
Links Lodge

July 2016

Healthwatch Blackpool



Resident's Voice - a Healthwatch Blackpool Review

1 Introduction

1.1 Details of visit

Details of visit:	
Service Address	Links Road, Blackpool
Service Provider	Karen Bradley
Date and Time	29 th July 2016 at 11am
Healthwatch Representatives	Steven Robinson, Steven Garner, Valerie Pemberton
Contact details	hello@healthwatchblackpool.co.uk

1.2 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Blackpool would like to thank the service provider, service users, and staff for their contribution and for facilitating us to carry out our consultation.

1.3 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

The views expressed in this report are primarily from those who reside in the home. It is acknowledged that some of the participants in our studies may suffer from conditions such as dementia or other memory impairments which do not enable them to give fully balanced and reflective views. However we feel that it is essential that every voice is heard and recognise our duty to all who receive care in Blackpool. In order to allow for this to happen we request feedback from the care home for clarification of the issues that are raised.

2 What is a Healthwatch Review?

Healthwatch Blackpool is the independent consumer champion for health and social care. Its purpose is to listen to the experiences of people using services and feed them back to those who run them to make positive change.

Part of the local Healthwatch Blackpool program is to carry out reviews of health and social care services to find out how services are being run from the service user perspective and make recommendations for improvement where possible.

Local Healthwatch are granted the ability to *Enter and View* premises to observe service delivery and talk to service users. Visits can take place if there are reported issues with a service, but equally, they can occur when services receive praise so that examples of good practice can be shared.

2.1 Purpose of Visit

To gather information about the experience of living in a care home in Blackpool directly from those who reside in them, including quality of life factors such as privacy and dignity, quality of care, and choice of activities and food.

2.2 Why did we do this?

In June 2016 Healthwatch Blackpool produced a [report](#) which asked Blackpool residents which health and social care services were of concern to them. Care Homes were reported as the 5th most concerning service in Blackpool.

As a result of this, Healthwatch Blackpool has set out a statutory annual work plan including reviews of all Blackpool care or nursing homes deemed to be “requiring improvement” in any of the five inspection areas in their latest Care Quality Commission (CQC) reports. Healthwatch shares good practice of those rated by CQC as “Outstanding”.

The Blackpool [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) (JSNA) notes that *“Dementia is the single most frequent cause of admission to care homes, and of the need for community care services for older people. The demographics of an ageing population indicate the number of people with dementia in Blackpool is predicted to rise to around 3,841 by 2020”*.

2.3 What were our aims?

Our aim was to allow the residents to have a say in the care that they were receiving. To do this, we required the cooperation of residents, family/carers, and the management and staff of the home. By collating this information, we could evaluate the quality of care within each care home we visited.

2.4 Methodology

We did not wish to perform an enforced *Enter and View* visit to this home. We felt that to be invited to attend the home would give us a more balanced view and encourage openness and co-operation with the care home management. To do this we wrote to the care home we intended to visit with a comprehensive outline of our intentions and purposes of a review. We also supplied the home with a poster confirming the date and time of our visit and its aims. We asked that the home place the poster in a prominent position for residents, families/carers and staff.

All Healthwatch representatives wore identification badges during the review. Before speaking to any residents, it was explained who we were and the purpose of our visit. Those residents that were happy to speak to us were asked a series of open-ended questions about what they liked most and what they felt could be improved. We confirmed that the information they gave us would be anonymous and that they were free to end the conversation at any point. Healthwatch representatives also made informal observations throughout the visit and made notes of what was seen around the home.

Healthwatch reviews are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch Blackpool's safeguarding policies. If at any time an authorised representative observes anything they have a query about, they will inform the lead reviewer who will either discuss with the service manager or make a judgement on whether this requires reporting to the Blackpool adult social care team.

Also, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to find out more about whistleblowing guidance.

The most recent CQC report ([April 2016](#)) gives an overall rating of “*Outstanding*” making it the highest rated care home in Blackpool.

Healthwatch Blackpool aimed to assist the home to recognise any potential improvements in all other areas of its service delivery, and share the good practice which enabled the home to receive the rating it achieved.



Overall Outstanding

Read overall summary

Safe	Good ●
Effective	Outstanding ☆
Caring	Outstanding ☆
Responsive	Outstanding ☆
Well-led	Outstanding ☆

2.5 Summary of provider

Links Lodge is a ten-bed capacity care home located in the suburbs of Blackpool. It is situated on a quiet street and with a large sign outside identifying the service. The managers of the home are heavily involved in the day-to-day running of the service and have a core principle of maintaining person-centred care and a welcoming homely environment.

The home specialises in supporting adults with complex needs such as physical and learning disabilities, sensory impairments and dementia. It has pioneered several ways to support residents which have contributed to the latest CQC rating. Before any new resident arrives at Links Lodge, the staff team spend time with the current residents to ensure a new person would fit in with the personalities and dynamics of the home. All the needs of a prospective resident are recorded and the home takes the time to monitor the individual's wellbeing as they transition into the home.

Due to the nature of the individuals within the home and their reduced capacity to understand, weigh up and communicate information, this review focuses on the observation and direct interaction of Healthwatch representatives with residents, and conversations with staff members and management.

None of the information in this report was gained directly from residents.

2.6 Results of visit

General

On arrival, Healthwatch representatives found that the home was clean, tidy and odour-free. Links Lodge had a homely look and appeared purposeful in its design to replicate a normal home environment (small kitchen, a lounge and dining room, etc.), giving the impression that the home was similar to a Supported Living service.

The home was busy, with most residents undertaking an activity of their choosing, with limited interaction with other residents by their own choice. The home holds activities based on the individual needs of the residents in the home, and preferred activities of residents are also used as educational opportunities. Healthwatch representatives spent some time with the manager who explained that the home has a part-time Occupational Therapist (OT) to help support those with physical disabilities and to provide knowledge and skills to engage residents in a wider variety of creative sensory activities to increase wellbeing.

During the visit we were shown a mobile application which all staff use for reference of support needs for individuals and to document when and how the needs of residents have been met. This software allows staff to record the exact time an activity was carried out and allows the staff to record in detail the response and details of the activity. For example, mealtimes, medication, personal care, responses to activities, mood and amount

of sleep can all be recorded and analysed to maximise the support for a person and recognise trends in behaviour and moods, and review care plans based on these.

Food and drink

There is no set meal time in the home due to the individual needs of residents, allowing for flexibility. To aid in the fulfilment and sensory experience of meal times, DVDs of food are played and scents of food are diffused in the room using specialised equipment. It was reported that the result of this is less stress and confusion for those eating, as well as assisting in re-activating the memory and reminding long-term dementia sufferers that it is meal time.

To help residents choose what they would like to eat, they are shown a set menu with large high contrast pictures of available options. Once the residents have chosen their preference, the staff prepare the meal for them. It was explained that residents' food and nutrition is closely monitored by the phone app software but also by external dieticians and specialists to monitor elements such as salt intake.

Activities

The home had many activities ongoing during the visit, and each resident appeared to have their own activity, as well as boxes of costumes and props available for themed days and group activities. Healthwatch representatives were shown around the home by the service users. Representatives were taken outside into the gated and sheltered front garden which was home to rabbits. It was explained that residents use the animals regularly for pet therapy as they found the animals calming and relaxing. Residents were also observed playing card games with memory and educational encouragement from staff, while others ambled around the home freely.

The home also engages in dementia, memory loss activities, and tactile themed sessions which involve residents touching different fabrics and textures to stimulate their senses. The machine used to diffuse food scents is also used to stimulate individual residents' senses on a person-centred basis, including scents such as train engines, or the beach.

It was explained that the home regularly take residents out on day trips and we saw many pictures of residents being supported in the wider community and overseas. The home also has themed days to celebrate events in the calendar.

Staff & Safety

The home has innovative training programmes. All staff have regular '*day in the life*' training, which involves staff experiencing support as a resident. This training involves sensory disorientation and impairment and is aimed at educating the staff in what it is like to experience dementia or complex conditions. The training for dementia includes use of glasses which restrict vision and headphones which provide distractions while they

are led by another staff member to do an activity. This demonstrates to the staff what residents experience, feel, see and hear on a daily basis. This training is to help staff understand the high level of patience, compassion and additional support which is needed to provide fulfilling and high-quality care.

The home also actively encourages critical enquiry from staff and believes that fully understanding why support is delivered in a certain way promotes better care.

Involvement in key decisions around their care

It was felt that almost all residents lacked the capacity to make complex decisions about their care. It was explained that staff and management spend time with relatives to learn as much as they can about the history and preferences of the individual and to consult on decisions in care.

At resident meetings, staff encourage service users to recollect their days, and share these experiences with others. The meetings enable staff to explore which activities are retained by service users and promotes the sense of community in the home.

Links Lodge has a comprehensive end of life programme for residents which also emphasises inclusion and support for family members. The practice of including all the data analysis gained through comprehensive reporting and documentation, and collecting information from families, helps indicate the preferred choices of the person. Families are invited to stay and spend as much time as they can/wish to with the resident on end of life support, and a named staff member is designated to the resident and family to provide continuity of care.

2.7 Findings and Recommendations

This report highlights observed practice and reflects the information provided to Healthwatch representatives. While it was not our intention during this visit to make recommendations, it was our intention to observe residents and raise any questions which may improve wellbeing and quality of life for residents within the care home.

Good Practice

- Use of technology in the home to record accurate details of residents which could be easily analysed to improve care planning.
- Pet therapy, and other sensory and tactile elements of support maximise the fulfilment of activities.
- Innovative staff training provides an acute awareness of the life of residents.
- Extensive end of life care planning allows support for residents and their families, with a designated member of staff.

2.8 Service Provider response

Care Home Review Response from the provider

Report Name: Links Lodge approved report

Date: 11/01/2017

Results of the review were fed back to Registered Manager, Karen Bradley, who provided the response below:

Dear Healthwatch Blackpool,

We have read the report provided by Healthwatch and are pleased to note the very positive comments. We have no request to make any changes to the report and are happy for this to be published and shared with others.

Karen Bradley - Registered Manager (Links Lodge)