

## Visit to Abbeyfield Residential Care Home - The Grove 7 March 2016

### Purpose of the visit

This visit was organised in response to an invitation from Abbeyfield to Healthwatch Newcastle to visit The Grove care home. The purpose of the visit was to provide an opportunity for residents and relatives to talk to an independent organisation about their experience of living at The Grove, or having a relative resident there. The visit provided us with an important information-gathering opportunity from an often seldom-heard group. The Grove care home will also be able to use the visit report as evidence of patient engagement when the Care Quality Commission next visits.

### Format for the visit

The Grove Volunteer Co-ordinator and Healthwatch Newcastle staff decided that the most appropriate format would be for The Grove to arrange an informal get together for residents and their relatives, which Healthwatch Newcastle staff would attend. We offered to provide some light refreshments as a way of thanking the residents for their time and for the opportunity to meet with them, however The Grove explained that their chef would be providing afternoon tea at the time of our visit so further refreshments wouldn't be needed. We provided posters advertising the visit and Healthwatch leaflets in advance as a way of encouraging residents and relatives to attend the meeting.

We began the meeting by thanking residents and staff for inviting us. We went on to explain about what we do at Healthwatch, the reason for our visit and what we will do with the information we receive. This was followed by Healthwatch Newcastle staff spending time talking to individual residents and relatives. While in conversation we asked the following questions:

- What do you really like about living at The Grove?
- What do you think The Grove could do to make your stay even better?

Healthwatch Newcastle agreed to provide The Grove with an anonymised summary report of what they heard during the visit (residents were informed of this outcome at the meeting). We hope this report will celebrate what The Grove do well and how they could make things even better for their residents in the future.

### Findings from the visit

Around 20 residents and one relative attended the meeting

Below are points noted from our conversations with residents and relatives. Positive points are listed first with negative points or suggested improvements at the end of each section

#### General

- I'm very happy with how things are
- It is great to know that my Mum is receiving 24/7 care by people who are very willing and able
- I have everything I want here and haven't found anything that wasn't good

- I like the people - both staff and residents
- Nothing could make it any better
- I'm very happy here
- I like it just the way it is
- It's a very good home - everyone is very happy here
- Very comfortable

### **Staff**

- The staff are lovely (x2)
- The staff are very good
- The staff are very good at gently engineering situations to avoid disagreements between residents
- Staff are all kind and helpful (x3)
- Staff are respectful but also full of fun
- Staff are genuine
- Very nice staff and some are very kind
- Staff are good at explaining what they are doing
- Staff spend time talking to me
- Some good, some not so good
- I need a lot of reassurance but staff don't always have time for me

### **Atmosphere**

- Friendly, homely atmosphere, more like a home than a hotel
- People get on very well
- There's a homely feeling
- It feels like home, when I had to go into hospital I was dying to get back to Abbeyfield
- Good company. Lots of friendly people (including staff)
- Warm and safe

### **Operational**

- It's very well organised
- Our rooms are our own little place
- Good management (x2)
- We can come and go as we please
- The girls let us do our own thing but are there to help us if we need it
- It's very reassuring to have someone check you every couple of hours throughout the night and to answer your bell if your call
- The place is always clean
- When someone dies or is very unwell we don't always hear about it. We are losing a friend and we should know.
- We have to have our meals at a certain time
- Sometimes I find it hard to get down the stairs
- Breakfast always arrives when I'm getting dressed so my tea goes cold

### **Activities**

- Lots of thought is put into physical and mental activities
- There is a great range of activities:
  - Chair aerobics
  - Hair dresser
  - Singalongs
  - Pet therapy dog visits
  - Schools children and the local church visit
  - Movie night

- Trips out to Gosforth and to concerts
- Cheese and wine nights
- Responding to residents requests, the home used funds donated by a former resident's relative to improve the garden, residents and volunteers are involved
- Staff supported me set up and run a music appreciation class for other residents and people from outside
- They (the staff) do a lot at Christmas and at other festivities
- We get to grow veg and plant flowers
- Activities are fun and there are lots of them
- I sometime think residents need a bit more encouragement to join in activities
- It would be good to have more one to one activities for residents
- I would like to have trips out to Marks & Spencer's
- There is a lack of mental stimulation and the assumption that we all just want to play board games

### **Food**

- The food is good - I never leave anything
- The food is lovely
- Lovely food - especially the home made cakes
- Balance diet - lots of fruit & Veg
- Choice of main meal at lunchtime
- My special request for smoked salmon was accommodated
- Too many sponge puddings
- The chef is very accommodating but I miss my Austrian and Italian food
- The meals are well balanced

### **Building & Grounds**

- My bedroom is fine
- My room is good (x2)
- The garden is lovely (x2)
- We can customise our rooms as we please
- Very comfortable
- Lack of grab rails in the common areas

### **Healthwatch staff's personal observations**

1. On entering The Grove we sensed a very pleasant and convivial atmosphere. Staff were welcoming and greeted us as we passed through the corridors. We also noted the number of staff on duty and the care they gave both to the residents and to us as guests in the home. In particular we noticed that staff appeared to genuinely care for residents, taking their hands and touching their shoulders.
2. The attention to detail on small matters such as the china cups and saucers, linen tablecloths and fresh flowers was noticeable and contributed towards a lovely homely feel.
3. It is noteworthy that around 20 residents (out of a possible 32) chose to attend the meeting indicating that they feel a high degree of involvement and engagement in the running of the home. However we were disappointed that only 1 relative came attended.

4. We were told about the many activities taking place at The Grove and in particular we noted examples of where residents own ideas had been supported and developed, for example the garden improvement scheme and the establishment of a music appreciation group run by one of the residents.
5. Other than the above examples, we noted that there was no mention of individualised activities for residents. There was also no mention of care plans being drawn up on entry or at internal reviews and no key worker system was mentioned and initially we thought these two things may be related. However the Care Home has subsequently assured us that upon admission, individual care plans are drawn up for every resident and reviews are carried out regularly. All residents also have a key worker who is named in their care plan.
6. Our conversations with both residents and relatives were generally very positive: only twelve comments out of more than seventy either suggested improvements or were negative.

## Conclusion

We would like to thank everyone at Abbeyfield for the opportunity to visit The Grove. It was a very positive and informative experience. The information we gathered has helped increased our understanding about what constitutes a good care home and a good care home experience. We hope the information included in this report will also be of use to The Grove care home.

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