
Enter and View Hillcroft, Epsom

July 2025



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Report overview

Why we visited

Enter and View is one way in which Healthwatch Surrey can observe and report on how services are being run and collect the views of service users and their carers and relatives, as well as staff. You can read more about our policy here: [Enter and View Policy – Healthwatch Surrey](#)

We were asked to carry out this Enter and View visit by the learning disability management team at Surrey and Borders NHS Foundation Trust (SABP). As well as giving people an opportunity to share their views of Hillcroft with an independent body, SABP were also keen to find out whether people are aware of the feedback mechanisms in place – an important way to ensure people with learning disabilities and their families have a say in how in services are run.

Details of visit:	
Service Address	Hillcroft, St Ebba's Way, Epsom, KT19 8QJ
Service Provider	Surrey and Borders NHS Foundation Trust (SABP)
Date and Time	Wednesday 2 July 2025, 10am – 12noon
Authorised Representatives	Hannah Gilmour, Jeni Cronin (Healthwatch Surrey authorised Enter and View representative)
Contact details	Healthwatch Surrey GF21, Astolat, Coniers Way, Burpham, Surrey, GU4 7HL Email: enquiries@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk Phone: 0303 303 0023 (local rate number) SMS (text only): 07592 787533 WhatsApp: 07592 787533

Who we heard from

We were shown around by the manager of the home, with some input from the deputy manager. We were able to speak to another staff member and meet one of the individuals living at Hillcroft.

Three staff members completed our staff questionnaire. A family member of one of the people also completed the friends and family questionnaire.

Disclaimer

This report relates to findings observed on the specific date we visited. It is designed to highlight the themes we heard about and includes quotes to provide context on these themes.

Recommendations

Following the visit to Hillcroft we have made the following recommendations:

- Explore ways to identify the families that would like more frequent or personal updates on their family member. Work together with the families and individuals to ensure that everyone is happy with the level of communication provided.
- Continue to improve relationships and communication with the local hospital to ensure individual's needs are met.

Observations about the service

Description of service

Hillcroft is a registered social care home for men and women over the age of 50 with a learning disability and associated needs.

Environment

Hillcroft is a single storey home situated at the old St Ebba's hospital site. There are a variety of community services and other residential homes in this complex. There are 6 individuals, all with complex and differing needs. Only 2 of the individuals are verbal. All the people have lived at Hillcroft for 20+ years.

Surrounding the enclosed home there is a large, landscaped, well maintained garden. It is in a secure fenced area; people are able to freely access outdoor space in safety when the weather allows. There are some raised vegetable beds that the people help to tend.



Facilities

We were told that all individuals have personalised bedrooms that are decorated to their taste and interests; we were shown 3 bedrooms to demonstrate this. The rooms reflected any special adaptations required –

the rooms of the people who have vision impairments had sensory items on the doors and walls to help them identify where they were for example.



All bedrooms are ensuite and there are a further 2 shared bathrooms and 1 wet room. There is a sensory room and different quiet areas for people to sit. There is also a large dining room, with high backed, non-rocking chairs for safety.

They also have a well-equipped kitchen that is used both by staff and by the individuals with supervision.

The home was clean and looked well cared for when we attended.

What we heard – in detail

Daily life and care

The people living at Hillcroft have been there for many years and it is considered a long-term home for them.

All people have a programme detailing the activities that are open to them that day. These are displayed pictorially on boards in the communal kitchen area.

“Its very individual. We plan each shift in the morning. Some activities are planned a long time in advance, some spur of the moment.”

“Some residents can tell us what they want do or point, choose pictures or sometimes we first have to try and see how the individual is enjoying it.”

A range of indoor and outdoor recreational activities are offered, including visits to places of interest, or shopping in the local community. These are offered to individuals via a pictorial board tailored to them and their interests. On the day we visited, 4 of the people living at Hillcroft were at the on-site day centre, which they go to regularly. One individual loves shopping and she is taken into Epsom most days by her keyworker to look around the charity shops and get lunch out.

Activity planning is completed with the individual, discussing what they would like to do. This is done via key worker meetings or in-house meetings with all staff. Booked activities such as art therapy are reviewed every month with the individual. Due to the relatively high staffing ratio they can be flexible with activities. All people living at Hillcroft receive 1 to 1 support and supervision at all times.

“Activities are planned every day for the residents. Holidays are booked in advance as well as day trips. Internal activities are organised from karaoke, aromatherapy etc.”



The people at Hillcroft all have the opportunity to help with their own laundry, shopping and preparing meals daily.

Last year three of the people went abroad on holiday with their key workers.

None of the individuals were able to directly tell us about their experiences at the visit. Four of the people were off site at the time of our visit. We used visual aids to talk to one of the other individuals but she was distressed by this and we did not continue. The final person declined to talk to us.

Staff

The home has 5 morning staff, 4 afternoon staff and 2 overnight staff. The staff usually work solely days or nights for continuity purposes.

There is a low turnover of staff. They do not use agency staff – if any extra staff are needed these shifts are picked up by existing permanent members of the team.

Training is regular, with the most recent session taking place the week before our visit. Staff spoke favourably about the training they received.

“The training is very extensive. I have my own training academy hub with is logged with the Trust. I am very happy with the training provided.”

The staff we heard from feel well supported. When asked what it was like working at Hillcroft they said:

“Fun, busy and happy. Every day is different.”

“We have a good staff team and they are a good employer.”

Visiting healthcare professionals

The relationship between the home and outside health professionals has been challenging in the past, however it is improving. The team use a specialist dentist in Guildford. A chiropodist and optician come into the home. The people at Hillcroft also have a physiotherapist, though this is a less consistent service.

Individuals are registered with the local GP practice who provides support for the home. The manager noted that the relationship with their GP had improved in recent months. Previously, it had been very difficult to get the GP to come into the home or to make an appointment to come into the surgery.

Staff do accompany individuals to outside appointments at all times and advocate on their behalf when needed. However, when going to A&E as an emergency, there can be challenges as the environment is not always suitable for the individuals and reasonable adjustments for additional needs are not always met.

Food

The menu changes daily and items are chosen based on what the people living at Hillcroft are known to enjoy.



People are able to help prepare their own meals in the communal kitchen.

Visiting

There are no set visiting hours, family are allowed to visit as frequently and for as long as they choose. Two of the individuals have regular family visits; the others no longer have family around or they live too far away to visit frequently. The manager said that visiting was becoming more difficult for some of the families as it is generally parents or siblings that visit, and they are all getting older.

Staying in touch

Staff told us that they are in touch with families regularly. They hold parties for birthdays and special events, which they are invited to, and families are encouraged to call and drop in as they please. Management stay in touch via email and phone calls, keeping family up to date with medical and financial matters.

The people at Hillcroft are also able to ring their relatives on request.

The manager has a calendar of family birthdays in the staff room and supports the individuals to write and send birthday cards/presents to close family members.

The family member we heard from said that communication, although getting better, could be further improved. She would appreciate more regular calls and video calls as she is not able to visit her son as often as she would like due to distance.

Staff include family in decision making decisions for all medical/dental decisions, which was appreciated by the family member we heard from.

Next steps

This report and the response from the service provider will be shared with commissioners and regulators of the service and will be published on our website.

Acknowledgments

Healthwatch Surrey would like to thank the staff at Hillcroft for welcoming us, and the family member who spoke to us for this report. We would also like to thank our Healthwatch Surrey authorised representative, Jeni, for her help.

Appendix

What is Enter & View?

Healthwatch have a legal power to visit health and social care services and see them in action. This power to 'Enter and View' services offers a way for Healthwatch to meet some of their statutory functions and allows them to identify what is working well with services and where they could be improved.

Healthwatch have a power under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Part 4 of the Local Authorities Regulations 2013 to carry out Enter and View visits.

The legislation places a duty on health and social care providers to allow Authorised Representatives of Healthwatch to carry out an Enter and View visit on premises where health and social care is publicly funded and delivered.

The purpose of an Enter & View visit is to collect evidence-based feedback to highlight what's working well and what could be improved to make people's experiences better. Healthwatch can use this evidence to make recommendations and inform changes both for individual services as well as system wide.

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.

About Healthwatch Surrey

Healthwatch Surrey champions the voice of local people to shape, improve and get the best from NHS, health and social care services. We are independent and have statutory powers to make sure decision makers listen to the experiences of local people.

We passionately believe that listening and responding to local people's experiences is vital to create health and social care services that meet the needs of people in Surrey. We seek out people's experiences of health and care services, particularly from people whose voices are seldom heard, who might be at risk of health inequalities and whose needs are not met by current services. We share our findings publicly and with service providers and commissioners to influence and challenge current provision and future plans.

We also provide reliable and trustworthy information and signposting about local health and social care services to help people get the support they need.



We are proud to be commended in the National Healthwatch Impact Awards, recognising our work helping to improve local NHS and social care. You can view [our video](#) highlighting how feedback has enabled us to make positive changes to health and social care services.



We are committed to the quality of our information. Every 3 years we perform an audit so that we can be certain of this.

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Luminus

The Healthwatch Surrey service is run by Luminus Insight CIC, known as Luminus.

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