



Enter and View Report

Elcombe House Care Home

Announced

20 February 2026

What is Enter and View

Part of Healthwatch Bedford Borough's remit is to carry out Enter and View visits. Healthwatch Bedford Borough Authorised Representatives will carry out these visits to health and social care premises to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The Health and Social Care Act allows Authorised Representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation so that we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Healthwatch Bedford Borough's 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 Bedford Borough's Safeguarding Policy, the Service Manager will be informed, and the visit will end. The local authority Safeguarding Team will also be informed.

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Provider details

Details of Visit	
Registered Manager	Kerri Trudgill
Service Address	61 De Pary's Avenue Bedford, MK40 2TR
Service type	Residential care home providing personal and nursing care designed to support people living with dementia or physical disabilities.
Date and Time	20 February 2026, 2pm
Authorised Representatives undertaking the visit	Tracy Cresswell Samantha Denness Elaine Singaram

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Bedford Borough would like to thank the manager, staff and residents at Elcombe House for their cooperation during our visit.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report is related to findings and observations made during our visit on 20 February 2026. The report does not claim to represent the views of all service users, only those who contributed during the visit.

Who we share the report with

This report and its findings will be shared with the manager of Elcombe House, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and Healthwatch England. The report will be published on the Healthwatch Bedford Borough website.

Healthwatch Bedford Borough details

Address:
21-23 Gadsby Street
Bedford
MK40 3HP

Website: www.healthwatchbedfordborough.co.uk
Telephone: 01234 638678

Healthwatch principles

Healthwatch Bedford Borough's Enter and View programme is linked to the eight principles of Healthwatch, and questions are asked around each one.

1. **A healthy environment:** Right to live in an environment that promotes positive health and wellbeing.
2. **Essential Services:** Right to a set of preventative, treatment and care services provided to a high standard to prevent patients' reaching crisis.
3. **Access:** Right to access services on an equal basis with others without fear of discrimination or harassment, when I need them in a way that works for me and my family
4. **A safe, dignified and quality services:** Right to high quality, safe, confidential services that treat me with dignity, compassion and respect.
5. **Information and education:** Right to clear and accurate information that I can use to make decisions about health and care treatment. I want the right to education about how to take care of myself and about what I am entitled to in the health and social care system.
6. **Choice:** Right to choose from a range of high-quality services, products and providers within health and social care
7. **Being listened to:** Right to have my concerns and views listened to and acted upon. I want the right to be supported in taking action if I am not satisfied with the service I have received.
8. **Being involved:** To be treated as an equal partner in determining my own health and wellbeing. I want the right to be involved in decisions that affect my life and those affecting services in my local community.

Purpose of the visit

The visit was announced and was part of the 2025/26 standard work programme.

On arrival at the building, the Authorised Representatives (ARs) rang the bell and were greeted by a staff member and asked to sign in. The ARs explained the purpose of the visit to the manager. It was observed that the staff member they were greeted by did not wear an identifiable name badge, however the manager explained that it is normal practice for staff to wear "Hello my name is "badge, unfortunately during our visit not all staff were wearing their name badges.

As the staff do not wear uniforms it was difficult to differentiate between staff, relatives, and visitors. This was further compounded by the fact that other staff were not wearing identifiable name badges.

One AR spent time talking to the manager, whilst the other two were shown around the home by a member of staff, which enabled them to engage with residents, relatives, and several other members of the workplace on shift.

The ARs were informed that the home is a care home registered to take up to 23 residents. At the time of the visit, there were 22 residents in situ with 1 empty room remaining. Elcombe House provide care for primarily older adults living with dementia. The age of the residents varied from mid 60s to 99 years of age. The split of the residents meant 73% were female and 27% were male.

If the home needs to use agency staffing, they use Edenvale.

Elcombe House transitioned to a digital records system nearly a decade ago and now use the PCS digital system. All records are maintained electronically, including medicines management for digital audit compliance. Staff, residents and relatives all reported to being happy and confident using the digital system.

All staff receive mandatory training. New staff follow a 12-week training programme which includes eLearning and shadowing another member of staff. Beds Care Group provides required training.

The home has a dedicated dementia champion and dementia interpreter; all staff are provided with the dementia interpretation training.

Findings:

Environment

External

Elcombe House is situated on a busy main road, offering on-street pay-and-display parking (maximum 2-hour stays) operating Monday – Saturday, with free on-street parking after 6pm on weekdays and on Sundays. The home is situated close to a park within a short walking distance.

There is a generous garden to the rear of the building. They also have a garden room that is used by residents and their families for special celebrations. Staff use this space for their breaks. The garden room is separate to the main building with its own kitchenette and toilet.

Internal

The home had a vibrant atmosphere, and the atmosphere was cheerily infectious. There were no unpleasant odours omitted.

There is a front lounge where residents go if they want some quiet space. However, the majority of activities at Elcombe House take place in the lounge/dining area.

The building comprises of three floors, with the manager's office on the third floor which is accessed by steps only.

All the resident's rooms are of a good size. Not all featured ensuite facilities. In terms of lavatories, not all had contrasting seats. It is suggested that the toilet seat and lid should be in a contrasting colour to the rest of the toilet, so they are easier for residents to see. For further information can be found below:

<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/dementia>

However, the manager explained We do have contrasting toilet seats in some of our bathrooms because these have been refurbished and are raised toilets. We don't need to put a toilet raiser around these toilets. The other bathrooms/toilets have seat raisers because standard toilets are too low. So, we wouldn't be able to put contrasting toilet seats on those ones. Going forward when we are refurbishing then raised toilets would be considered with contrasting toilet seats so we wouldn't have to use the raised seats. If a resident was struggling without a contrasting toilet seat, then this would be addressed.

The main bathroom is used by the visiting mobile hairdresser on a Monday.

Staffing consists of the following:

- Manager
- Deputy manager
- Housekeepers (1 x part time, 1 x full time)
- Activity Co-ordinator (22 hours p/wk.)
- Care staff x 19; including shift patterns of early, day and night shifts. Shift patterns constitute the following: 7am to 2.30pm, 1pm to 9.30pm, and 9.15pm to 7.15am. There are 5 members of staff covering the night shifts. There currently isn't a 4pm to 9.30pm shift but this would be considered as a shift pattern if a member of staff need to work around school time, childcare etc.
- 1 cook full time (7am to 3pm)
- Kitchen assistants (2 x part time - 2pm to 6pm)

All staff have access to the kitchen.

Essential services

Access

Elcombe House is affiliated with The De Parys Group who provide primary care GP services. Residents do have a named GP, but they are not guaranteed to see their named GP, as any GP can visit the home from the surgery. A member of the practice nursing team attends if required. The good relationship they have with the practice means that they have quick access to care and treatment for residents.

Elcombe Houses uses SMARTA Healthcare as their preferred primary care pharmacy provider.

Primary care dental provision is generally provided by the NHS Community Dental Service, although several residents have opted to use their own locally sourced dental practice.

Primary care ophthalmology is provided by Optical.

A chiropodist visits bi-monthly to undertake footcare for residents.

The Bedfordshire Community Nurses from ELFT visit as and when required.

Friend for Life (FFL), the befriending charity which aims to reduce isolation, provides assistance to those residents at Elcombe House wanting to go out on walks and offers a unique and valuable service matching befrienders to residents.

Local schools provide regular performances and musical activities.

Elcombe House offers regular work experience to students and those interested in joining the care sector.

Safe, dignified and quality services.

During our visit, we were shown how staff inform residents if someone has passed away. They have a candle on each floor that is switched on whenever someone dies.

On the first floor, there was a set of stairs that was converted into a wheelchair friendly lift.

The bathroom cupboard is accessible to residents and staff. The ARs queried the contents with staff in respect of safeguarding risk and COSHH. They duly informed them that it only houses gloves and aprons.

The ARs observed a staff member wearing a shoulder bag. There were concerns that this could potentially have caused risk to herself when undertaking manual handling. The manager explained that the member of staff was going to complete a medication round, and the reason for them wearing during the visit was so they had somewhere to put the medication keys and they would not wear it during manual handling.

Information

Along the corridor there are lots of lovely photos of the residents engaging in different activities.

Compliments are placed on the kindness board.

The managers ensure that they highlight employees who go above and beyond. The AR suggested having a “*You Said, We Did*” board to demonstrate that Elcombe House listens to feedback.

The management team operates an open-door policy. However, it was very evident to see that they are both very much part of the home and it's positive atmosphere.

The home uses an interactive digital board that has lots of information on it. This includes champions names, the menu of the day, safeguarding updates, etc.

Residents' rooms are personalised with the name and picture that they have chosen.

Choice

Residents always have two options for both main meal and desert. It was noted however that ARs only observed a choice of two fish dishes at the visit. The manager explained that the two options on a Friday are fish, as this had been discussed as part of the residents meeting and this is what they asked for. However, residents are always given choices and if a resident prefers a different option then it would be provided, sweet shelf is provided for snacks. Some residents have access to kitchen to make their own tea, but they are always supervised.

The ARs observed that throughout the visit there were refreshments available for the residents to partake in.

The residents can choose how they want their rooms to be decorated and furnished.

A small number of the residents prefer to stay in their rooms as it their choice. Staff ensure that they are engaged in activities which they like to take part in.

The residents that the ARs engaged with expressed that the *"Food is amazing"*, and remarked that, *"There is lots of it!"*

Residents have complete choice to go out and about externally, either with Elcombe House staff or their relatives. The ARs observed one relative picking up a resident to take them to their nail appointment. This was encouraging to see.

Being listened to

All serious complaints are documented, with attempts made to resolve concerns at the earliest available stage. Escalation is completed when required. It was reported that lower-level complaints are not logged.

Residents expressed that, *"Staff understand the residents, and that makes a difference."*

The activity co-ordinator arranges residents and relatives' meetings to ensure ongoing contact and support.

Being involved

During the resident's meetings the menus have a standing agenda item so are routinely discussed.

Residents expressed that, “If you have good staff, you have a good home”, and “Staff make the home.”

During the visit, activities were taking place in the lounge/dining area involving several of the residents and staff. They were playing snakes and ladders, with lots of cognitive stimulation taking place. The cheery atmosphere was infectious with both staff and residents deep in laughter and being a little competitive. Residents that did not wish to engage with the Snakes and Ladders game were taking part in other one-to-one activities with staff.

Children from the local community attend the home on a monthly basis, singing and engaging with the residents.

The home has several activities for the residents to engage in. These include: arts and crafts, music sessions, shopping trips, local walks, activities in the garden, and a PAT dog visits the home on a regular basis.

Current challenges for the home

The current challenges reported at Elcombe House were the length of time NHS services take to attend, i.e. phlebotomist appointments are running at around 6-8 weeks, and Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) can take up to 3 months or more, which can increase the element of risk for patients

Recommendations

Recommendations made from findings	
1	Ensure that all staff consistently wear clearly visible identification, including the “My name is” yellow badges, particularly as they are not in uniform. This will support residents, relatives, and visitors to easily identify Elcombe House staff and managers, promoting a culture of dignity, trust, and person-centred care. The registered manager should implement oversight and monitoring to ensure compliance with this, including its importance through staff supervision and audits.
2	Consider introducing a “You said, we did” board as this will promote full transparency, encourage open communication, and provide assurance that feedback is listened to and leads to meaningful action.

Provider feedback

We welcome this feedback as an opportunity to improve. Our home has chosen not to use uniforms as part of our commitment to creating a warm, homely and person-centred environment, particularly for people living with dementia. We recognise that uniforms can sometimes create a clinical atmosphere or cause anxiety for residents. We have reinforced the expectation that all staff wear clearly visible name badges throughout their shift. Additional checks have been introduced to ensure compliance, enabling residents, relatives, visitors and professionals to easily identify members of the team. This supports a welcoming environment while maintaining our person-centred approach to care.