



Branch Court Care Home, Livesey Branch Road, BB2 4QR

Enter and View Report

Tuesday 8th October 2024

10:30am

healthwatch

Blackburn with Darwen

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.

Contact Details:

Louise Bagley

Branch Court Care Home

Livesey Branch Road

BB2 4QR

Staff met during our visit:

Louise Bagley (Manager)

Date and time of our visit:

Tuesday 8th October 2024 at 10:30am

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen
Representatives

Liam Kershaw-Calvert (Lead)

Katie Merry (Healthwatch BwD Staff)

Liz Butterworth (Volunteer)



Introduction

This was an announced Enter and View visit undertaken by authorised representatives from Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen who have the authority to enter health and social care premises, announced or unannounced, to observe and assess the nature and quality of services and obtain the view of those people using the services. The representatives observe and speak to residents in communal areas only.

This visit was arranged as part of Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen's Enter and View programme. The aim is to observe services, consider how services may be improved and disseminate good practice. The team of trained Enter and View authorised representatives record their observations along with feedback from residents, staff and, where possible, residents' families or friends.

A report is sent to the manager of the facility for validation of the facts. Any response from the manager is included with the final version of the report which is published on the Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen website at www.healthwatchblackburnwithdarwen.co.uk

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen would like to thank Louise, together with staff, residents, and visitors, for making us feel welcome and taking part in the visit.

General Information

Branch Court Care Home is privately owned by Krinvest Care Group with places for 30 residents. There were no vacancies at the time of our visit. The person in charge is Louise Bagley.

Information obtained from carehome.co.uk states that the home provides care for people from the ages of 50 who are affected by old age and dementia, as well as offering discharge and rest bite.

Methodology

The Enter and View representatives made an announced visit on Tuesday 8th October 2024.

We spoke to 9 residents, 3 staff and 4 relatives, where possible within the constraints of the home routine, people's willingness, and ability to engage and access to people in public areas.. Discussion was structured around four themes (Environment, Care, Nutrition and Activities) designed to gather information concerning residents overall experience of living at the home.

The team also recorded their own observations of the environment and facilities.

Our role at Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen is to gather the views of service users, especially those that are hard to reach and seldom heard, to give them the opportunity to express how they feel about a service regardless of their perceived ability to be able to do so. It is not our role to censor feedback from respondents.

We use templates to assess the environment of a facility and gather information from respondents, to ensure that reports are compiled in a fair and comparative manner.

Observations were rated on Red, Amber, Green scale as follows:

Green = Based on our observations and the responses gathered we would consider the experience of this home to be good.

Amber = Based on our observations and the responses gathered we consider the experience of this home to be need of some improvements.

Red = Based on our observations and the responses gathered we would consider the experience of this home to be in need of significant improvement.

Summary:

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen previously visited Branch Court in March 2023, and since our visit there have been significant positive changes to the home.

Renovation and maintenance work that the manager had previously spoken about had been completed and it was pleasant to see the changes and the impact those changes have made on the home.

Throughout the visit we witnessed staff to be calm, encouraging and attentive to the residents, with one resident stating “I’m looked after well here, I know they will help me when I need it.” It was apparent the staff worked well as a team and that residents appear happy. One relative told our representatives “I’m exceptionally happy with this care home and so is my Mum. I know my Mum and I can tell she is happy here. I feel like you get what you see.”

It is clear that the manager is well liked amongst staff, residents and relatives. She informed representatives that she had an open-door policy in the home and this was seen to be true. Both staff and relatives spoke highly of management, with a staff member saying, “I feel supported in every aspect.” One relative reported that while they didn’t know how to make a complaint, they said they knew “if I had a problem I could go straight to the manager. I know the staff here quite well - they have an open-door policy.”

Since the last visit, the garden has now vastly improved, previously it was unusable and overgrown, but now is maintained with seating and garden beds to encourage residents to grow plants. The corridors and bathrooms in the home had also been renovated since the last visit and were a vast improvement.

Representatives note that the entrance of the home still needs work, the external environment is still dark and appears unwelcoming - but the manager said it is something they are aware of and are actively looking into.

The main area for improvement is the activities provided at the home. Bingo is a regular activity with some bored of it and some who do not want to take part. Some residents were asking to do craft activities like sewing and tapestry. Representatives were told the home did have an activity coordinator, who was in Monday-Friday from 10am-3pm. A relative remarked “There’s not a lot to do, it does concern us.” A staff member also stated, “The only thing this place lacks is activities, there is only one activity coordinator, and we could benefit from two.” There was no activity taking place during our visit; however the activity coordinator was on leave that week. Introducing activities to interest everyone would be beneficial and need not be the responsibility of just one person - Healthwatch BwD recommends this link for activity ideas for residents:

<https://adventuresofacaregiver.com/75-stimulating-activities-for-alzheimers-dementia-patients/>

In conclusion, Branch Court has undergone many positive changes that have improved not only the environment of the home but the morale of the residents and the staff working in the home. The manager, staff and provider are to be recognised for this achievement.

Based on the criteria, the Enter and View Representatives gave the home an overall score of:

Green

Enter and View observations

Pre-visit and location

Prior to the visit representatives looked on the internet for information about the home. There did not appear to be a dedicated website for the home, however, there is a Facebook page that is periodically updated. The page was last updated in November 2023, but the posts did have information about resident activities, and relatives had commented on posts. Regular updates would be beneficial for families and carers.

The home is well signposted and easily located on the A6062 Livesey Branch Rd. The area is well served with a bus stop sited directly outside, as are a local Co-op store and pharmacy further down the road.

Branch Court is a modern purpose-built home, it has three floors, the ground floor had an office and communal facilities and the top two floors were resident bedrooms. There is a lift for access to the upper floors, as well as two stair flights, which were serviced by modern stairlifts.

Green

The external environment

The first impressions of the entrance is unfortunately not a welcoming one, as representatives found it to be dark and uninviting. To get to the main door, there is a ramp leading down, and the design of the building means there is little natural light in that area. Disabled access is facilitated by a suitable ramp to the ground floor reception.

This was brought up with the Manager, who is aware of this issue and is actively looking into ways they can make the area more appealing.

On the last visit, we observed the outdoor green garden space to be restricted and in need of maintenance, at that time it was practically unusable. Since that visit, significant improvements have been made to the space, with the greenery well maintained, a dedicated seating area and a garden bed for growing plants. It was a delight to see that the space is now an area that is used frequently and somewhere for residents to sit outside safely.

Green Amber

The internal environment/reception - first impressions

Inside the home, it is warm, brightly lit and clean. The décor is contemporary grey but comfortable. On arrival, the home has a friendly and inviting atmosphere. You are greeted with a noticeboard full of information about the home, as well as funeral order of services pinned to the board. Representatives found this to be a nice sentiment but might be off-putting as a first impression entering the home. An area in the lounge may be more appropriate.

On arrival, representatives were asked to show their ID badges as well as sign the visitor book and use hand sanitiser. The Manager was welcoming and made sure we had everything we needed to carry out the visit.



The Healthwatch poster to inform of our visit was displayed as requested as well as a printed copy of our previous report.



The Manager gave her time to talk about updates on the home since the last visit as well as the ongoing improvements. The Manager had an open professionalism, informed us the home had no open safeguarding issues or complaints and it was clear her focus was improving the home for both the residents and the staff. She told us she had an open-door policy for all, including relatives. We later observed this when a relative informed us “if I had a problem I could go straight to the manager. I know the staff here quite well - they have an open-door policy.”

We observed a comfortable but professional relationship between staff and the management. With staff stating, “I feel supported in every aspect” and another saying “I go to management when I need help.”

Green

The observation of corridors, public toilets and bathrooms

The corridors were brightly lit, clean and clutter free. On each floor the corridors were uniform and easy to follow, with handrails and colour contrasting walls and flooring. The signs were dementia friendly in a written and colour coded manner. Bathrooms and other public spaces were clearly identified.

The ground floor has a lift which has the capacity to carry a carer and wheelchair, it was modern and easily accessible.

The Manager informed representatives of the new flooring in the upper corridors, which were observed to be clean and improved from our previous visit.

Bathrooms and other public areas were clearly identified and inside were colour contrasting, clean, and disability friendly. Handwash, toilet paper and hand towels were all noted to be in plentiful supply. On the last visit, the first-floor bathroom was closed for repairs. On this visit, the repairs were completed, and the bathroom now is newly decorated as with new flooring.

Each bedroom at Branch Court has an ensuite facility of a toilet and sink. Each floor had two additional communal wet rooms or bathrooms, complete with appropriate adapted bathing facilities. Communal toilets are also situated close to the dining area/lounge. Representatives considered that the provision was suitable for the number of residents in the home.



The overall environment of the home was a clear improvement from the previous visit, issues that were apparent had been dealt with, and renovations that had been discussed had now been completed. It was pleasant for the representatives to see the positive change to the home.

Green

The lounges, dining area and other public areas

The lounge and dining area on the ground floor was spacious, warm and welcoming. It was well decorated in contemporary design, with good lighting and relaxing colours. The windows around the room were small but had a view of the outdoor garden. Photos of residents were dotted around the room which was a nice touch.

A different range of seating were found around the room to suit everyone's personal needs. There were approximately twenty arm chairs around the sides of the room. There were two TVs on the wall, one central playing 60s/70s music through the internet and the other in a corner playing morning television. They were pleasant and not intrusive with noise. Some residents were seen doing puzzle activities like wordsearches, crosswords while in their armchairs. A smaller area adjacent to the lounge area had a quiet section, with a table filled with memory objects. In the corner was a fishtank that was clean, brightly lit and added to the calm atmosphere. Representatives witnessed this area to be used by relatives visiting their family members.

Residents were comfortable to freely walk about in the lounge, some with Zimmer frames. There was plenty of space and staff were around to observe and ensure the residents were safe. There was also a resident cat for interest and interaction with the residents.

Most of the daily information was on a pillar in the centre of the room which featured the daily handwritten food menu, activities with a local school and decorative pictures.

The overall atmosphere of the lounge was calm and pleasant, with the team describing it as having a homely feel.

Toward the back of the room near the door was the dining area which had seven tables. The round tables were spread comfortably apart. The dining area was mostly clean, however some of the placemats were a little dirty and needed a wipe down. The tables were set with red and white patterned tablecloths, cutlery, napkins, salt, pepper and vinegar and beakers for drinks. Representatives observed some residents with adapted cutlery and beakers during lunch.

Next to the dining area was a kitchen worktop which was used by the carers to make refreshments for the residents.

Green

Observations of resident and staff interactions

Representatives observed staff to be pleasant, calm and endearing. There was a level of respect between residents and staff noted by the way they communicated with each other. One representative observed a staff member sing with a resident as they led them to the table at lunchtime. All the staff seemed friendly and welcoming and knew each resident well.

Staff were identifiable by uniform, with one staff member wearing an apron that had do not disturb, indicating she was focused on medication.

During our visit the activity coordinator was on leave, so there were no themed activity on for the day. When speaking to residents, they expressed their desire for more activities, “I don’t really like the activities, it’s all the same all the time really, would be nice to do something different.” Another stated, “There’s not much to do apart from bingo. Sometimes games, but not every day.” When speaking with staff about activities, they also expressed their wish for more, “The only thing this place lacks is activities, there is only one activity coordinator, and we could benefit from two.”

Carers were seen to anticipate the residents’ needs. When one resident felt agitated with our representatives being present, a staff member escorted her back to her seat and assured it was okay. Residents were observed to be calm and comfortable with staff constantly asking if they wanted a drink or if they needed anything.

We were informed that the staff used Care Vision online which was personalised and person centred for each resident. When asked about how staff know each residents personal needs they stated they would use Care Vision, and if they couldn’t find the information there then they “would just ask them.”

Representatives had the pleasure of meeting a resident who was approaching their 101st birthday. We sat and spoke with them and it was clear they were happy and comfortable in the home. Their secret to a long life is a “pie and a pint.” The interaction between staff and the resident was caring, respectful and lovely to witness.

Green

The Lunchtime Experience

On this occasion, representatives chose to focus on the experience of residents during the lunchtime. We evaluated the lunchtime as a social experience, the quantity and quality of the food, the interaction between staff and residents, and the dignity afforded residents during this period. We were informed on arrival that lunch began at 12:30pm.

Thirty minutes before lunch was served, residents were asked if they needed to go to the bathroom before they were seated.

The dining area comprised of seven tables, with fifteen residents sat and five residents choosing to eat in their armchair. The residents who chose to have their meals in the lounge area were given them on side tables.

The tables were laid with wipe clean table cloths, and plastic placements - which were dirty and embedded with food debris. There were table numbers on each table as well as metal cutlery, knife, forks spoons, napkins, salt, pepper and vinegar. Staff served juice as well as tea and coffee.

Some residents needed a plastic bib to prevent food spillage, and staff asked the resident before placing it on. Each staff member had gloves and aprons throughout lunch and were seen frequently changing their gloves. Though there was no station for hand washing, and no hand wipes were handed out.

There were two TVs on at lunchtime, the main TV playing Elvis songs but they were not intrusive or loud. There was a good atmosphere, most residents were sat in silence, however a few were striking conversations.

Representatives witnessed discussions between some residents while they were sat waiting for their food. One pair were talking about the music playing on the television. “Who’s that on the TV?” With the other replying “It’s Elvis” and then the other saying “What a dish.”

Lunch was served at 1:00pm, with most residents receiving their food at 1:10pm. There were three residents who had been seated at 12:00pm, and waited over one hour while sat on the hard dining chair at the table.

The meal choice was liver and onions, mashed potatoes, green beans and carrots or quiche and baked beans. Dessert was mandarin oranges and cream. Some residents’ meal was brought out on dementia friendly blue plates, and some had deep sided plates to enable them to eat easier. The residents who requested

quiche had to wait a little longer than those with liver. While the food was slowly coming out from the kitchen; the atmosphere still felt calm and relaxed, and the staff seemed organised and knew what everyone wanted - and representatives did not hear any complaints from residents about waiting.

One resident asked, “what the hell is that?” when their food arrived, but were quickly encouraged by a staff member that it was quiche and beans and that they had requested it. The resident seemed happy with that response and began eating. Afterward the same resident was heard telling another resident, “I didn’t know what I just had, but that was nice that.”

The staff who assisted residents with feeding were attentive and interactive, with one staff member assisted two residents at a table. Some residents were in wheelchairs while at the table, and were seated quite far away due to the wheelchair arms not being able to go under the table. This caused problems for some residents who then had to carry forkfuls of food a longer distance to their mouth. Some residents struggled with this and caused spillage of their food.

During lunch there was a demanding and disruptive resident who was causing an issue at their table. A staff member quickly went over and moved the resident to another table. The situation was handled well.

One resident eating their lunch in the lounge required a one-to-one carer, and they insisted the carer also get something to eat before they started eating. The carer told the resident they’ll go check with the chef where their meal was and encouraged them to begin eating their food in the meantime. The carer got up and moved just behind the resident out of sight, but still able to monitor them. When the resident had finished, the carer resumed sitting next to them, saying “I had my lunch, it was delicious.” The resident seemed pleased to hear that.

Throughout the meal, residents were encouraged to eat and assisted if needed. The residents who were seated in lounge to eat were frequently checked in on by staff, representatives didn’t feel as though they were forgotten about.

After their meal, some residents requested yoghurt instead of the set dessert, which were brought quickly.

Overall, the lunchtime experience was pleasant, with a few minor issues, and while the food did take a bit of time to arrive at the table, the atmosphere was still calm and relaxing.

Green Amber

Feedback from residents

Most of the residents we spoke to were happy to chat to representatives about their experiences of the home. The majority of residents told us that they were happy with their rooms. “I have a nice room” and “my bed is really comfy.”

However, some residents said they would like more activities in the home.

Overall, the impression representatives got from the residents was that they were comfortable, relaxed and happy in the home.

Environment

“You can go to bed when you want to and get up when you want to. There are no set times. That lady over there has just got up for her breakfast. They don’t bother you.”

“It’s as near to home as you can get here. It’s home from home.”

“We can have visitors in the lounge, or they can come to your room. I go to Preston and cafés.”

“I have no complaints about the home. I have a nice room.”

“I’m happy with my room. It’s fine here. It’s not like my own home but it’s fine and I’m happy.”

“Yes, I like here. I don’t remember never being here, this is my home.”

“I like my room, my bed is really comfy, it’s good, I’ve been here two and half years now.”

“It’s all pretty good, my room is nice, I’ve got everything I need in there, I’m quite happy here.”

“It can be nice here, I would like my room more if I was able to walk around more, they don’t let me walk here without them help me. It’s very frustrating.”

“It’s all lovely, I like it here.”

Activities

“There’s not much to do apart from bingo. Sometimes games, but not every day.”

“We’ve been on a coach but I can’t remember when or where.”

“I don’t know if there are any, I have visitors mainly.”

“I don’t really get involved with any activities. I just get up, come in and sit and talk to people really. I like to watch TV in my room in the evening.”

“We do bingo sometimes; you can win small prizes. The activities could be better.”

“There isn’t a lot to do, they play bingo, it’s okay but I don’t like to join in.”

“There is never anything to do, I like sewing and tapestry, it would be lovely if we could do activities like that. We play bingo too much, I’m sick of it.”

“I don’t really like the activities, it’s all the same all the time really, would be nice to do something different.”

Care

“No complaints at all.” All the staff are good.”

“They look after us well.”

“If you need someone at night they come quickly.”

“They are good with me.”

“If you have an appointment at the hospital the staff will take you there. I have no issues with that. I had to go see the consultant and a member of staff took me in her car.”

“The carers are very nice, they look after you well.”

“I don’t like the care, it could be better.”

“I wouldn’t grumble, it’s pretty good. They can do what they can for you.”

“I’ve been to a few care homes and the care here is good.”

“I’m looked after well here, I know they will help me when I need it.”

Food

“You get birthday cake when it’s your birthday.”

“The food is good here. I like it.”

“For breakfast you get cereal, toast, porridge, eggs, whatever you want, they will get for you.

“You get plenty to eat and you get seconds to. They look after us well.”

“They come and ask us what we want to eat off the menu. The cooked meals are good.”

“You don’t go hungry. They will bring you fruit, biscuits, yoghurt if you want, any time.

“You get cakes in the afternoon too.”

“The food is fine and there’s a choice. If you don’t fancy anything on the menu they will get you something else.”

“It’s okay, I can’t complain.”

“The food is good.”

“The food is pretty good, they take me to the table to eat. I don’t like sitting in an arm chair to eat my meals. I don’t know why some do?”

“It’s okay I suppose, sometimes when you get it served to you, it feels like it’s just been put together.”

“Yes, the food is lovely, I always enjoy it, you are given a choice of what you want.”

Relatives and friends’ views

How do you feel generally about the service?

“Staff are very good.”

“No issues at all.”

“Overall, very happy.”

“Any issues are dealt with speedily.”

“They go out of their way for anything you ask. I feel like patient needs are a priority to them.”

Do you think that you are kept informed about your relative e.g. Health and future care plans?

“Yes we are.”

“Yes any issues about her we get informed. They are very good.”

“Yes they know their stuff, I only had one previous problem but that was down to the doctor changing my mum’s medication and nobody told me. They now make sure I’m notified of any changes to my Mum’s care.”

Do you know how to make a complaint if you need to?

“You just go to the office and talk to the manager.”

“Yes, I’d speak to Louise. Things get sorted.”

“Not 100% sure, but I know if I had a problem I could go straight to the manager. I know the staff here quite well - they have an open-door policy.”

Are you aware of the social activities at the service and do you feel welcomed to join in?

“There’s not a lot to do, it does concern us.”

“There’s a Halloween party soon and we are coming along to it. They make you welcome.”

“I feel there was a long period of time when they didn’t do many activities. I know that position has been filled now, I’ve seen some improvements. It doesn’t have to be major activities, even just drawing and colouring would be good.”

Would you recommend this service to others?

“Yes, definitely.”

“Yes we would.”

“Yes, definitely.”

Any other comments?

“We are a bit concerned about pocket money. We hand over money to the office for personal items like shampoo, toothpaste etc. and we don’t get an itemised receipt back for the items. We’ve no way of knowing what’s been spent and on what. I feel we really should get receipts.”

“I’m exceptionally happy with this care home and so is my Mum. I know my Mum and I can tell she is happy here. I feel like you get what you see.”

Feedback from staff

The staff we spoke to reported that they enjoyed working at the home and sang praises for the management. “I feel supported in every aspect.”

Staff were open in discussing their personal experiences working in the home and how if they had issues, they felt comfortable raising this with the management. The majority of staff informed us about the activities in the home and how they felt they need a Coordinator that “can do more”. As noted, the Activity Coordinator was on leave the week of our visit.

Overall, representatives felt that the staff presented as a happy and hard working team with a good morale, with one staff member stating “I love it here.”

Do you have enough staff when on duty to allow you to deliver person centred care?

“Yes, unless somebody rings in sick and we can’t get it covered. We try not use agency.”

“I feel like in the morning there is enough. In the evening it would be more helpful if we had more staff.”

“We could give more showers in the evening if we had more.”

“Yes, there is plenty of staff here. It’s much better than the care home I used to work at. It’s a luxury to have so many staff, it just makes your job easier.”

How does the organisation support you in your work?

“Very good with me”

“I feel confident to approach management.”

“The hours are flexible and they work around childcare etc.”

“I feel supported in every aspect.”

“I go to management when I need help.”

“I had an issue and was supported by the manager completely.”

“You can see a difference from the last management.”

“Perfect, I’m still new here, but they gave me all the training I needed when I started. I don’t feel afraid to ask if I needed more training in a certain area.”

How do you deliver care to diverse groups such as LGBTQ+ etc?

“Never cared for somebody who is openly LGBTQ+ but wouldn’t change anything in terms of care.”

“There would be no difference in care.”

“I treat everyone the same and always making sure I’m respectful to them.”

Are you aware of residents’ individual preferences? Where do you find this information?

“All the information is on Carevision, but working in person is how you learn more and know the residents’ needs.”

“You pick up how they like things.”

“Yes. You learn all about the residents along the way.”

“I know the details, like who has coffee, tea, how many sugars. Things like that.”

“I would look at their care plans and if I can’t find the information in there, then I would just ask them directly what their preferences are.”

Would you recommend this care home to a close friend or family?”

“Yeah.”

“Yes definitely.”

“Yes, 100%.”

Any other comments?

“The only thing this place lacks is activities, there is only one activity coordinator, and we could benefit from two.”

“I personally think the activity coordinator is useless. There are only one or two sessions in five days. Residents and family ask why nothing is going on. I don’t think the activity coordinator is comfortable. We need new one who can do more, or at least two coordinators.”

“I love it here!”

Response from provider

Thank you so much for the detailed report in which you have sent to me.

We are pleased to read and evidence that yourself and your team felt that vast improvements had been made from your last visit to Branch Court Care Home (2023) something me and my team our proud of.

Kind Regards

Louise Bagley

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