

Healthwatch Waltham Forest Enter & View Report

St. Francis Care Home

Care Home Series 2014-2015

Friday 20th March 2015

Sue Toole
Evalina Strum

March 2015

Visit details

Service address	65-67 Falmouth Avenue, Chingford E4 9DR
Service Provider	Ventry Residential Care
Service description	Care home
Number of residents	29 older people with dementia
Reason for visit	Part of programme. This is one of a series of visits to older people living in care homes in Waltham Forest. This programme is to introduce our Enter & View representatives and develop their role. We wanted to talk with older people about their experience of living in care homes. We looked at 4 areas - meals, activities, staff responses and complaints
Status of visit	Announced
Date of visit	20/3/15
Authorised Reps	Sue Toole and Evalina Strum
Declarations of interest	none

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Waltham Forest would like to thank the service provider, service users and staff for their co- operation and hospitality in hosting this visit. We welcome all contributions to this Enter and View programme.

Enter & View

Enter & View is a statutory power conferred upon Healthwatch by the Health and Social Care Act 2012. It gives Authorised Representatives of Healthwatch Waltham Forest the right to enter and observe publically funded health and social care services in the borough. Enter & View visits are visits and not inspections. Enter & View visits are used to get a lay perspective on the service concerned and are an opportunity for service users to talk about their experiences with the service. This takes place in the communal areas of the home, as our visits preclude talking to people on their own in their private rooms. A report of each visit is produced which includes any recommendations for change or improvement arising from the visit. This is shared with the service prior to publication. All Healthwatch Waltham Forest Authorised Representatives undergo training and background checks before joining the Enter & View programme.

Disclaimer: This report relates only to the service viewed on the date of the visit, and is representative of the views of the service users, visitors and staff who contributed to the report on that date.

Summary of the visit

We arrived a little early but were warmly welcomed by the manager, who introduced us to the layout of the home and the people living there. We were greeted with smiles and a willingness to chat by both staff and the people living here, which was much appreciated. Most people were downstairs where loud laughter came from the main lounge, where a game of bowls was taking place involving service users and staff. There was good interaction between staff and service users and

many people interacted with each other. The home was clean, light, well decorated and had a pleasant and happy atmosphere. We observed lunch being served, which was done in a very personal way and people told us they enjoyed the food here. We looked at the activities, which seemed both relevant and varied, and observed staff responses. There was a pleasant atmosphere and the home did not feel institutional. People were treated with respect and care was attentive and personal. At the end of our visit, we shared our findings with the manager and said goodbye to staff and service users.

We looked at 4 areas:

- *catering, activities, staff responsiveness and complaints*

Description of facility and overview of findings

The home is laid out on two levels, with personal bedrooms upstairs; we did not visit these. Downstairs, there is a lobby in the entrance, a long hallway that leads to a main lounge with two other sitting rooms on either side of it. One of these is a dining room. Good use was made of this space to offer different activities for differing needs.

There is a light and spacious conservatory with a radio and fish tank and a well established garden with tables and chairs. The home was well decorated and furnished, with a lot of light and vases of fresh flowers and bowls of fruit readily available. The meals were satisfactory although we thought that a pictorial menu might be useful.

There was a lot of interaction between the staff and service users and between people who lived here. We noticed communications in a number of different languages. There was a good range of activities and space for individuals to pace from room to room safely if they wanted to. Care was personalised and staff knew the service users' likes and needs very well. There was a library but we felt the books could be changed more often.

There was a happy atmosphere in this home; service users were friendly with each other as well as the care staff, who were very aware of their needs. We thought that this home promoted people's choice and independence very well and we enjoyed our visit and thank both the staff and service users for their time.

Observations

Catering

During our visit, we were able to observe the lunchtime meal. Staff appear to know mealtime needs of service users very well. Those who are able, take themselves off to the dining room tables; they choose where to sit and with whom. Others who prefer to eat at their armchairs can do so and a trolley table was used. Where protective covering is needed, it is provided automatically. We were interested to note that none of the service users needed help with eating, everyone fed themselves.

The food looked appetising and was beautifully presented. It was fillet of salmon with rice, sauce, vegetables and chips and smelled enticing. It was brought to each service user covered with a plate, which was removed by the care assistant and taken away. One person did not want to eat her lunch; a care assistant calmly chatted to her and said it was not a problem she could eat it later. She came back and tried to encourage her to eat.

Although people were sitting variously at the dining table or in their armchairs in the one of the lounges, no-one waited long for their meal. Tables were served in turn and the chef came out to check that people had the food they wanted and to talk to the service users about the food generally.

One service user was a little agitated about when dinner would be and kept forgetting. We observed a member of staff bend down, hold both her hands and patiently explain that dinner was about to be served. This was repeated softly about 5 times to the person, and it was said gently and kindly.

Service users can sit at whichever table they choose. They were making conversation with each other but it was a very calm and peaceful atmosphere. Activities before the lunchtime period were stopped and service users had a period where they were able to relax and calm down - therefore when lunch was ready they remained calm and happy.

There is always a choice; today it was fish - the service users who did not want fish were given an egg instead. One service user has Halal. Dessert was pancakes.

Drinks are available during the day. When we arrived, most people had a drink in front of them. We heard several people asked for a drink during the morning and staff were prompt in responding. Some of the people we spoke with told us that if they asked for a drink, they could have one whenever it was needed.

With regard to medication, several service users told us that sometimes it was given before, sometimes after meal times.

We noticed that one of the service users helped to lay the table for meals and seemed to enjoy this activity. Another person told us that their favourite meal was curry and they had this regularly. Someone else told us that they really liked the breakfasts here.

The tables looked beautiful. Each had a large vase of roses, and people living here told us that this was a regular thing, usually every couple of weeks. There was a bowl of fresh assorted fruit on each of the dining room table, and we saw that people helped themselves and each other to this as they wanted. This fruit could be taken back to their armchairs if wanted.

The details of the menu were on a noticeboard at the other end of the lounge, along with a variety of other relevant information. Given that many people living here have dementia, we wondered if a picture menu, perhaps in the dining room, might be helpful visual reminder to people of the choices that were available to them.

The atmosphere was lively and happy before, after and during the meal time.

Activities

We arrived whilst three different activities were going on. They were playing bowls in the main lounge, a number and bean bag game in another lounge and people in the dining room were reading, using toy building bricks and doing jigsaws. We heard lots of loud laughter and noise whilst this was happening, with most people enjoying themselves. A couple of people who did not want to join in went and sat in the conservatory, where it was quieter. The care assistants were participating and it seemed to be a happy and "free

atmosphere”. The service users could wander around, participate or just sit in their chairs soaking up the activity fun. They all had sight of these activities. Whilst this was going on the care assistants were very aware of the service users and kept an eye on them. It did not feel “institutional” - there was a feeling of being allowed to do what they wanted.

There was a board with activities for the month in the dining room. There seemed to be a wide range of activities from gentle exercise on most mornings, to a range of things including dominoes, bingo, puzzles, singing, bowling, knitting, painting therapy, music therapy and reminiscence work. The activities were a range of self selected things and some external visitors, such as on Friday afternoons, when a lady comes and does circle dancing together with the service users.

As well as the range of activities, it was clear that some people just liked to sit and be, and others wanted to walk up and down quite a lot. All of these things were going on to suit individual needs and likes.

As well as the programme of activities, there was another board in the dining room, showing various photographs of service users, some of whom clearly had been out on visits. We were pleased to see that the Healthwatch poster, notifying of our visit, had been displayed here, so people knew we were coming.

The staff seemed to be very involved with the service users, encouraging and supporting them both in groups and on an individual level.

There were two televisions in the main lounge, the sound was turned down and sub- titles on. We were pleased to see this as those not playing the activities could still read the text, so beneficial to anyone with impaired hearing. We noticed that sometimes these TVs are turned off, e.g. mealtimes. In the dining room, there was calming music being played. At the other end of the room, there was another TV that people were watching.

There was a bookcase full of books in the hallway, and one person told us the range was a little limited. The books were not updated regularly and we thought this could easily be achieved either by contacting a visiting library or contacting the local library a few streets away.

We wondered if computers were available, as one service user would like access to a computer. We spoke to the manager who told us that the home did have Wi-Fi available. However, service users would need to buy their own lap tops or computer equipment and several people already did this.

Service users said they were often taken out, either in small groups with a care assistant; one person told us he was taken out by his son to Tesco regularly for coffee.

Staff responsiveness

When we spoke with the service users, they said how kind the staff were to them. They said they felt they could talk to them and ask for help. One person said, “there is a feeling of togetherness”. Another told us that “staff know what I like”. We noticed the home was well staffed and staff were alert, observing, interacting and asking people how they were, what they wanted to do etc.

We were impressed with the range of languages spoken by staff and service users. Several staff spoke Romanian, which was helpful to one of the service users who was Romanian and could not speak, nor understand, English. We heard the care assistant speak to this lady and settle her when she was clearly upset. Another service user spoke Portuguese, as did one of the staff, and several people spoke Spanish, French and Italian to each other. We had a brief chat in Spanish with care staff and service users. It was really good to know that both staff and service users spoke a variety of different languages to and with each other regularly.

The care assistants seemed to have a very good presence in the home. When they spoke to service users they came down to their level to speak to them (particularly if they were seated). They all appeared happy and smiling. One remarked how she loved coming into work even though she felt tired at the end of her shift. They seemed to enjoy their work and displayed a high level of interaction with people living here, and understood individual behaviour patterns well. Perhaps it was this knowledge that made them proactive and alert to what people wanted and needed. Service users that we spoke with were content at the home and this seemed evident in their behaviour.

Complaints

We did not hear any complaints from the service users.

One service user said the best thing about living in this home was how kind everyone was. He also said “I don’t have to wash my clothes, or cook my food, and I can just relax as I am 85 now”.

Generally, however, none of the service users spoken to know how to make a complaint - although one person said they would tell their son and another person said they would talk to a staff member.

We discussed this with the manger, who told us that he had an “open door” policy and talked to relatives and service users frequently about any concerns.

Conclusion and Recommendations

We concluded that staff at this home were delivering personalised care and promoting choice and independence to the people living there. The service users seemed to be well cared for and their individuality respected and well catered for. We were pleased to see the high level of social interaction and happy atmosphere.

Recommendation 1

Given that many people living here have dementia, we wondered if a picture menu, perhaps in the dining room, might be a helpful visual reminder to people of the choices that were available to them.

Recommendation 2

The books in the library were not updated regularly and we thought this could easily be achieved either by contacting a visiting library or contacting the local library a few streets away.

Service provider response

Recommendation 1

A pictorial menu aid as visual reminder is a planned introduction to St Francis.

Recommendation 2

We were visited by a visiting library but this service fell away. We will enquire as to whether LB Waltham Forest still offer this facility and if so request it restarts. If not we will look to any institutional membership options Hale End Library (Highams Park) offers, or in the alternate should this not be available, individual membership for those with capacity to register and wishing to do so. We hope to make the library a community access location for our service users to visit and enjoy, and to improve the flow of generally available books to all out service users.

If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences of this or any other care home in the borough please contact us.

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