

Healthwatch Waltham Forest Enter & View Report

# George Mason Lodge

Care Home Series 2014

Saturday 12 July 2014

### Visit details

Service address	George Mason Lodge, Chelmsford Road, London, E11 1BS
Service Provider	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Service description	Accommodation for persons who require nursing or personal care, Dementia, Mental health conditions, Caring for adults over 65 yrs
<i>Number of residents</i>	39
<i>Reason for visit</i>	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 reps 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
<i>Status of visit</i>	Announced
<i>Date of visit</i>	Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2014
<i>Authorised Reps</i>	Sue Toole and Elektra Demetriou
<i>Declarations of interest</i>	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

During this visit on 12<sup>th</sup> July at Saturday lunchtime, we met some of the residents who were doing some late morning activities and having lunch. We spoke with about 10 people who live here, one relative and some of the staff and observed the care given. Staff and residents made us feel welcome and seemed happy to talk to us about their experiences of living in this home.

We were impressed by the range of activities available for the residents and the personalised way that care was planned with the people living here, most of whom were suffering from dementia or memory loss. The Units were well decorated, clean and pleasant and offered a secure and supportive environment.

We looked at the following 4 areas

- Catering
- Activities
- Staff responsiveness
- Complaints

Our recommendations are based solely upon what we observed at the care home during our visit.

A first draft report was sent to the home and a factual inaccuracy was highlighted, some of the findings were also questioned. We discussed these points with the provider and amended the final version of the report accordingly. We are grateful to the home for this feedback.

### Description of facility and overview of findings

At the start of the visit, the Manager introduced us and showed us around the home. The home is for 39 residents and there were 39 people living there at the time of our visit. The home is divided into 5 units. The downstairs Unit is for respite care and was used to relieve winter pressures over the last year. This meant taking people who were ready to be discharged from hospital while care packages to support them in their own homes could be organised. Upstairs were another 4 units, two on each floor for permanent residents.

The layout was similar in all units with a large lounge and dining area, a kitchen and individual rooms. There was space for people to wander about the corridors, lounge and into the lounge of another Unit if they wanted to. They were safe to do this as the entrance to both units was secure and had a pin entry system. All of the Units looked light, clean and spacious. We spoke with residents in the lounge and dining areas. Each Unit was quite small with about 7 people living there. This

allowed an intimate atmosphere to develop and to an extent, each unit could establish its own identity.

We noticed that some rooms had some personal decorations just outside on the wall near the door. These were “memory boxes” which staff had produced with individuals who wanted them. They contained things like a postcard of their place and country of birth or home town, family pictures and objects, a favourite record etc. We thought this a good way to work with individuals to find out what things are important to them, and also a visual reminder of different aspects of their life and cultural heritage.

Staff also told us that they have an International Day, when staff wear their national costume to work and bring in food or artefacts of their culture. The staff team is diverse and residents were said to enjoy the colourful variety of this event.

There is a large garden to the rear of the home with a variety of seating areas, so people can enjoy sitting outside. There was evidence of various gardening projects including growing food, potatoes and tomatoes, which several residents mentioned to us. Both the garden, the front entrance to the home and all the Units had a variety of colourful plants and flowers that looked attractive and gave a pleasant odour in the home. We saw several people using the garden during our visit and another person watching the birds eat food put out for them.

All of the people living here have dementia or memory loss and we noticed that all the signs - for toilets, rooms, activities etc. had pictures indicating their purpose. We thought this was helpful for the people living here.

## Observations

### Catering

We noticed that in all the Units there was an up-to-date menu for the current day. This used both words and pictures to show the choices of food for breakfast, dinner and tea. Several people told us they had breakfast and liked to have a cooked breakfast, and enjoyed scrambled eggs bacon and toast.

Several people told us they enjoyed the food at the home and one told us “the fish and chips were good last night”. Another person said they did not like breadcrumbs on their fish so had it battered, and that they enjoyed eating pasta. Another person told us they liked most of the food, and enjoyed the roast Sunday lunches. Several people said they liked home grown vegetables and were looking forward to the new crop of potatoes grown in the home’s garden.

We spoke to staff and ascertained that one current resident was diabetic and the food was adapted to meet their particular dietary needs

Food is prepared by the chef and catering staff in the main kitchen and then put on a trolley for individual units. Lunch was a choice of beef stew or ham.

We joined the residents on one unit just as they were having a tea break with biscuits. We noticed the lunch being served on the respite Unit and residents were encouraged to move to the dining table for this.

However, on another Unit, we spent more than 30 minutes talking to people and noticed that during this time no-one was offered a drink. We were later told that they had a drink just before we arrived. It is good practice to remind service users that drinks are available throughout the day

There were also some flowers in a vase on the tables, which gave a personal touch to the dining room.

### **Activities**

We were informed that there is an activity, sometimes short, on every unit in the morning and afternoon of every day. Staff record what activity took place and who engages in it. These are collated and reviewed by the manager every week to assess the suitability of activities and the level of engagement of the residents. We thought this sounded like a very thorough system.

We noticed a card game, with very large playing cards, going on with staff and residents in the respite unit that people enjoyed. In another Unit, there was a music and exercise session taking place. Not everyone wanted to join in with this activity - some people were reading their newspaper and others were asleep. We saw the staff member record the details of the activity as soon as it finished.

On another Unit, there was a general knowledge quiz taking place that people were enjoying with residents and staff were making good use of it to stimulate discussion.

In one Unit, the music was playing very loudly and we could not hear a resident who wanted to talk to us. We mentioned this to staff and they reduced the noise level. They explained that one person liked the music loud, so they could hear it. However, we thought it may have been too loud for other people living there. We do appreciate that achieving a happy medium can be difficult.

All the Units had a range of TV, books and activities and there were some fish tanks, too.

We noticed that one unit had an electronic photo frame with pictures that change often. This seemed a good way to keep individual's focus and the photos related to the local area, so may help to stimulate some memories.

There is an activities room where there were more board games, DVDs and a large screen and projector for films and memory sticks. There is a member of staff that

works 2 shifts per week to use computers and IT to support the care for individuals. An example of this was that a range of photos or pictures relating to an individual's interests and history could be compiled. These were displayed at their birthday tea to make the celebration more unique and personal to the individual.

There are also "rummage bags" available on each unit. This is a bag that contains a variety of items on a theme - for example, the gardening theme has packets of seeds, a toy wheelbarrow and various bits and pieces that prompt memory and discussion about gardening. These are used for group activities to stimulate debate and also individuals can rummage through them on their own if they want to.

We were informed that there is a monthly cocktail party held at the home, which is popular and organised by an external company called Magic Me. The home also has a sponsorship with The John Lewis Partnership who sponsored the recent summer party.

Also we were told that the home was involved in a research project with a local University to study which activities can improve the quality of life of service users

### **Staff responsiveness**

Several people told us that they were well looked after and felt comfortable in their home. Some said that they liked the staff and generally, we observed good interactions between staff and residents. There are 2 staff on each unit for most of the time and we noticed that they were engaging with residents, supporting them and talking to them. The manger explained to us that their role was dedicated to resident's care. This meant that they did not have to do much in the way of domestic tasks, as there are cleaners and cooks to do these duties and so their main task was the care of individual residents. Currently, they are trying to link individual residents with staff who share the same interests, such as gardening or music.

The manger displayed an extensive knowledge of the residents who live here and has known many for some years, including when they lived elsewhere. She also explained that she supervises her night staff regularly and achieves this by coming in to the home late at night, or early morning, twice a month to meet with night staff. We thought this was a good way to make sure night staff were consulted and included in plans at the home.

We were keen to see the provision of the Respite Unit. It provides carers the opportunity of a break from their caring responsibilities by accommodating those they care for, which is very important.

In the Respite Unit, people felt looked after although one person said "It is ok, but I would rather be living at home". This seemed appropriate, given the temporary nature of this unit and the plans for this person to move back home soon. We

noticed that, on this unit, there was a little less interaction between the staff and residents as compared with some of the other units.

There were some people who were in bed in their own rooms and either were not well enough to join in any group activities or chose not to do so.

Some residents were keen to talk with us and we enjoyed talking with them. We suggest that staff could have an individual chat with some people, especially those who didn't engage in group activities.

### **Comments & Complaints**

We understand that not everyone wants to make a formal complaint about the services at the home, although there is a procedure to use if they do. In the entrance to the home there is a comments and suggestions box so people can make suggestions in this way, which may be a less formal or confrontational method of raising issues.

People we spoke to felt that they did not have much to complain about and were confident that they could talk to staff about any issues they had. One person felt that they would contact their MP if they had any complaints.

We were informed there are monthly residents meetings and frequent contact with relatives, during which any concerns can be raised. We also saw the visitor's room, which is specially equipped for visitors if they want to have a private chat outside of the resident's individual room or lounge. This was well furnished and a pleasant space with a cupboard of "memorabilia". We thought that this was a useful facility, especially for those people who had to travel a long way to see their loved ones.

We did speak to one relative who liked to visit to ensure that their loved one had some regular company while living there.

Several people said that being comfortable was the best thing about living in this home. The home reports having a good working relationship with the local health centre, who supply services to those living here.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This was our first visit to this home and we were pleased to see the many initiatives at the home to provide really good care to those living there. The flowers and gardening, the personalised approach to care - such as matching individual residents interests to those of individual staff to support residents choice of activities, the cocktail parties and varied social events had all been developed to improve the quality of care people have while living here. We were pleased to hear that all of the activities were recorded and assessed to see how well they were engaging the different residents. The people we spoke with seemed happy with the care system and staff we saw were mainly attentive and knowledgeable about the people they were caring for. There were few suggestions we could make to improve things. A reminder to offer everyone drinks frequently, and to offer people the chance for a one-to-one chat are detailed below as our recommendations.

1. We saw a tea break in one unit, which was clearly a regular feature. In contrast, in another unit where we were talking to residents for at least 30 minutes, no-one was offered a drink during this time, despite it being a hot summer's day. We were later told that they had a drink just before we were in this Unit. We suggest that all staff remember to ask and prompt residents to have a drink frequently during the day.
2. Mostly staff engaged well with residents. We found people were keen to have a one-to-one chat with us. Staff could offer time for an individual chat with some of the residents, especially if they did not want to engage in group activities.



## Service provider response

Thank you very much for the report that I have now received regarding your visit to the home on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2014.

### **Recommendation 1**

As mentioned the residents were offered a drink before the start of their activity and would have then been offered another drink afterwards. The staff encourage residents to drink and particularly on hot days residents are offered extra drinks in addition to ice lollies and smoothies

### **Recommendation 2**

Staff engage with the residents on an individual basis on a daily basis. This is evident in the daily activity sheets that are kept. For those residents who are in bed, staff visit them in their rooms frequently to talk to them and ensure that they are alright.

Yours sincerely

Karen Martindale

Manager of George Mason Lodge

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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