

Healthwatch Cumberland Enter & View Report

Dalton Court Care Home

March 2026

Revisit



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 residents who met members of the Enter and View team on that date.

Contents

Contact Details	Pg 3
About Healthwatch	Pg 4
Summary	Pg 5
What did we do?	Pg 6
Service Overview	Pg 7
Enter & View Observations	Pg 8
Resident Feedback	Pg 11
Staff Feedback	Pg 13
Recommendations	Pg 15
Provider Response	Pg 16
Provider Response from First Visit	Pg 17

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Practice Contact:

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Date and Time of our visit:

11/03/2026

17:30-19:30

Healthwatch Cumberland Authorised Representatives:

Clandon Armstrong (Engagement Officer)

Caitlin Graham (Research and Data Officer)

About Healthwatch

Healthwatch Cumberland is the independent public voice for health and social care in Cumberland and exists to make services work for the people who use them. We believe that the best way to do this is by providing the people of Cumberland with opportunities to share their views and experiences.

Healthwatch Cumberland has statutory powers to listen, act, challenge and gather feedback to improve local services and promote excellence throughout the NHS and social care services.

To help achieve this Healthwatch have a statutory power to 'Enter and View' health and social care services that are publicly funded. The purpose of an Enter and View is to listen to people who access those services and observe service delivery.

Following the Enter and View visit a report is compiled identifying aspects of good practice within the service visited along with any recommendations for any possible areas of improvement.

As we are an independent organisation, we do not make judgements or express personal opinions but rely on feedback received and objective observations of the environment. The report is sent to the service provider providing an opportunity to respond to any recommendations and comments before being published on the Healthwatch Cumberland website at <https://wearepeoplefirst.co.uk/healthwatch-cumberland/>

The report is available to members of the public along with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations. Where appropriate Healthwatch Cumberland may arrange a revisit to monitor the progress of improvements and celebrate any further successes.

General Information

At the time of this visit, Dalton Care home was not at capacity with vacant rooms observed. We can not comment on their exact capacity for this visit. They provide accommodation care services to those with personal care or nursing requirements.

There are two floors in the building with the second floor dedicated to those with dementia.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Cumberland would like to thank residents and staff for making us feel welcome and for taking the time to speak to us during this unannounced visit.

Summary

Dalton Court Care Home is situated on the outskirts of Cockermouth town.

With a specialised floor for dementia care, the home offers a range of services. The home can assist those with a range of conditions and presentations, for instance with having registered nurses on site, those with medical needs can receive nursing care.

Healthwatch Cumberland staff were given a tour of the L-shaped building upon arrival including their lounge areas, seating areas in corridors and bathroom facilities. Upon each floor there are also two dining areas with the first-floor dining room having a mountain view. There is secure fencing and doors at external entrances ensuring the safety of residents. Furthermore, there is a large garden patio space with seating for residents to enjoy. Every room has en-suite bathrooms and rooms appeared to be decorated in uniform with the rest of the home.

Following our observations, Healthwatch Cumberland have suggested a number of recommendations to improve the services at Dalton Care Home. It is important to note here that our visit was unannounced.

Furthermore, this document is a snapshot of the time we were present, and this should be acknowledged if being used for recommendations of one's care.



What did we do?

Healthwatch Cumberland Enter and View Representatives made an unannounced visit to Dalton Court Care Home on **11th March 2026** and received feedback from:



Introductory meeting

Before having a tour of the home and speaking to residents, Healthwatch Cumberland staff met with administration staff. The home manager was unavailable due to our visit being out of hours. This gave us opportunity to explain what our Enter and View visit would entail and review recommendations from our initial visit in 2025.

One to one discussions with residents and their relatives

Throughout the visit, we explored the home and spoke to anyone willing to chat with us. We were also interested in the natural dynamic of the home, observing staff interactions. We spoke to residents to gather their opinions and thoughts about the home. In a one-to-one setting, this allowed for honest and open conversations. Unfortunately, there were no relatives visiting during our visit to get feedback from.

Discussions with members of staff

Using the basis of our structured questions and some unstructured conversation, we asked members of staff similar questions throughout the visit.

Observations

We observed the layout and organisation of the home, being alert for areas of concern such as blocked hallways, any damaged areas, resident rooms etc. Resident and care giver interactions were also observed.

Service Overview

Location and public access

The home is located on the outskirts of Cockermouth, close to the Lamplugh Roundabout off the A66. The home is not clearly signposted before having entered the road up close to the building. Without a navigation system or guide, it would be difficult to find.

The home is near some local amenities with a service station in proximity with a small shop and food services. The closest pharmacy and greater shopping opportunities are a reasonable distance away from the home in the centre of Cockermouth.

On the main road (Lamplugh Road), staff noticed bus stops which would allow public transport access to the home with a short walk to the home estimated to take five minutes. However, the public transport accessibility in Cumbria is limited and unless a relative resides within Cockermouth, public accessibility may be very difficult without access to a car.

Background of the home

Opened in 2010, the home has been running for 16 years with some long-term staff still working at the home. The home has a capacity of 60 residents and offers a range of care with an on-site nurse for those required. The home recently was taken over by the organisation Sandstone. The home was managed by Priory group during our previous visit.

Services available

The home has two floors with the ground floor being suited for those over 65 years of age requiring physical or personal care needs. The first floor is dedicated to residents living with dementia or age-related brain changes. The home can accommodate residents with medical needs that require nursing care due to their on-site nurse provision. The home has their own minibus which allows for greater options of activities with residents.

Enter & View Observations

External Environment

The home is secure with a fenced garden and coded external doors on the front side of the home. It is clear to visitors where to report to, with a large sign to show where reception is located.

The garden can be entered via the ground floor lounge or family visit lounge. There are adequate seating options with space for those who require their own chairs to be brought out.

The ground is level and paved which is suitable for wheelchair access. The garden boasts mountain views which is especially good to view throughout the right wing of the home. There is lots of nature surrounding the home with greenery and trees with large windows for residents to enjoy looking out.

Internal Environment

First Impressions

Healthwatch Representatives attended this enter and view as an unannounced visit. It took a short while to have the reception doors attended to (<5 minutes) and we were not made to feel welcome. As this was an unannounced visit, lanyards and clipboards can be stress inducing especially as we arrived towards the end of the evening mealtime.

We observed a visitors book in the foyer however, it was not obvious what the book was without a close look. We were also not asked to sign in or out.

Staff were identifiable by name badges, but they were small. It can be useful in care homes to feature a staff board with names and images to help relatives, residents and new staff get to know who works there.

Enter & View Observations

Observation of corridors, public toilets and bathrooms

The decor of the home has been significantly updated since our previous visit in 2025. All walls, and rails have been re-painted, with new carpets installed throughout most of the home. These updates create a homely feel, with the refresh providing a visible cleanliness of the home.

Corridors feature imagery of the local area, primarily historical photographs of the main street in Cockermouth. This is a theme throughout the home, with some artwork also displayed.

Public toilets appeared to be clean to a high standard and located suitably. In some instances, there were laundry trolleys stored in toilet and bathroom areas. We were made aware by staff that they are not usually in there. Corridors were spacious with no obstructions. Rails contrasted the wall colour and signs were appropriately placed.



Pictured: Ground Floor Corridor & Resident Cat (Name Unknown)



Pictured: First Floor Corridor

On the first floor that is specialised for those with dementia, rails contrasted the wall paint more so than the ground floor. It was observed by Healthwatch Cumberland staff to be contrasting however, for those it is designed for; it could be a more drastic.

Signage featured very small images beside text which is not dementia friendly.



Enter & View Observations

Lounges, dining and other public areas

The lounges, dining areas and other public areas were all generally clean, pleasant and homely. The lounges had more than enough seating for residents considering there were multiple lounge areas on each floor. Some seating areas did not have a TV which is good for those seeking a peaceful area to sit. In the main lounge that had a large TV, there were many seats facing it however, some faced away which promotes social opportunities.

The dining area looked to provide a pleasant dining experience, with space for those with assisted chairs. Healthwatch Staff did not observe a menu present and when asked, the administration staff were not aware of what residents had this day. Compared to our last visit, there was a visible sign outside the dining areas.

It should be noted that this visit was unannounced and out of hours, with our arrival aligning with the end of the evening mealtime.

Staff and resident Interactions

Staff knew residents by name and communicated respectfully. From our observations, staffing levels seemed sparse with an appropriate focus on the first floor. We heard many call bells and calls for assistance on the first floor however, we were notified that residents were 'sundowning' which is a change in behaviour in those with dementia. There was high demand for staff during this time.

We observed two residents on the ground floor to have been seated in the main lounge for the majority of our visit who did not seem to be attended to.

We chatted with them and they seemed happy however, we did not observe any staff checking in.



Resident feedback

Healthwatch Representatives spoke with 8 residents during the visit.

Tell us what you think about the home

We asked about: the care they receive, the food provided and comfort.

Healthwatch representatives attended the home as residents were finishing their evening meals. Residents seemed happy who were in the dining areas. We asked residents in conversation how they found the food at Dalton Care home.

Following conversation with residents, in addition to observations, Healthwatch Representatives observed limited person-centered care due to staff capacity.

When asked about if they feel safe in the home, a resident responded “Oh, yes”, adding on that “the staff are wonderful”.

We asked about how residents find the care they receive at Dalton Court: “Good, I’m quite happy”, the “Majority (of care staff) are very good.” and “I would recommend it to people”.

One resident stated “I’d rather be at home”.

The food is “Very Good.”

“I’m vegan, it’s a bit difficult for them. But they do very well.”

What activities are on offer, and do you join in?

Healthwatch representatives observed an upcoming cocktail night poster in the entrance however, there was no other evidence of activities and no activities board observed. We were told about the minibus that the home has for taking residents out for activities and days out.

“I knit but it’s all in the cupboard.”

“We go to the garden centre near Carlisle, it’s nice when the weather’s good”

I’m “Sick of TV” and “Don’t get choice what’s on.”

“I want to be out doing something.”

Resident feedback

Any other comments or feedback

Healthwatch Representatives made note of any further comments or feedback that were important to capture the experience of residents in Dalton Care Home.

During our visit, Healthwatch Representatives met two black cats who reside in the home. Residents seemed content with their presence.

One resident shared they heard one of the cats in their room that morning and it humoured them.



Staff feedback

Healthwatch received feedback from 7 staff members during the visit.

Do you have enough staff when on duty?

“No”

“If someone calls in sick, it’s tight going.”

Staff ratio: “5 Carers to 1 nurse, used to be 6”

“Struggling all the time”



Do you feel supported to carry out a person-centred experience?

Mixed responses around ‘feeling supported to provide a person-centered experience’.

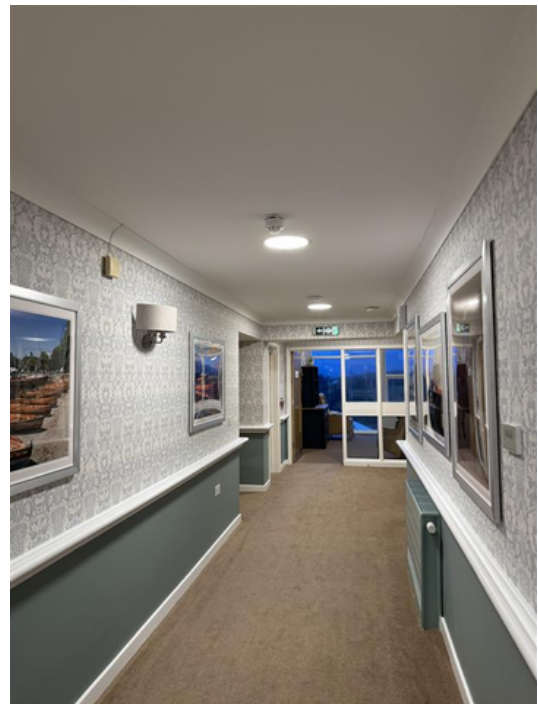
- “Yes”
- “No”
- “If they had more staff, yes”



Do you feel you have enough training to carry out your duties well?

- "Online courses so yes"
- "Training when you're new to the job, no"
- "I didn't feel I was trained properly"
- "Didn't have the time to be trained"

I train new staff 1:1 myself



Are there any improvements that could be made?

Things "got worse since being taken over".

"I would (recommend to a relative), more time with each resident with more staff would only make things better. The staffing doesn't mean the care isn't there."

"Yes" when asked if they enjoy working here.. "Been here 12 years!"

Improvements: "Theatre, learning acting skills or a make up night. We have tried everything over the years."

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated based on observations of the environment and feedback gathered from residents and staff.

1 Staffing Coordination

1. Staff communication with residents could be improved especially when in physical contact (such as help sitting down). Talking to residents to make sure they are comfortable is important and best practice.
2. Staff were focused in one area and seemed to move as a collaborative. This meant we observed the extremities of the building lacking attention (L-shaped building). Therefore, there is some risk of residents furthest away from the main lounges being unattended to.

Recommendation

Implement updated mandatory training on communication with residents and share messaging on the importance of having staff well distributed.

2 Activities

Healthwatch Cumberland representatives observed significant gaps in activity provision during this unannounced visit. There was a poster available for an upcoming 'Cocktail Night' in the main entrance however, this was not visible to residents or placed anywhere else in the home. Furthermore, there was no activities board available and limited self-led entertainment. The main form of entertainment available seemed to be television.

Recommendation

HWC recommends an activity board to be installed featuring upcoming activities, events and an area for residents to request activities. Furthermore, more self-led entertainment should be implemented such as a book shelf.

3

Menu

During this unannounced visit, residents were unable to recall what they had for their evening meal. Furthermore, there was no menu displayed for us to observe. When we asked administration staff during our initial walk-around, they were unable to tell us what the residents had eaten this day.

Recommendation

HWC recommend adding a menu board for residents and relatives to view.



Images of one of two main dining rooms at Dalton Court



Provider Response

Recommendation	Timeline	Response
Staffing Coordination	ASAP	
Activities	Within 3 months	
Menu	Within 3 months	

*Timeline figures are suggestive and it is recognised that some will be quicker to implement than others.

Previous Visit Provider Response

Enter and View reports are sent out by Healthwatch Cumberland for comment within 20 working days from the visit. No response was received in 2025.

Before we began this revisit, administration staff verbally responded to these recommendations.

Recommendation	Timeline	Response
1) Telephone Signal Upgrade	6 Months	The Wi-Fi in the home has been upgraded which allows for Wi-Fi calling. This helps with the signal issues.
2) Accommodating chair heights	ASAP	All new furniture has been moved in following the organisational changes.
3) Handbook upon arrival	12 Months	Due to the new ownership, a new updated handbook is in development. HW Staff were made aware that one existed during our last visit despite resident comments.

Responses are continued on the following page.

Previous Visit Provider Response

4) Volunteer position	12 Months, review at 6 months	Not appropriate due to significant training required.
5) Hand Rail Updates	ASAP	Home has been re-decorated following changes. Handrails are now all white with a darker contrast on the specialist dementia floor.
6) Bird Corner to include a bird feeder	ASAP	New decor choices make this recommendation no longer applicable. Admin staff did notify us that some rooms have birdfeeders outside their windows.
7) Review Cleaning Schedule	3 months	We were informed of spot cleaners available all over the home, with new carpets in place having eliminated historical odours.



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