



Young
healthwatch
Northamptonshire



Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire and National Citizen Service visit to Elm Bank Care Home, Kettering



August
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Thanks and acknowledgements

We would like to thank the residents, manager and staff at Elm Bank Care Home in Kettering for facilitating these visits and welcoming the team.



Introduction

On the 30 and 31 July 2018, 15 young people completing the National Citizenship Service (NCS) scheme visited Elm Bank Care Home, in Kettering Northamptonshire. For this part of their NCS course they teamed up with Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire. The visit took place over two days so that the young people could get to know the residents and get a real feel for what Elm Bank was like. This report is written by the young people in their own words.

Elm Bank is a care home in Kettering offering residential, palliative, dementia and respite care (<https://www.brighterkind.com/care-homes/elm-bank>). It was rated as 'Good' in April 2017 by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), who are the regulators and inspectors of care homes. It has 115 rooms.

This was the first time that Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire have visited a care home, although there have been previous visits to local hospitals. The young people visited over two days and were accompanied by staff from both NCS and Healthwatch Northamptonshire. During our visit we did not go on to the floors where there were dementia residents and all of the residents we photographed and spoke to gave their permission before hand.

Consistent with Healthwatch Northamptonshire practice, this report has been written by Young Healthwatch and NCS volunteers in their own words and expresses their own opinions. It is based on their own observations and those of the people they spoke to. The report is split into five sections, looking at whether the home was welcoming, safe, caring, well organised and calm, and a section about what the residents said.

The content has not been altered by Healthwatch Northamptonshire, National Citizenship Service or Elm Bank Care Home, except for points of clarification.





Report from Young Healthwatch and National Citizenship Service

Welcoming

When entering the care home, we were able to get a feel of the atmosphere. The home felt welcoming, caring and generally quite homely. Straight away we felt welcomed in the reception as it had sofa chairs to sit on. The home was bright, with large windows allowing for residents to look through, and plenty of light to enter the home. This makes the home appear more like a home, and less like a care home. The smell was pleasant. We could smell the freshly cooked food prepared for the resident's lunches.

First, we went around the Manor, which had a higher cost than the main home. It was far grander than the other house and was for more able residents. Each room had an en-suite and a walk-in wardrobe. An issue with separating residents between the Manor and the main house could be that the residents in the main house feel isolated from those in the Manor.

The care home is split into sections based on needs and capabilities of the residents; we saw the bottom floor (the residential floor) for able residents. We didn't go to higher floors as they were for residents that need more care such as those with dementia/Alzheimer's or those nearing the end of life. The rest of the home also felt welcoming to family members and visitors. The atmosphere was attractive to the visitors; they felt a want to come back. The living rooms had plenty of chairs, as did the garden. The furniture was quite dated but this may be appropriate for the elderly living there; it was all clean and in good condition. The rooms were warm in colour making it more welcoming; however, more decoration could be added to the walls. *[In response Elm Bank said: "The home at the time of the visit was undergoing a programme of refurbishment therefore there were no pictures on the walls due to redecoration in all of the corridors".]*

As we walked through the care home we passed each room, getting a glimpse of how each resident lives. In each room there is a fan, which is very essential to have now the weather is warm; this prevents the residents from overheating. The carers are always around if the residents need them, they tend to check up on those who are by themselves just to check if they're okay. There is also a huge open space outside in the garden and a gazebo to stay under when the weather gets too much for the residents.

Safety

The safety of the home seems to be well thought about. Around the facility, there were several handrails, so the residents can keep themselves upright when moving around the area. The halls of the home were wide and tidy, meaning that there is easy access to every location and there are few collisions in the halls. Also, the key codes on the doors helped to make it easier for staff to get from a to b, and to keep the residents from going to places they cannot or shouldn't go. However, we observed that the carers were not very secretive with the key code, as we were able to pick up the 4 digit code straight away. *[In response Elm Bank said: "Key codes are in place for security of the building".]*

Once getting residents opinions of the home, we were able to come to the conclusion that they feel safe and happy within the home.

The home was clean; we could see that cleanliness is a priority as there was no dust and mess. However, some residents did not like the choice of plants in the garden as they needed weeding. The area felt very safe and caring to the residents. There were lots of fire exit signs around, but we were unsure of what the procedure was when the fire alarm sounded whilst we were there, and it took a while until we saw a staff member to tell us where to go. However, we were able to observe that the staff take their jobs seriously as they knew all the resident's names and a little bit about them. A staff member, Mark, was a clear indicator of this fact. Furthermore, upon the safety of the home, the carers pointed out the safe spaces for the residents to go and chill out and they have the availability to get away from other residents if needed.

We were shown two lounges; a quieter one with a TV and books, and a more communal one with games, and an opening onto the garden. The home provides many activities throughout the days for the residents with a wide range to do such as bingo, carpet boules and cricket. This area allows the residents and visitors to relax together and go into the big garden space, which most of the residents enjoy doing. The residents always had their Zimmer frame at reach if needed. Before going out, staff ensured a resident had sun cream and a hat on when directly in the sun, and would move residents around into the shade if in the garden.

We saw medicines being handled from a trolley that seemed secure and was only ever out if a staff member was there. There was no visible lock on the medicine trolley, however the medicine cupboard had a key code lock and we never witnessed it being left open. *[In response the Elm Bank said: "All of the medicines trolleys are locked individually and the senior member of staff hold the key".]*



Care and involvement

The residents enjoyed interacting with the staff, as they made the residents feel happy, and the residents believed the carers are “doing their very best”. Staff act friendly to the residents, they share personal experiences and speak loudly and clearly in order for the residents to hear them. The staff take safety seriously as when they are moving people they ask them if they are okay and ask them to sit back and lift their legs so they don’t cause harm. They also stop to move any obstacles which maybe in the way.

Our understanding of the residents experience grew throughout the day as we learnt that it’s scheduled, yet the residents enjoy visitors of any kind. This observation also helped establish the strength of the team work between the staff members, which was displayed to be strong. The residents are made to feel special, for example celebrating a residents’ 89th birthday by singing ‘Happy Birthday’ with a cake. This appeared to make the resident very happy, she said it was the best day she’s had in a very long time.

Another resident felt miserable as she would rather be at home, as she does not have family that come to visit because they live far away. She also complained about some of the staff due to ignorance; however, staff were busy with other residents who needed more care. Some staff would turn their back on certain residents, for example a dementia patient mumbled words throughout the activity we were doing and the carer would either ignore her or rub her hand and not take notice of what she was saying. The resident was moaning about not being comfortable and her shoes had fallen off but the staff member explained her condition and ignored what she was saying. After confronting the staff member and once she had been moved and her shoes were put back on, she was much better and more comfortable, so the staff could have been more attentive.

Some parts of the care home were very warm, we understand that the days that we went the weather was hot, however the very high temperatures inside the care home could make the residents, as well as the staff, uncomfortable. We did notice fans in some areas however they could have more to make sure that on warm days the residents and staff can stay cool.

During our visit we witnessed more than one resident with dried food around their face, clothes and hands, the staff didn’t appear to take action on this. These were residents that wouldn’t have been able to properly clean themselves.



Well organised and calm

The atmosphere of the care home is positive the second you step through the door. It appears to be calm and soothing, yet the staff are always actively trying to seek the best for the residents, to give them what they need. The home and the Manor across the garden both seem suitable for the residents, and the residents appeared to be happy. Some residents are government funded; however some residents in the care home fund their own care. The Manor seems to cater for the more able bodied residents, as they appear to be able to do most things without help. The organisation of residents due to their level of care is very helpful and makes it easier for the staff as well as visitors.

The noise levels within the home were low, to respect the residents, however there was a constant beeping, which we were told was residents wanting their plates to be taken away after dinner. This raised slight concern as this could be addressed quicker, so the residents do not become distressed. *[In response Elm Bank said: “The beeping was our nurse call system and this sounds as and when residents require assistance, it has a night mode so is a quieter tone throughout the night”.]*

Once walking around the home, most areas can be clearly identified, which helps to show simplicity for the residents.



Residents' voice

As part of our NCS programme, we believed it was important to hear the residents' voices and to get to know them.

When we were introduced to the residents, the workers/carers would tell us their names, a little bit about them and make sure they were comfortable before leaving to allow us to talk to the residents to ask questions about their experience. NCS members took part



and got to meet some of the residents in smaller groups, and got to know them better. In cupboards there were card games and board games for residents, this was useful as not all games we brought were familiar to them.

One resident we talked to told us how she had played scrabble for 50 years and the home had provided a scrabble board, which she often plays, this was a thoughtful act. We got to know the residents a bit as part of our project. Whilst most residents felt cared for by the staff, one resident said that they feel as if the staff do not care for them enough, they get neglected. Also, that they miss living with their family due to feeling lonely. Therefore, to improve their care at the care home, staff could take more interest to ensure every resident feels cherished and happy, to ensure residents are satisfied with their care.

The care home appears to be very caring, they take care of the residents in many ways. Another resident we spoke to said she had enjoyed the staff and care she had received over the years she had been staying in the care home. She liked that she could socialise with other residents and build personal friendships with the staff. Allowing the residents to build strong bonds with the staff is good because it helps them feel at home and allows them to trust the care home to take care of them correctly. Another beneficial feature we have observed is that the elderly have a decent amount of time to socialise with each other; this is also good because it can improve the well-being of the residents and reduce loneliness.

One resident we interviewed was 92 years old and had lived there for less than a year. When he moved in he was accompanied by his wife, who recently passed

Conclusion

Overall, the visit was insightful and showed much good practice. We witnessed a safe environment with an average level of care; due to a lack of staffing. The staff that we saw whilst visiting were extremely caring and went above and beyond their duty.



Summary of findings

What worked well:

- Staff relationships with the residents
- Large amount of activities for the residents to do
- Accessibility for families
- Structured days
- Regular refreshments
- Hand rails around the home

Recommendations:

- Better Wi-Fi
- Staff being more secure with key codes
- More staff
- Reduce the loud beeping noise
- Ensure residents (especially the less able) are cleaned properly after meal time

About Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Healthwatch Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and wellbeing and improve the quality of services to meet people’s needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and social care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvement, where required.

Our rights and responsibilities include:

- We have the power to monitor (known as “Enter and View”) health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of health and social care.
- We report our findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision makers and make the case for improved services where we find there is a need for improvement
- We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people, to influence how services are planned, organised and delivered.
- We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we find out what local people think about health and social care. We research patient, user and carer opinions using lots of different ways of finding out views and experiences. We do this to give local people a voice. We provide information and advice about health and social care services.
- Where we do not feel the views and voices of Healthwatch Northamptonshire and the people who we strive to speak on behalf of, are being heard, we have the option to escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations including Healthwatch England, NHS England and the Care Quality Commission.





About Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire are a group of young people between the ages of 11 to 24 who are health and social care champions.

What we do:

- Look at local health and social care issues
- Give young people a voice for all aspects of health and social care locally.
- Work with professionals on the health and wellbeing of young people locally and nationally
- Set our own work plan
- Learn new skills
- Report back to the Healthwatch Northamptonshire Board

WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR MORE YOUNG PEOPLE TO JOIN US. PLEASE GET IN CONTACT



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[Twitter.com/YHWNorth1](https://twitter.com/YHWNorth1)



yhwnorthants (scan our code)



[yhwnorthamptonshire](https://www.instagram.com/yhwnorthamptonshire)



If you are a professional that wants to work with us please contact us on the details on the next page or email younghealthwatch@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

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About National Citizenship Service

WHY WE'RE HERE

NCS exists to help tackle some of the biggest social challenges in our country:

SOCIAL COHESION

To bring our country together by building stronger, more integrated communities and fostering understanding between young people from different backgrounds

SOCIAL MOBILITY

To build essential skills for life and work, investing in our country's future talent.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

To engage young people in social action in their communities and the democratic process, building their understanding of their responsibilities as citizens.

NCS is more than just a youth programme, it is designed to challenge and inspire 15-17 year olds and provide them with invaluable opportunities as they embark on that all-important transition to adulthood. NCS has a positive local impact on communities right across the country. As a local delivery partner, the UFA run a series of fantastic NCS programmes in County Durham, Kirklees, Northamptonshire, Suffolk, Bedfordshire, Lancaster, Accrington, and Milton Keynes. We aim to help young people improve confidence, make new friends, develop desirable employability skills and secure a brilliant CV. We're committed to building a national institution, a rite of passage that can transform young lives and their communities - one NCS graduate at a time.



Transforming Learning
through Leadership

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