

Somerset House Care Home
Enter and View Report
August 2026

Contents

Background	2
Details of the visit to Somerset House Care Home	3
Summary	3
About this visit	5
Findings	6
• Environment	6
• Accommodation	7
Quality of life	9
• General happiness	9
• Food and drink	10
• Activities	11
• Contact with friends and family	13
Quality of care	14
• Residents and relatives	14
• Staff	16
Safety and staffing levels	16
Health Checks	17
Raising concerns and issues	17
Other comments	18
Staff feedback	19
Overall ratings	18

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.

Somerset House Care Home



Details of the visit to Somerset House care home

Service address	Somerset House, 1 Church Lane, Wheldrake YO19 6AW
Service provider	Country Court Care
Date	6 July 2026
CQC rating	Good (July 2023)
Care home manager	Dipin Peter
Contact number	01904 448313

Summary

Purpose of the report

In this report, we summarise the findings from our visit to Somerset House on 6 July 2026. We also share the feedback received 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

Somerset House is a care home owned and managed by Country Court Care Company. They have a portfolio of 51 care homes across the country. Somerset House offers residential, nursing, dementia care and respite services for older people. The property has accommodation for 55 residents.

When we visited there were 40 residents – 21 nursing and 19 residential – and a good mix of male and female residents. Two bedrooms are available as step-down beds to aid hospital discharge, funded by City of York Council. There were no specified areas designated for people with dementia; all residents living in the home access the same facilities.

Most residents are aged 80 – 90. Many are very frail. The age range of the current residents is 69 – 102. On admission residents are given a welcome pack and flowers in their bedroom.

Key findings

At the time of our visit, we found that Somerset House was operating to a good standard of care. 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 on duty were all very friendly and helpful.
- There was very good interaction between residents and staff.
- The building was freshly decorated, in very good condition and exceptionally clean.
- The main lounge and dining area felt airy, light and welcoming.
- Built-in air-conditioning units in the lounge are very welcome in hot weather.
- The curved corridor was an attractive feature and created shorter, more welcoming space for residents, staff and visitors.
- Themed areas along the corridors were an excellent feature.
- Coloured hearts incorporated into the bedroom door signage to indicate 'Do not attempt resuscitation' were very clever and unobtrusive.
- Posters with keyworker details in each bedroom are good practice.
- Photographs of the main meal options on the menus were appreciated, supported by residents' comments.



Recommended areas for improvement

We did not have many areas for improvement. The ones noted were:

- Consider providing seating areas for residents in outdoor areas.
- Investigate opportunities for external organisations to use the coffee shop. This would be a good way of integrating the local community into the home and with its residents.
- Revisit the room numbering to run from 1 onwards. Volunteers found the sequence starting with 001 gave an institutional feel.
- When redecorating, take feedback from residents and others to introduce a more homely approach.
- Develop the available activities to provide a wider range and have less reliance on daily living as 'activities' such as watching TV, hairdresser, chiropodist, listening to music and relaxing in the lounge.

About this visit

This was an announced Enter and View visit arranged in advance with the care home manager. The purpose of the visit was to capture the experience of life and care within the care home. We did this by observing the interactions between staff and residents, observing their surroundings and speaking to residents and family and friends to understand their experiences. We also 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 directly to residents, staff and some family members, 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 and were not able to answer all our questions. However, in those instances, we had more general conversations to understand their experiences of living at Somerset House.

In addition, 11 family and friends of residents responded to our survey with their views. We also heard from 12 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 has recently been extensively refurbished and a new extension opened in March 2026. Internally the decoration is colour coordinated, with themed pictures and matching furniture. We were told the overall ambience has been influenced by the company's interior design team. Clearly there was considerable investment to the fabric of the building and facilities to create a distinctive, characterful feel.

The building is well maintained and clean and tidy. The home is located centrally within the village of Wheldrake, seven miles from the centre of York. It has ample car parking within the grounds. The home is close to an hourly bus service between York and surrounding villages.

Somerset House has large well-maintained grounds with trees and gardens, and the home's driveway gives access to a number of bungalows for older people (separately owned). There are steps and a slope leading to the home's main entrance and reception area. Here there were a variety of potted flowering plants and a grassed seating area with garden furniture. Residents can access the garden and often sit outside in warm weather. They can help in the garden.

The home is accessed via automatic double doors. Staff were available on reception to welcome us, and the manager's office was located off the reception area. The Coffee Shop, accessed off the reception area, is new and offers additional space for residents and family and friends to socialise. The café offers drinks and homemade snacks. The care home hopes to welcome outside organisations to use the Coffee Shop facilities for meetings and events.

The reception area felt like a hotel with a staffed desk. Notice boards with information about the day's menu and activities on offer alongside a poster advertising the Healthwatch York visit were located further into the home. Somerset House offers free Wi-Fi throughout.

Accommodation

All 55 bedrooms are ensuite with a toilet and sink. Some rooms include a shower. There was a separate toilet on the main ground floor corridor for staff and visitors. It was well signed.

There are two main common rooms (lounge with dining area and smaller quiet garden room), and a hairdressing salon (Elegance Salon) which is very well equipped with sinks, driers, etc. The hairdresser visits every Wednesday. There is also a staff room facility close by giving easy access to communal areas. There is an attractive cantilever staircase, part of the original building, and two lifts. The laundry room is on the ground floor. All the residents' personal clothing, bedsheets and tablecloths are serviced by laundry staff. Residents clothing is labelled by laundry staff to make sure personal items are returned to their owner.

The décor in the lounge and dining area is striking; colour coordinated in pastel shades with large windows providing good natural light. There is a variety of seating (including two electric recliner chairs), wallpaper and pictures. There are air conditioning units incorporated into the ceilings. These offer adjustable temperatures including a cooler option which was appropriate for the hot weather when we visited. The garden room has high ceilings, a large clock (showing the correct time), and a variety of matching seating. There is a door leading to the garden and patio area from this room.

Corridors all have a handrail in a contrasting colour to the walls. The corridors are wide, especially the corridors built into the building extension. There is a natural curve on the main corridors leading to the new extension. This reduces the feeling of being on a long corridor. Some parts are themed with particular photographs, pictures and items of interest. Themes included sewing, Rome, York and horse racing. Electric fans are in place along the corridors to help air flow on hot days. Corridors are well lit. On the day of our visit there weren't any unpleasant smells.

All residents' rooms have the name of the resident and a number on the door; some have a photograph of the resident. The room numbering was considered unusual, starting with two 00s namely 001, 002, 003. We noted the use of identifiable heart signage on some doors, which we were told signified the resident had a "do not attempt resuscitation" in place.

There are notices in each bedroom indicating who the resident's keyworker is. This includes a photograph of the keyworker and their name.

Most rooms are of a similar size, but some have high ceilings which makes them seem spacious. A few are much bigger.

The rooms are furnished with a profiling bed, wardrobe, side dresser, chair, curtains and TV. All bedrooms have en-suite toilets and sinks and some have walk in showers. Some residents have their own possessions and pictures. Residents can bring their own furniture. Some ground floor bedrooms have direct access to the garden via patio doors.

We noted separate bathrooms with a toilet and either a raising bath or walk in shower.

Overall, the home is well maintained and welcoming. However, our authorised representatives felt the environment reflected the style of the organisation rather than of the residents who live there. It felt more like a hotel than a home in parts.

Cleanliness and hygiene

Our representatives found that the care home was exceptionally clean, with no unpleasant smells. Domestic housekeeping staff are employed alongside laundry staff.

Quality of life

General happiness

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

- “Much better living here ... as I can sing and dance.”
- “I have the same people looking after me, I feel comforted, they have a lot of time for me.”
- “The staff call me by my name and I know their names”.
- “The people who look after me are very nice and I like chatting to them”.
- “At all times the staff tell me how they are going to help me, like when they take me for a bath or shower”.
- “I choose my own clothes to wear”.
- “I have got some of my things in my room, can’t have everything because it’s just a room”.

- “I go to bed when I feel like it. I get tired so I go to bed in the afternoon for a rest, especially after lunch”.
- “When I feel sad there is always someone to talk to”.
- “We sometimes go on a trip and sometimes they take me for a walk down the road to the shops”.
- “Do you know, a doctor comes every week to make sure we are all very healthy”.
- “I sometimes have to wait to visit the toilet”.



Food and drink

Residents and relatives were asked to share their views on food and drink at Somerset House. Our representatives observed the lunchtime meal in the main dining room.

The kitchen has been recently refurbished and provides very good facilities. All the food is cooked on the premises by one head chef supported by the catering team. The day's menu is shared with photographs of the meal options. Choices for lunch on the day we visited were sausage casserole with potatoes and vegetables or chicken curry and rice. The desserts options were peach upside-down cake with custard or ice cream. The evening meal choices included crustless quiche, sandwiches, soup and chilled desserts.

We were told the chef adapts the food on offer based on personal requests. Somerset House caters for a range of special diets including vegan, gluten free and pureed meals. Wine is served to those residents that want it and coffee or tea is served after lunch. Staff assist some residents to eat their meal when needed and regularly check if people want more. At our visit most residents appeared to be enjoying their meal.

Residents have a choice of eating in the dining room or in their rooms. Everyone we saw who needed help received it in a kind and friendly manner.

Drinks and snacks are brought to residents in the morning and afternoon. There is a well-stocked food and drink area near the ground floor lounge. Everyone we spoke to said they had enough to eat and drink.

Residents' comments about the food were generally positive but also included suggestions:

- "Food is good here. We have a menu with pictures of what's on offer so it's easier to choose".
- "I like fruit, I wish there was fruit instead of biscuits".

All the family members/friends who responded to our 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. All residents and family members said drinks were always available.

Comments from family members and friends included:

- "We are very happy that mother is living in Somerset House as she has started to eat again".
- "The food is excellent all the time. It's also nice to have a meal with my mum".

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.

Somerset House employs an activities coordinator. There is a range of activities inside and outside the home. The home has access to a minibus and takes people on trips. Entertainers regularly visit. When we visited a singer/organist was entertaining the residents, and they clearly enjoyed it. A resident's family member also mentioned:

- "Mum recently enjoyed a trip to the garden centre. She loves flowers".

The home produces a weekly activity programme which is displayed on noticeboards.

Advertised activities included – exercises, music, floor games, curling, bunting making, gardening (flower beds), arts and crafts, one to one sessions and scarecrow building.

The local school visits the home at Christmas and Easter. There had been a summer fair at Somerset House the previous weekend which attracted many local visitors.

We asked friends and family and staff about activities. Of the 11 family and friend respondents, eight said that there were always things for residents to do and three said that there were sometimes things for their relative/friend to do. Nine respondents said they were invited to take part in activities.

Respondents said:

- “My mother can continue to do all the hobbies she had at home. I didn’t say always as that is an impossible task for any home with multiple people”.
- “Lovely caring home where the residents are known as individuals and every effort is made to keep them happy”.
- “The activity coordinators are good at getting residents to participate in activities”.

Staff explained and commented about the activities happening at Somerset House including:

- “We enjoy playing games with the residents including ball, singing and playing music”.
- “We have mini-bus trips to the racecourse, orchestra , garden centre, restaurants, bowling or just ride around trips”.
- “We take residents on walks to the local village shop and the local pub and walk around the village”.
- “There are indoor activities such as charity organised events like musical performances, piano performances and karaoke”.
- “There are floor games, table top games, pampering sessions and one to one sessions for residents in bed”.
- “We enjoy day trips out, going bowling, coffee mornings or going to the races”.
- “There are bus trips, church services, hairdressers, and chiropodist. Also, we do exercises, bingo, outings and colouring”.
- “We have activity coordinators. They are 100% involved to fulfil residents wishes”.

One of the Healthwatch York representatives expressed concern about the quality of day-to-day life for the residents. They noted residents sitting very traditionally in a circle of chairs with little conversation. Quite a number of residents were in bedrooms (in bed) with the television on even though they appeared to be asleep.

Healthwatch representatives also felt the range of activities needs developing. We felt that some listed activities are more daily living like watching television or listening to music. We hope that residents are asked about activities, or if not, this is done and it helps shape a broader selection of activities in the future.

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 relatives or friends said they can visit at any time.



Comments from family and friends included:

- “We are always welcomed when we visit. All staff greet us in a friendly manner and have time to answer any questions we have”.
- “The staff are very friendly and answer all our questions”.

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 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. Clothing is labelled by the laundry staff team and this reduces the chance of clothing going missing.

All 11 family and friends responded to the question, “How satisfied are you with the care your relative / friend receives” with all being very satisfied.



“We know our family member is being well looked after.”



Other comments included:

- “The staff are very patient with my mother as she has hearing difficulties and blurry eyesight. Due to her condition, she cannot respond to questions immediately therefore the staff do their best to accommodate her.”
- “We understand the issues the staff have with our mother and we find the staff caring, calm and understanding.”
- “Every member of staff, whether nursing, care or ancillary staff all take time to get to know residents and talk to them.”
- “Mum is always clean and tidy. Staff are friendly and always happy to chat.”
- “Residents are very well looked after; the staff are very caring and helpful.”
- “Mum is very well cared for. I feel content when I leave as I know she will be looked after.”
- “All aids and adaptations are provided for mum. She has a call bell in her bedroom and sensory mat for night time.”

There were a couple of responses which highlighted minor concerns:

- “Sometimes the language has been an issue with staff, especially their accent.”
- “Not sure whether there’s enough staff as my relative sometimes has to wait to use the toilet when the staff are on a break.”

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 and they can ask for assistance. Residents have a bell in their room and all those we spoke to said staff come quickly when they ask for help. Due to limited time, we were not able to observe how residents with dementia get help when needed.

We were told about the use of technology within the home including the new Nourish Better Care handsets for staff. Nourish is a mobile hand-held app-based care management system. It is designed to help plan, record, report and coordinate care. It provides care staff with access to care notes whilst working alongside residents. Senior staff can see live reporting on care plans.

Volunteers noted the noise level of the Nourish handsets was a bit off putting with regular bleeps.

We were also shown Mobii, a new mobile sensory projection unit used for interactive sessions with residents. It can project onto walls and floor and is being used with residents to improve engagement and reduce agitation.

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

Of the 11 people who responded, nine said they had contributed, and two said they had not. No one said they had been asked to be part of care plan reviews.

Staff comments about being informed.

Eleven staff responded to our survey question about being informed about residents' needs. Ten felt very informed and one felt somewhat informed. Staff mentioned detailed personal care plans are accessible on the electronic care system.



"It's a well lead home and our manager is very much focused on the care of our residents."



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 wear uniforms and all wore name badges and appropriate protective clothing. We observed staff calling the residents by their name. All the residents we spoke to were complimentary about the staff as were all of the relatives and friends.



"From day one the care shone through and our family are more than happy with the home."



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 11 family and friends who responded said they felt their relative or friend was safe at Somerset House. The majority (10) of the 11 family and friends who responded thought there are enough staff. One family member was unsure.

The manager told us that Somerset House is fully staffed and that they pride themselves on not having used agency staff since 2019. They have their own bank of staff they can call on to cover holidays and sickness. They have a multi-cultural workforce and some sponsored international workers. Some staff live locally but most travel in from York, Selby, Pocklington and Elvington.

The staffing is made up of the manager; deputy manager; general nurses; senior carer (responsible for medication); carers (one there for 22 years); handyperson; laundry and housekeepers and gardener. There are no dedicated day or night staff. The front of house staff help serve meals, drinks and snacks.

Newly employed staff go through a one week in-person induction (in-house) and two weeks buddying before working on their own.

All 12 staff respondents said they felt the home has enough staff. Staff comments included:

- "We are staffed according to the residents' dependency ratio, so there is usually one extra staff member on each shift than is required."

Health Checks

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

A GP from the local surgery in Elvington visits once a week. A chiropodist visits every six to eight weeks. Most family members take their relatives to appointments and said that care home staff will help if needed.

End of life care is provided when necessary. This includes support for relatives – namely meals and accommodation – if there is a spare room.

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 or the manager if there were any issues. Family members and friends said the same. None were concerned about raising issues. They felt they would be listened to and issues addressed as soon as possible. However, most people said there had been no issues.



“Communication is good. There is always someone available to speak to. The manager is friendly and happy to give updates on the resident and their care.”



Other comments

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

Family members/friends said:

- “From day one the care shone through and we are more than happy with the home.”
- “Somerset House is a beautiful place to live.”
- “We are more than happy with the care mum receives; all staff are professional, caring and go above and beyond to meet our needs.”
- “We could not provide better care ourselves and mum is very happy.”

Our care home representatives also summarised their impression of Somerset House:

- “The home is efficiently run, is clean but perhaps a bit hotel-like. All the staff I spoke to seemed very pleasant.”
- “The home seems very calm and smoothly run.”
- “Somerset House gives the impression of a well-run, friendly place to live. Staff were very positive, helpful and showed real empathy for the residents.”

Staff feedback

How do they feel?

We asked staff about working in the care home.

All 12 staff members who completed the survey said they enjoy working at Somerset House. Comments included:

- “I enjoy my job in the care home.”
- “Somerset House is a very nice place to work. We have a good team and a very nice working atmosphere.”
- “All staff are co-operative, so I love to work with them.”
- “I enjoy my role and responsibilities.”

When we asked about things that could make the working environment better none of the respondents could think of anything and reiterated what a good place it is to work. Those that commented said the recent renovation met all their requirements and enhanced the facilities.

All staff respondents felt they were offered relevant training to do their job.

Most staff (eight) said they are always kept informed about any changes at the home. Three said they sometimes were kept informed and one staff said they weren't informed.

We were told about the regular audits carried out by the manager.

All 12 staff respondents said they would recommend Somerset House to friends and family.

We asked staff if they were well informed about the residents likes and dislikes, food and drink requirements and hobbies and interests. Ten of 11 staff responding said they were very well informed and one was somewhat informed.

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

- “It's a well led home and our manager is very much about the care of our residents and staff.”

- Our company (Country Care) is focused on elevating the lives of our residents by offering a peaceful environment and comfort.”

Other Comments

The father of one of the Healthwatch representatives had lived at Somerset House 11 years ago. She was pleasantly surprised to find that three staff members remembered specific facts about her father including which had been his room.

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: (5 out of 5)



Staff: (4.6 out of 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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