ward manager has checked and all torches are the red light type. We understand this can be disturbing and we try our best to observe prior to using the torch but for safety reasons this is not always adequate to observe the patient. In relation to the night time noise this has been fed back to the night team and they apologise and will be more mindful of their volume as the wards do echo and can disturb sleep.

## Action to be undertaken by/when?

Actioned by ward Matron - July 2025

Ensure staff availability when patients require support.

We have recently reviewed our safer staffing figures to better manage the needs of our patients. We have increased our staffing numbers to 6,7,6. Across each shift any deficits in staffing are escalated to the unit nurse in charge and this is managed in line with wider safety across the whole site, this is reviewed by senior managers throughout the day. There has been no incidents reports of harm as a result of staffing for assurance.

Actioned by ward Matron - July 2025

Improve communication, particularly surrounding discharge information and the chance to speak with the ward matron.

Patients attend MDT's weekly, and patients are encouraged to attend these meetings for discharge plans as these are vital things discussed. The ward matron is regularly available on the ward throughout the week and attends the ward every day and makes herself available. In order to speak with the matron outside of these times patients can ask staff to contact her for specific 1:1's. Apologies the ward matron doesn't feel available as much as you would like, specific drop ins have now been made available for you to review which is more scheduled.

Actioned by ward Matron - July 2025

Provide consistency to requested meals and implement options for fresh fruit and desserts.

Fresh fruit is provided on a daily basis but the stock may not be available for all patients to have the same items patient are encouraged to requests any specific items through the maple meal ordering system at point of ordering to increase chances.

Actioned by ward Matron - July 2025

Provide consistent alternative activities for those with physical health issues to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.

This has been fed back to our OT team who coordinate many of the activities at ward and unit level so they have this specific need in mind when engaging in activities with those with disabilities. Many activities are both ward based, and off ward with a range of different skills required. Adaptations are made as best as possible but further ways to support will be reviewed.

Actioned by ward Matron - July 2025

# Managers Overall Feedback

## **Were you happy with the Enter and View arrangements prior to the visit?**

Yes, we was given notice prior which helped the team feel ready and prepared for the visit.

## **Please use this space to outline any positives aspects of the visit?**

We was notified prior to the visit and a poster was given so this could be displayed. This was helpful as made service users and staff are of the visit.

The staff conducting the visit were pleasant and polite throughout the visit, they took the time to engage with service users and hear their perspective.

We received initial feedback to help improve and the feedback report has arrived quickly to help us action plan how we can improve.

## **Do you have any comments on staff conduct?**

No issues with conduct.

## **Please use this space to outline any negative aspects of the visit?**

There was no negative aspects to the visit. It felt professional and all queries were made from a positive outlook.

## **Is there any way in which Healthwatch Blackpool can improve? - Any feedback is greatly appreciated.**

No improvement necessary. We was grateful that we was given prior notice of the visit and being given a poster to put on display helped to inform the service users and the staff. The visit took place when expected and there was no unexpected requests as Healthwatch had made us fully aware of what was expected from the visit.

We as a team found this to be a positive experience and an opportunity to showcase the ward and the care which we provide. We was also appreciative to receive some initial verbal feedback whilst awaiting the full report.