

The Chocolate Works Care Village

Enter and View Report 2026

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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.

The Chocolate Works



Details of the visit to The Chocolate Works Care Village

Service address	Bishopthorpe Road, York, YO23 1DE
Service provider	Care UK
Date	20 January 2026
CQC rating	Awaiting inspection – internally rated Good using CQC methodology
Care home manager	Judy Wray
Contact number	01904 211740

Summary

Purpose of the report

In this report, we summarise the findings from our visit of 20 January 2026, 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

The Chocolate Works Care Village is managed and staffed by Care UK. It offers residential care services for people of all ages, but currently the ages of residents range from 71 to 104. They offer residential support, specialist dementia care and nursing care across three floors. The Chocolate Works can also support people needing respite and/or rehabilitation beds and can provide end of life care – unless specialist equipment or medication are required. There is space for 90 residents. When we visited there were 87 and approximately 65 – 70% of those residents are female. There are a variety of rooms, including eight apartments, which would work very well for couples.

Key findings

At the time of our visit, we found that The Chocolate Works was operating to a 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 Care Village was clean.
- It is in a beautiful heritage building with a lovely grand entrance and staircase. The interior still reflects its art deco origins throughout, including the second floor which was added when the building was converted to a care home.
- There were a lot of different spaces for people to sit out of their rooms with larger areas and smaller spaces.
- There seemed to be a lot of activities and residents from all floors seemed very engaged in one activity when we were visiting.
- The staff seemed kind and caring for residents and we saw some excellent interactions between staff and residents.
- Feedback suggested staff have a good understanding of dementia and provide good care for residents with dementia. There were some 'fiddle toys' available on Riverside, the dementia care floor.



Recommended areas for improvement

- Review staffing levels to make sure residents are not kept waiting for help and can access the care they need.
- Make sure that staff supporting residents at meals know what the meals are for that day.
- Always provide cups with the cold drinks and water.
- Make sure that spills in dining areas and residents' rooms are cleared up quickly.
- Make sure any residents with sight loss are told about activities planned for the day and week so they can get involved and feel included in activities.
- If changes are discussed with residents or family members, check that these are implemented and provide feedback on what has happened.

About this visit

This was an announced Enter and View visit arranged in advance with the 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 and through conversations on the day of the visit. Copies of the survey were available in The Chocolate Works before and after our visit and staff circulated links to the online survey.

On the day, seven Healthwatch York authorised representatives conducted observations and conversations. We spoke to 14 residents, who shared their thoughts and experiences using a survey focused on quality of life and care in the home to guide the conversations. Some 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 The Chocolate Works.

In addition, we spoke to five staff on the day and had three responses from staff to our survey. We also spoke to six family members during our visit and heard from a further five through the 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 good state of repair and were told a full refurbishment was underway. While there were some areas we felt needed attention, we were assured that they are part of the rolling refurbishment programme. We were shown some rooms and suites that were currently being refurbished.

The building is Grade 2 listed and was once the administration block for Terry's factory. It is art deco and elements are based on the fittings of the Titanic. Some of the residents once worked in the building.

The Chocolate Works Care Village does not have a garden immediately outside the property. However, it has a roof terrace with planting on the second floor which all residents can access. There is also a 'peace garden' a short walk away which

independent residents can access at any time or other residents can visit if accompanied by a staff member or a friend/relative as appropriate.

The home was easy to find and is situated just off a main road. There was a good-sized car park across the road accessed with a fob provided by the staff and some Blue Badge spaces immediately outside. There are bus stops nearby. We did not see any cycle parking, however staff supported one of our volunteers to safely secure their bike.

The home has automatic front doors. These are locked with information about how to get in if the reception staff member is not there or does not see you. The reception staff member was kind, and volunteers saw a good number of other staff when walking round the building. If the reception staff member is not at their desk when someone arrives, it can take a little time to get access to the building.

The reception area had comfortable seats, hot drinks available and information about how to provide feedback about the care village. Information about activities and staff was available in other parts of the care village, including the lifts.

Accommodation

Care is provided on three floors for 90 residents. The ground floor is residential accommodation, the first floor, or Riverside, is the specialist dementia floor and the second floor, or Minster, offers nursing care. (If nursing care is required for an existing resident, this can be provided in their room and does not necessitate that they move to the second floor unless essential to meet their care needs). There are eight apartments which offer bedroom, bathroom and lounge/kitchen area and enable people to cook all meals for themselves if they choose. However, residents of suites can also access all the facilities, including meals, from the care village.

All bedrooms are ensuite with showers and there are three bathrooms, one on each floor, where residents can have, or be supported to have, a bath. Each floor also has accessible toilets. All the common rooms (lounges and dining rooms) and toilets are well signed and some signs have images and words and others have very large font signs.

The décor is generally good with some areas identified for refurbishment. The ground floor has a large atrium which has been fitted out to look like an outside

area with café and shops. The shops include a hairdresser and a hairdresser visits three days a week. During our visit the atrium area was quite noisy with a radio on competing with the sound from the activity upstairs. A family member also commented on this, but said it was unusual.

Across the three floors there is a wide variety of seating areas, including separate dining rooms on the first and second floors. All corridor walls have a handrail which has good colour contrast with the walls on the first and second floors. Each floor has a different layout, different lounges and different décor, including different colours and themed photos which makes orientation easy.

All residents' rooms have a number and name on the door and we were told there are plans to introduce memory boxes outside each room.

All residents' rooms we saw had their own possessions and pictures displayed and some people had their own furniture. We were told that in one room, all but the bed came with the resident.

The lounges are well appointed and comfortable with a range of seating to meet resident needs. Most have televisions or radios and one has a large tablet which can be used as a television or for interactive games as appropriate. This can also be moved to other areas if appropriate. Televisions or radios were not on in all the lounges we saw.

Relatives are welcome to visit their family members or friends in any of the spaces including the residents' rooms.

Cleanliness and hygiene

Our representatives noted that the care home was clean, with no unpleasant smells. We met some of the cleaning staff who were very engaged, knew the residents by name and needs and supported the care staff if needed.

Quality of life

General happiness

We asked residents what they liked about living at The Chocolate Works and asked relatives and friends what they thought. Answers included:

- "I love it here. I have got nothing to worry about."
- "I am very happy. It is a lovely building. People are nice in general."
- "Very comfortable. I can have a lovely time."

Most family members or friends completing the survey or those we spoke to said The Chocolate Works was clean and comfortable and that residents were being well looked after. Comments included:

- “The care has been fantastic, especially since she moved up to the nursing floor (Minster).”
- “I have worked in care homes. I am very happy with the care mum is getting here. My mum has dementia and has personality issues and the staff cope well.”
- “It is generally good, although getting in can be difficult until you have a job. Food is good, there are activities and good care for people with dementia. ... It is a stimulating environment. There are different places inside to go and the rooftop garden is lovely.”
- “My mum only came a couple of days ago from hospital. They have been very welcoming. There are lots of staff and they are engaged. You can ask anything and they will respond.”
- “Overall yes but it could be better with more staff and attentiveness and activities for stimulation and more staff.”
- “Not always cleaned. Food on the floor and dirty chairs and tables.”



Food and drink

Residents and relatives were asked to share their views on food and drink at The Chocolate Works. Our representatives also observed a mealtime.

All the food was cooked on the premises. A kitchen was added during a recent major refurbishment and a number of people noted that the food has improved since it has been freshly made on site. Menus were available on the tables in the dining rooms and residents were shown the different choices to help them choose where appropriate. There were two choices for main course and pudding. The home also caters for special diets including coeliac, vegetarian and meals for people with swallowing difficulties.

Residents can choose to eat in the dining room or in their rooms. There were separate dining rooms on each floor, which were spacious and well laid out. Everyone who needed help received it. The staff on Riverside coped well with residents who did not want to sit for long to eat their meal.

Drinks were available from the dining rooms at all times and everyone we spoke to said they had enough to eat and could get food if required. The staff recognised that people like to eat at different times and we were told that residents can get food at any time of the day or night on request.

Residents' comments about the food included:

- "Sometimes when you get the plate it doesn't seem to be what you chose. You can get snacks later and there is lots of access to cold drinks."
- "Can't complain about the food. Enough choice and I can ask if I am not happy."
- "I have breakfast in my room and other meals in the dining room. Some of the food is not very nice. ... I do not like fruit and veg. One day it was supposed to be pork but the plate was just full of vegetables." (The family member has asked for them not to put vegetables on the plate, but the staff continue to do it citing health reasons.)

All but one family member or friend who responded to the survey said that the food was good most of the time and all respondents said their relative or friend had enough to eat. Comments identified some areas that could be improved:

- "She has a soft diet and you can see the difference now they cook in house and can tell the different things that make up the meal."
- "Sometimes the communication is poor and staff don't know what the food is."
- "I regularly observe breakfast, although there's plenty of food available it is often poorly presented and not warm enough. The heating trolley is either too hot or not warm enough."
- "Some of the meals are not well balanced. High carbohydrates and not enough vegetables and fruit. Cakes and biscuits offered too much."

We also asked relatives and friends about drinks. All respondents said drinks are freely available, but one added that residents on Minster who require nursing care are often reliant on staff to bring them drinks.

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.

The Chocolate Works has one lead for lifestyle and three lifestyle coordinators who organise activities for the residents across all three floors. One person is full time and the rest are part time. One of the coordinators had only recently started when we visited and they were actively recruiting one more. There are a range of activities inside the home with residents encouraged and supported to attend activities on different floors. When we were visiting there was a musical activity run by Musical Moments on Riverside with residents from the other floors attending, including some from receiving nursing care who were taken in specially adapted chairs. We also heard about a visit from a pony to all three floors the previous day.

Activities lists are available in communal spaces and are posted in the lifts. We were told that staff explain activities to partially sighted residents. The aim is to have three activities each day. One staff member mentioned that they wanted to get a minibus and while that had been promised when the new owners took over The Chocolate Works, it hadn't happened yet. They explained that as a result, they are limited in arranging activities outside the care village as they would rely on wheelchair taxis which are not always available, especially at school times.

Other activities include namaste wellbeing sessions in a dedicated room or taken to residents in their room, manicures, hand massages, movement to music, keep fit, yoga, board games, quizzes, themed events, singers and more. Staff also support residents to go to the local peace garden. There are good links with the local church, St Chad's, whereby a priest regularly visits and residents go to the concerts and services at the church. The Chocolate Works has a cinema room which is used by residents to watch films or sports. Members of the local community are invited to a monthly community cinema, a monthly friendship café and regular dementia café. Where possible, staff support residents to go out of the home including taking one resident to watch York City – which they described as making their dream come true.

We also asked residents, friends and family and staff about activities.

Respondents said:

- "I did some baking and enjoyed making some buns."

- “My brother visits and takes me to the café. I do crosswords and love the quizzes they have here. I would like to get out to chapel.”
- “I like watching sports programmes. ... I will go and watch the football in the cinema room if Spurs are playing.”
- “I can go out when I want ... I like to go out for a walk most days.”
- “They ask my mum what she wants to do and she goes to music and movement on a Tuesday. They do take her to activities and know her personality and what she likes, so can encourage her.”
- “My husband is totally dependent, staff organise hand massages and music in his room.”
- “Mum is blind and cannot see the planner. She is very rarely asked if she wants to attend events.”
- “I have not been asked about what I want to do. I have been very disappointed.”
- “The activities ... could be a lot better with more enthusiasm, innovative thinking and consideration to different residents also a bigger budget is needed too. In contrast to the sheet distributed, the activities are often cancelled with no notice given or an alternative activity put in place or staff are utilised somewhere else to help out i.e. kitchen or reception. More wellbeing members are needed (and with experience) due to the size of the home and be able to have more involvement with residents. Also, residents aren’t always taken to an activity if held on another unit so miss out regularly. Not enough staff for residents to be taken outside. Residential residents always get preference.”

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. All the residents who talked about relatives or friends visiting said they can visit at any time.



Comments from family members include:

- “Excellent for being able to visit whenever, especially now she is in her last days. The staff care extends to us too, offering drinks etc.”
- “I have visited my husband four times a week (my choice) to feed him breakfast. I’ve always been made welcome.”

There is Wi-Fi throughout the home.

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. Most of the residents we spoke to said they could have a shower or bath when they wanted. One said they would like a shower more often.

Where appropriate, residents choose the clothes they wear and their clothes are clean. They are laundered on site. There were a couple of comments from family members that the laundry was not as good as it had been and their relative sometimes gets the wrong clothes, but we were told they felt that things were improving.

Three family members and friends who responded said they are very satisfied with the care their relative/friend was receiving and two said they are somewhat satisfied.



“Generally, very satisfied. Improvements could be made with food and participation in activities.”

“Some great staff but more training and more supervision is needed. Shortcuts are taken.”

“Carers are sometimes too busy to give care as is required.”



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

All the family members who responded to our survey said they had contributed to their relative’s care plan. One person said that staff always talked thoroughly with family about care plans, however, another mentioned that their relative’s care plan is not always adhered to.

All the staff who responded to our survey said they were very informed about residents’ likes and dislikes and felt informed.



“My husband’s care plan review is held on a set date each month so I can raise any issue when I visit and know it will be dealt with.”



Staff

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

Staff all wore name badges and called the residents by their name. Almost all the interactions we saw between staff and residents were very positive. The only exception was one instance where a resident said she wanted to go to her room. When our volunteer mentioned this to a staff member, the staff member said that she would be on her own in her room and that the resident didn’t know what she was saying.

All the residents we spoke to were complimentary about the staff:

- “They are friends and it is good to chat to them. ... Some of the staff are very kind.”
- “Nice and friendly. Staff pop in and out [of the person’s room]. They are respectful, explain what they are doing and talk to me about how I want to be looked after.”
- “Caring, chatty staff.”

Family and friends were also positive:

- “The staff are amazing with her. If I mention something they come straightaway and get her sorted out. ... They are appropriate and understanding with mum and calm with her...”
- “They are welcoming. As soon as mum arrived they got her settled.”
- “The staff are exemplary in terms of friendliness and talking to me.”

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 the family and friends who responded also said they felt their relative or friend was safe at The Chocolate Works.

There were mixed views on whether there are enough staff. Most of the residents we spoke to felt there were enough staff, although some said they feel there are too many jobs for the staff to do. One of five family and friend respondents said there are enough staff and four said there weren't. Their comments included:

- "Staff on the nursing floor are very overstretched as most residents are highly dependent. Mornings are especially difficult and mealtimes as so many residents need feeding or assistance with food."
- "Often comments heard about being short staffed. Not offered a shower every day/every other day. Has to ask. Sometimes has to wait to get up/for buzzer to be answered."
- "Sometimes there is only one member of staff to sit with the residents and obviously cannot leave them, so if anyone else needs help, you have to wait until other staff come back. This can take quite a while. Also, regularly both seniors are gone from the office."

The manager told us that there are 147 staff at The Chocolate Works, including sponsored international workers, and two vacancies. Day and night staffing levels are two seniors and three carers on the ground floor; one nurse, one senior and five carers on Riverside (the dementia floor) and one nurse, one senior and four carers on Minster (nursing floor). Staff can move between floors when working if needed. All buzzers are heard across the three floors via an internet system. They have a bank system for staff, so staff can opt for additional shifts to cover others' leave or illness.

Some of the staff we spoke to felt they wasn't enough staff and feel there has been a reduction in staff numbers. Some mentioned that they still had personal care to complete when it was lunch time. Another mentioned that staffing is a topic that comes up regularly in resident and family meetings.

One staff member added: "It doesn't matter how many staff you have, it's more important about the team and how we work together to deliver good care."

Health Checks

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

The Chocolate Works has good contact with the allocated GP practice. An advanced nurse practitioner visits every Monday and a GP and care practitioner on Thursdays. Other visits can be arranged if needed. They also have good links with a local dental practice and a local pharmacy. The manager is developing

links with an optician service with a visit planned for the end of January. There are also regular visits from a podiatrist and masseuse. The Chocolate Works has good links with a local physiotherapist who can support residents, especially anyone there for rehabilitation.

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.

A number of residents mentioned pressing a buzzer to get help or talking to staff. A family member mentioned that their relative needed nursing care and had to rely on staff popping in and out if they needed help.

All the family members said they would talk to the manager or staff. They also mentioned a resident and family meeting with the manager every month. Minutes of the meetings are circulated and available at reception. The manager has a monthly open office session and an open door policy and shares her contact details for family members to get in touch at any time. Most family members said that any concerns they had had been dealt with promptly and that staff listen. One person added: "I find management very friendly and receptive at all times. However, not everything is carried out as they wish. It would be helpful if they would follow up our concerns at a later date to ensure it's happened. Sometimes I feel placated with an affirmative when raising concerns to members of staff."

Other comments

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

Residents said:

- "I enjoy being here. I enjoy the company. I have people here I can trust."
- "Staff are charming and extremely good."

Family members/friends added:

- "I chose the care home as it offered the care that mum needed. Initially we thought she was end of life, but she is still here, so the care she needed changed. They have moved her upstairs as she was shouting. She is now opposite the nurse's station so they can respond quickly. I recommend the home to others."

- “Special recommendations for Mo and Anita on the nursing ward. They have been amazing and really helped ensure care was of such high standard and that we were informed at each stage. They’re both so approachable also and you never feel like they don’t have time to talk to you as a family member. Such excellent approach to caring.”
- “Generally, it is very good. It would be better if she was included more. She hasn’t been out of doors for a long time.”
- “Mum sometimes finds carers difficult to understand (ie if English is not their first language).”
- “The home has lots of good things about it and could be one of the best but families feel placated and give up voicing their concerns. Shortcuts by staff are often taken and dignity isn’t always a priority. Residents can be left covered in food on their face and clothes without being wiped or changed. Their clothes dishevelled exposing their modesty. Each team should be constantly overlooked and checked to ensure they’re doing what’s asked of them, especially within the care plan and not what’s easiest for them.”

Our care home assessors also summarised their impression of The Chocolate Works:

- “Beautiful setting that would suit some people extremely well. Dementia and nursing care were good. The space is utilised in a way to suit as many different people and different needs as possible.”
- “Felt like a very high-class hotel with a lot of attention to décor.”
- “Very good. Lovely environment, but not very homely. ... Nice staff. Interesting and thoughtful approach to the layout.”
- “Grand building, but a shame not to have a garden to walk straight into. Spacious, so plenty of scope for walking inside.”
- “Lovely and clean. Very friendly staff.”

Staff feedback

How do they feel?

We asked staff about working in the care home.

Eight staff members provided feedback either in person or via the survey and everyone said they enjoyed working there. Comments included:

- “It’s a lovely place to work. There is good support for the residents.”
- “I’ve worked here for eight years and it has been up and down. They are good employers and the manager is very approachable. She listens and actions things.”
- “You feel supported but we need more staff.”
- “It feels like a family and everyone helps. ... We are listened to most of the time.”
- “I have worked within the Chocolate works for almost five years now. Working at The Chocolate works is very different to other places. I have always felt at home here.”

All staff respondents felt they were offered relevant training and all said they are always kept informed about any changes at the home.

Comments included:

- “There is plenty of training that is mandatory. But I know there is opportunity to receive training like health and social care levels 2 and 3.”
- “We get training and feel supported by the care home managers.”
- “We offer ... future home manager/ deputy manager course. Whilst being at The Chocolate Works, I have completed my health and social care NVQs, as well as mentor training and I have recently put my name forward for the future home managers’ course.”

All the staff we asked said they would recommend The Chocolate Works to friends and family. They said:

- “I would feel confident that the staff would look after my friends and family very well.”
- “Without a doubt I would recommend The Chocolate Works to my friends and family. We work as a team to ensure residents are well supported ensuring their needs are person centred throughout their full journey.”

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: (4/5)



Staff: (4.8/5)



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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