

Amarna House Care Home

Enter and View Report 2025

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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 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.

Amarna House



Details of the visit to Amarna House care home

Service address	Rosetta Way, York, YO26 5RN
Service provider	Avery Healthcare
Date	24 November 2025
CQC rating	Good
Care home manager	Linda Donnellan-Beevers
Contact number	01904 376869

Summary

Purpose of the report

In this report, we summarise the findings from our visit of 24 November 2025, as well as the feedback shared through 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 being provided for the residents and their interaction with staff and their surroundings.

General information

Amarna House is an Avery Healthcare home. It offers residential care services for older people, specialising in people with dementia, including those with high dependency dementia. Amarna House has bedrooms in three units with accommodation with space for 80 residents. Residents were 60% female and 40% male when we visited.

Key findings

At the time of our visit, we found that Amarna House was operating to a very good standard. These findings were based on our observations and reflect the general happiness of residents, family and friends of residents and staff members.



Positive feedback

- The staff were all extremely friendly and knew about residents' needs, likes and dislikes. Our volunteers saw a lot of staff and everyone said there are plenty of staff at all times.
- The staff were very respectful. They all wore name badges and talked to residents by name. A number of the staff have worked at the home for more than five years.
- There was a lot of information about activities, with weekly information sheets seen around the home, including residents' rooms. The residents who commented said that staff talk to them about what is happening and everyone was happy with what was available, including one-to-one sessions for residents as appropriate.
- All the residents looked clean and smart and there were positive comments about laundry, which is done on site.
- The décor was lovely, the lounges felt comfortable and homely and the dining rooms well-appointed with tablecloths, cloth napkins and flowers on the tables.
- The home is extremely clean.
- There are GP visits twice a week, regular optician visits and the home has good links with a local dentist and a dentist providing emergency care. There is a regular visit from a hairdresser.



Recommended areas for improvement

We did not have many areas for improvement. The one noted was:

- Ensure variety in the choices of meal. When we visited the two options for the main meal both had a similar cream-based sauce.

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. We did this by observing the interactions between staff and residents, observing their surroundings and speaking to residents to understand their experiences. We 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 and staff circulated links to the online survey.

On the day, five Healthwatch York authorised representatives conducted observations and talked to residents, their family and friends and staff members. We spoke to twelve residents, who shared their thoughts and experiences using a survey focused on quality of life and care in the home to guide the conversations. Many of the residents have dementia or other cognitive issues, which meant some were unable to answer all our questions. Where this was the case, we had more general conversations to understand their experiences of living at Amarna House.

In addition, 18 family and friends of residents responded to our survey with their views. We also heard from 19 members of staff who work in the home via a survey.

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

Findings

Environment

On initial observation of the care home, our authorised representatives found the building to be in a very good state of repair. The building is purpose-built, relatively new and was noted to be 'spotless'.

Amarna House has an enclosed garden which can be accessed at any time by residents. We heard that residents can help in the garden and often sit out or in the greenhouse when the weather is warmer. Friends of Amarna are volunteers who help support residents, and help in the garden and Food Standards Agency staff have come to help with the garden, including painting a fence.

The home was easy to find. There was a good-sized car park which was busy and was full later in the day.

The home was accessed via automatic front doors. These are locked with a bell to access. Once rung, the bell was answered very quickly by a welcoming staff member. All the staff were extremely kind, and volunteers saw a good number of staff on arrival. The reception area had information boards with details of staff and their roles. There were printed weekly activity programmes available.

Accommodation

Residential care is provided in four units for 80 residents. The units include Willow, a high dependency dementia unit; Laurel, a residential dementia unit both on the first floor; and Evergreen a residential unit and Autumn, a high dependency dementia unit, both on the ground floor.

All bedrooms are ensuite, but many other rooms and each unit has at least five additional toilets and bathrooms for use by anyone. All the common rooms (lounges and dining rooms) and toilets are well signed. All toilets are accessible.

The décor is excellent and we were told that residents helped to choose the textured wallpaper. All walls have a handrail which has good colour contrast with the walls. Each unit has slightly different décor, including different colours and themed photos which makes orientation easier. Some of the photos are linked to previous work done by residents, including photos of work at Rowntrees. Other photos are of cars, motorbikes and sports which are appreciated by the male residents.

All residents' rooms have a number on the door. Some have name plates if the resident wants them. The home follows guidance from Stirling and Leeds Beckett universities about appropriate design and décor for people with dementia.

All residents' rooms we saw had their own possessions and pictures displayed and some people had their own furniture. One person had a pet budgerigar in their room.

The lounges are well appointed and comfortable with a range of seating. They are well decorated and one has a fish tank, radio and fireplace. The dining rooms have tables with tablecloths, cloth napkins and flowers on the tables. Residents can sit in the dining rooms at any time; there are also small seating areas in corridors that people can use if they want to have a quieter place to sit or to meet relatives. Relatives are also welcome to visit residents in their rooms.

Cleanliness and hygiene

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

Quality of life

General happiness

We asked residents what they liked about living at Amarna House. They said:

“I like living here. Nobody bothers you if you don’t bother them. You have your privacy.”

“Very good – the staff give a lot of help.”

“I have lots of friends. It is a home away from home. I am never lonely. Lovely downstairs and there is always something going on.”

“I get looked after.”

All 18 family members completing the survey said Amarna House was clean and comfortable and that residents were being well looked after. Comments included:

“Such friendly and caring staff who know their residents so well, and families.”

- “Linda and her team do an amazing job. My relative has dementia and can be quite difficult at times but they have worked tirelessly to support her and I will always be grateful.”
- “My dad is so well cared for and the team are so attentive always staff around engaging they make you feel so welcome and all led by the amazing Linda.”
- “Very well cared for. Staff really do care. Mum was in a home before and it was awful, but Amarna gave me back my confidence that good kind care does exist. The manager is amazing and she knows what she’s doing and she keeps us all right.”



Food and drink

Residents and relatives were asked to share their views on food and drink at Amarna House. Our representatives observed a mealtime in the home.

All the food was cooked on the premises by one head chef supported by two sous chefs. There were two choices for main course and pudding. The home also caters for special diets including coeliac and vegetarian.

Residents had a choice of eating in the dining room or in their rooms. The dining rooms were very well laid out. Everyone who needed help received it.

Drinks and snacks were brought round regularly and everyone we spoke to said they had enough to eat.

Residents' comments about the food included:

- "The food is good. Staff know what I dislike and alternatives are available. There is a bumper meal at Christmas."
- "I can have tea, coffee, juice when I want."
- "Food is 50/50 - sometimes good, sometimes bad."

All the family members/friends who responded to the survey said that the food was good most of the time, that their friend/family member gets enough to eat and the home caters for special diets.

Family members commented:

- "The food is great my dad loves it and he put weight on. ... He's even tried sweet and sour chicken."
- "Good choice on menus and lovely fresh cakes made at coffee time."
- "My mum is not able to choose what she eats as she has no mental capacity to do so, but I informed staff of her likes and dislikes which they make sure she gets."

We also asked about drinks. Most residents and family members said drinks were available. One family member/friend said that drinks are not always available in residents' rooms. Another person commented that their friend/relative can't drink without support, but that staff help and check the amount the person is drinking daily. Another person mentioned a mobile gin bar and that her mum enjoys a gin and tonic now and again.

Activities

Residents were asked if they spend their time doing things they value and enjoy. Relatives and staff were asked if residents have regular access to activities in the home.

Amarna House has one senior and two other activities coordinators who make up the Wellbeing Team. There are a range of activities inside and outside the home. There are monthly and weekly activities lists which are given to each resident. There is a minibus to take people on trips and many entertainers regularly visit. When we were talking to residents about what they enjoyed, they mentioned gardening, bingo and dancing.

We also asked friends and family and staff about activities. Of the 18 family and friend respondents, ten said that there were always things for residents to do and eight that there were sometimes things for their relative/friend to do. Most (16) of the respondents said they were invited to take part.

Respondents said:

- "Often take my mam out or into the garden or to a different part of the home so she has a change. There is always something to do for the residents and outings too."
- "Lots of choice and meaningful not childish or patronising. Karina is amazing, so thoughtful."
- "Dad does not always want to comply, but the staff always include him in meaningful activities. They look at the person not the task."
- "...Staff don't take mum out as she is seen as a flight risk and they don't have enough staff or room in minibus for both. I take her out when I can for a walk around a garden centre or for tea and cake."

Staff explained about some of the activities happening at Amarna House including:

- Weekly church attendances at Holy Redeemer.
- Visits to places of interest.
- Weekly shopping trip to Morrisons.
- Visits to the York dementia café.
- Visit the Food Bank once a quarter and residents help out.
- Bingo.
- Music events.
- Book club.
- Men's club.

Contact with friends and family

Residents and their relatives were asked about their contact.

All family and friend respondents said that they can visit their friends or relatives when they want. A number mentioned that they always get a friendly welcome. All the residents who talked about relatives or friends visiting said they can visit at any time.



There is Wi-Fi throughout the home but not many people use it. Some have their own phones and stay in touch with others that way.

Quality of care

Residents and relatives

Family and friends were asked whether they felt they/their relative was well cared for. We also observed whether residents looked well cared for during our visit.

Throughout our visit, all the residents we saw and met looked well cared for. The residents we spoke to said they could have a shower or bath when they wanted. Where appropriate, they choose the clothes they wear and their clothes are clean. They are laundered and ironed on site.

All but one family members and friends who responded said they were very satisfied with the care their relative/friend was receiving. The other person said they are somewhat satisfied.



"I think the manager and staff go above and beyond with the care they give my mum and the support they give to family."

"My relative has a history of failed placements but Linda and her team have succeeded when others have failed."

"The care exceeds our expectation they don't always get it right, but they mostly are perfect.

So caring, and you can see they love the job. The manager is a born leader. She makes Amarna House stand out with her amazing team."



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 we spoke to said they get the help they need. Residents mentioned that there are always staff around (there were when we visited) and they can ask. Residents have a bell in their room. All the residents said staff come quickly when they ask for help.

Relatives and friends were asked if they contribute to individual care plans.

Of the 18 people who responded, 13 said they had contributed, and five said they had not. A number of people said they had been asked to be part of care plan reviews.

All 19 staff who responded to our survey said they were very informed about residents' likes and dislikes. Many of the respondents talked about detailed personal care plans. They also mentioned the story boards in each resident's room with information about them to help staff support them and talk to them about their lives.



"Kept informed verbally as well as via care plans etc. Various aids to gather the required information."



Staff

We wanted to know what residents and family/friends think of staff.

All the interactions we saw between staff and residents were very positive. Staff all wore name badges and called the residents by their name. All the residents we spoke to were complimentary about the staff as were the relatives and friends.



"Polite staff. Most are friendly. Staff discuss with me what I want."

"They ask a lot of questions and get to know you."

"Usually nice. They chat to me."

"Friendly chatty staff. They occasionally ask what I like and how I want to be helped."



Safety and staffing 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.

All the residents we spoke to said they feel safe. All 18 family and friends who responded also said they felt their relative or friend was safe at Amarna House and all but one said they thought there are enough staff.

- "The staff ensure my aunt is cared for and she feels safe that's the main thing and we as a family know she is."
- "The manager makes sure of that [safety]. We trust the staff without doubt."
- "The staff on the unit are very attentive They are always helping and singing."
- "There are staff everywhere. We have never had to look for someone. The call bell rarely rings and when they do, staff attend quickly."
- "I feel the clients on the unit are often left with music in the day room, no real offer of individual interaction. The animation team are amazing, perhaps more of them in the unit would be good."
- "Mum left to pace rather than having time to distract and comfort her."

The manager told us that Amarna House is fully staffed with 81 staff. They have 11 sponsored international workers. All staff live locally and are given help to find rental properties. Two staff are recently qualified with Masters degrees.

There are four units or communities. They are staffed with one senior and four carers during the day and two seniors and seven carers at night. Shifts are 7am to 7pm or the reverse.

The manager or one of the clinical leads is always available.

All of 19 staff respondents said they felt there are enough staff. Staff comments included:

- “Never worked in a care home with so many staff.”
- “If we are short manager helps out, she works like one of us.”
- “We always have staff on. The manager is always walking around checking. The residents like her a lot and we do. She even gave us a prayer room.”
- “We have a big team now and the boss always looks out for us asking if we are ok. She’s worked so hard to get us out of Covid and the hard times.”

There was no Covid in the home, even at the height of the pandemic, and no Covid-related deaths.

Health Checks

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

GPs from the local surgery visit twice a week. An optician visits annually and the home has links with a dentist for routine care and one for emergency care. Many family members take their relatives to appointments as needed and said that care home staff will help if needed.

Raising concerns and issues

We wanted to know if residents, family and friends had any concerns about the service, would they know what to do.

All the residents who commented said they would talk to staff members if there were any issues and many mentioned talking to the manager, Linda. Family members and friends said similar. None were concerned about raising issues and felt they would be listened to and issues addressed as soon as possible. However, many people said there had been no issues.



“I would go to Linda and her clinical staff. She is so on it and nips in the bud. We have had niggles to start but wow what a response from her amazing first-class service.”



Other comments

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

Residents said:

- “It’s very nice. You get to see all the shows [entertainment in the home]. Family live near and visit regularly. The home is clean and I’m happy with that. It’s very nice here. You get the sun most of the day. Other residents are nice to be with – I haven’t met anyone I didn’t like. ”
- “Everyone is friendly. ”
- “Very comfortable in this home. I feel safe and the staff look after me well.”
- “If I need anything at all, I just ask.”

Family members/friends added:

- “There are some exceptional staff. Emma and Gill both great leads and show knowledge and understanding of mum.”
- “This is the best care home I have ever encountered and would recommend it to anyone who is looking for top quality care.”
- “I couldn’t ask for my dad to be in a better place. Linda the manager gave him a chance when other places gave up on him. He loves it there. All staff are brilliant. I do not have one bad word to say about any of them. Marina is especially good with activities for my dad, Jo goes out of her way to see my dad and interact, Sarah and her team are brilliant at keeping his room and the home spotless, all carers and nurses are brilliant and go above and beyond.”
- “Amarna house and the team are amazing caring and they just love their jobs. The home is so welcoming and very, very clean; better than most and this is all down to leadership...”
- “Since coming here from day one Linda gave us such reassurance and they as a team have delivered. All care homes should visit Linda and her team they could learn a lot about how to be caring and respectful. They work as a team should with Linda in the front and her admin team who are amazing.”

Our care home assessors also summarised their impression of Amarna House:

- “I personally think the manager has done/is doing such a great job here. The management of staff, residents, visitors, volunteers etc is all very smooth and logical. Taking residents’ opinions into account and acting on that too. It is definitely clear how much the manager prioritises and cares for residents and

staff. No concerns about management style and the way in which the staff care for the residents.”

- “This is a lovely home. Staff are enthusiastic and seem very caring. They know the residents well and predict what is needed where residents have dementia. Some residents have challenging behaviour, but these are well managed. Not much interaction between residents but staff help and communicate well.”
- “I would be happy for my mum to live here and believe she would be well cared for and her needs met.”

Staff feedback

How do they feel?

We asked staff about working in the care home.

Nineteen staff members completed the survey across a variety of roles and every one said they enjoy working at Amarna House. Comments included:

- “I’m new it’s lovely I’ve had such bad experience in last home but Amarna is so different and manager so supportive.”
- “This home is lovely and I love it when I came here I was so nervous but was made to feel welcome.”
- “Lovely home. Best I’ve worked in. All the staff are caring and it shows manager leads us to be the best.”

When we asked about things that could make the working environment better most respondents couldn’t think of anything and reiterated what a good place it is to work. Those that mentioned something, suggested support with transport to work, with accommodation and being provided with lunch or food during their shifts.

All staff respondents felt they were offered relevant training and all said they are always kept informed about any changes at the home. A number of respondents mentioned the ways they can feedback and reflected on a positive, open culture at the home. Many of the respondents also said that they feel listened to by senior staff and particularly the manager.

All 19 staff respondents said they would recommend Amarna House to friends and family. One staff member said that she chose the home for her mum.

When we asked staff if there was anything else they wanted to tell us, they said:

- “Over the last eight years I have embedded ‘Resident of the Day’ reviews, training and development of staff allowing staff to progress and feel appreciated. Residents have a say in how the home is managed. Most of all my residents will say to me this is my " home"; that's all I need to hear.”
- “It’s a lovely caring home. Manager runs a tight ship, but she cares about all of us, helps with our problems and teaches you the right way. She is well respected.”
- “Amarna is a proper care home homely caring and a manager who knows what she is doing. Senior staff listen and talk to you. Manager does not allow gossiping like you get in other homes. My residents are family to me.”
- “I love it here. Great home, caring and staff really love the residents. We support each other and manager always available even when she’s busy she will give you time. The residents love her.”

Overall rating

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

Family and friends: (4.9/5)



Staff: (5/5)



Acknowledgements

The Healthwatch York Enter and View team would like to thank the manager, deputy manager, staff, friends and families of residents, and residents for welcoming us to the 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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