

“The Health and Social Care Champion for East Sussex”
Tel: 0333 101 4007

Name of care home: Elizabeth Court, 4 Hastings Road, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex, TN40 2HH

Date and time of visit: Tuesday 23 July 2019 from 10.30am

1. Introduction

Healthwatch is the independent consumer champion created to gather and represent the views of the public on issues relating to health and social care. We have a legal footing, as we were created under the Health and Social Care Act. Part of our responsibilities is to ‘enter and view’ health and social care establishments and services, to seek the views and experiences of people receiving a service.

The focus of the visit was threefold:

1. The degree to which residents were involved in the choice of care home.
2. The level and ways in which residents are actively supported and enabled to make choices and decisions and to be as independent as possible.
3. To obtain information about access to outdoor areas.

This visit was part of a programme of visits to care homes, numbering in total between 40 and 50 care homes. An overarching report will be written on general conclusions from all these visits and made public on our website.

2. What we did

- We met with the manager at the start of the visit.
- We were given a tour of the premises including the garden. We also saw a few bedrooms where doors had been left open.
- We met with about six residents in communal areas and one resident in their bedroom, as agreed with this person. He tends to spend most of his time in his bedroom.

3. What we saw

- The care home is very homely and welcoming. There is a separate lounge and dining room, as well as a smaller lounge area. Dementia friendly signage was very evident, to assist residents and to guide them around the care home. These include arrows to show the direction to different areas, such as

to toilets and bathrooms. Sensory equipment is fitted to various walls in corridors.

- Bedroom doors had been made to look like real front doors, with letter boxes and a door knocker.
- One bedroom had a luminous strip to assist the resident to see the way to the toilet at night. The en suite facility had a coloured toilet seat to assist the resident.
- A crash mat was beside one bed, as the resident is at risk of falling out of bed and so this ensures their safety.
- Different parts of the accommodation have street names and are different colours. This helps residents to know which is their part of the building.
- There is an activity board on display to tell people what is happening and when. It includes pictures so that as many residents as possible are able to know what is taking place.
- The garden is used imaginatively. There is a summer house which is used as a café. Some residents chose to have their meals here, but it can also be used as a place for residents to have afternoon tea. It tries to provide a sense of being out of the home and at a café. Other sections of the garden are used for various animals including rabbits and hens. A covered raised pond is in the garden as well. There is a sensory garden.
- Whilst meeting with a resident in their bedroom, we observed that carers always knocked on the door and only entered once the person had replied.
- We saw residents choosing where to have their lunch and where to spend their day. One resident was walking around the garden, another had returned to their bedroom and some were in the lounges.
- There is an extensive programme of activities, on a daily basis. This includes a very good range of external entertainers and groups including musicians, Motivation and Co, Pet Pals. There are also armchair exercises.

4. What people told us

Residents told us:

- Residents spoken with were positive about living at Elizabeth Court. They confirmed that they can make their own decisions and are supported to do so.
- One resident stated that “you are your own governor” and “you have your freedom”.
- Residents stated that they enjoy the activities and they can choose what they do.
- One resident is much younger than the other residents and he tends to choose to remain in his bedroom. He explained that he has everything that he needs and was helped to get a large television and a PlayStation. He confirmed that he can make his own decisions and choices about what he does and where he spends his day.

The manager told us:

- The care home can cater for a maximum of 24 residents and at the time of this visit, it was full. They tend to be able to meet the needs of those residents who may exhibit behaviour that could challenge.
- In the last six months, about five new residents have moved in. One visited for the day prior to deciding to move in whilst the others were visited by care home staff and then they made their decision.
- People are encouraged to bring in their own items of furniture and personal possessions, as long as they can fit into the bedroom.
- The care home is a member of the Cinnamon Trust. This is a national charity for the elderly and their pets. This means that the care home is able to cater for people who need residential care and can also cater for their pets. This means it is a pet friendly care home. They currently have three dogs and several cats. They also have a range of other animals including rabbits and hens. They are linked with an organisation called 'Hen Power'.
- Residents are offered choices and supported to make their own decisions. There are always at least two options for all meals. Although people are asked in advance, they are then asked again nearer the time of the meals in case they have changed their minds.
- There is flexibility about lunch time so it can fit in with residents. People are served their lunch as they arrive at the dining room. Most residents choose to have their meals in the dining room.
- Resident meetings are held regularly and they are used to enable residents to be involved in menu planning.

Staff told us:

- We did not speak individually with staff but met them informally.

5. Conclusions

Elizabeth Court is a very homely environment. There are pets around the place and this is very welcome by residents. There is an extensive programme of activities which are also appreciated by residents, who were positive and complimentary about the care home. People were supported to make their own decisions. The garden has been developed in an imaginative way, including a cafe, lawns and sensory areas.

6. Response and comments from the care home manager

We were privileged to welcome Healthwatch into our service to see what we do here. We believe it's very important to work with outside agencies so that we can identify areas for improvement that we might've missed. We work hard to bring a sense of normality in a care environment and provide a home for life wherever possible, recognising and valuing individual differences. We have worked hard over the years

to provide the gold standard for end of life care and to develop inclusive and imaginative strategies for those living with dementia and other mental health conditions that have struggled to settle elsewhere. We continue to work closely with services and families in the hopes of providing some light in the dark.