

The Thorns Retirement Home

Hest Bank

Enter and View Report

Tuesday 15th October 2019

10.30am-12.30pm



DISCLAIMER

This report relates only to the service viewed at the time of the visit and is only representative of the views of the staff, visitors and residents who met members of the Enter and View team on that date.

Contact Details:

Mrs Claire Robinson (Manager)
The Thorns Retirement Home
1 Coastal Rd
Hest Bank
LA2 6DW

Staff met during our visit:

Maggie Feather (Assistant Manager)

Date and time of our visit:

Tuesday 15th October 2019
10.30am-12.30pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Michele Chapman Project Officer (Lead)
Lynn Yates volunteer
Dawn Allen volunteer

**Introduction**

This was an announced Enter and View visit undertaken by authorised representatives from Healthwatch Lancashire who have the authority to enter health and social care premises, announced or unannounced, to observe and assess the nature and quality of services and obtain the view of those people using the services. The representatives observe and speak to residents in communal areas only.

This visit was arranged as part of Healthwatch Lancashire's Enter and View schedule. The aim is to observe services, consider how services may be improved and disseminate good practice. The team of trained Enter and View authorised representatives record their observations along with feedback from residents, staff and, where possible, resident's families or friends.

The team compile a report reflecting these observations and feedback, making comment where appropriate. The report is sent to the manager of the facility for validation of the facts. Any response from the manager is included with the final version of the report which is published on the Healthwatch Lancashire website at www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Lancashire would like to thank Maggie Feather, together with staff, residents and visitors, for making us feel welcome and taking part in the visit.

General Information

The Thorns Retirement Home is privately owned by The Thorns Retirement Home Ltd with places for fifteen residents. There were three vacancies at the time of our visit. The person in charge is Claire Robinson.

Information obtained from carehome.co.uk states that the home provides care for people from the ages of fifty five plus who are affected by old age and sensory impairment.

Methodology

The Enter and View representatives made an announced visit on Tuesday 15th October 2019.

We spoke to five residents, five staff and one relative, where possible within the constraints of the home routine, people's willingness and ability to engage and access to people in public areas. Discussion was structured around four themes (Environment, Care, Nutrition and Activities) designed to gather information concerning residents overall experience of living at the home.

The team also recorded their own observations of the environment and facilities.

As some residents were receiving visits, choosing to stay in their rooms or being nursed, we spoke with five of the ten residents.

Our role at Healthwatch Lancashire is to gather the views of service users, especially those that are hard to reach and seldom heard, to give them the opportunity to express how they feel about a service regardless of their perceived ability to be able to do so. It is not our role to censor feedback from respondents.

We use templates to assess the environment of a facility and gather information from respondents, to ensure that reports are compiled in a fair and comparative manner.

Observations were rated on Red, Amber, Green scale as follows;

Green = we would choose this home for a loved one.

Amber = we may choose this home if some improvements were made

Red = we would not choose this home for a loved one unless significant improvements were made.

Summary:

The Thorns presented as a very impressive and homely facility, representatives observing an exceptional physical environment coupled with high levels of person centred care.

The standard of provision seemed to be linked to the level of commitment by the directors and the dedication of a stable and well established staff team who reported feeling being part of a “*tight knit team*” and being “*well supported.*”

Staff disclosing “*I am happy working here and I think other staff are too. It’s a lovely atmosphere. I couldn’t work here otherwise.*”

Similarly, residents who responded to us reported high levels of satisfaction with The Thorns telling representatives “*Staff are very caring and have never refused my requests, they are very kind.* This was endorsed by a family member who described the service as “*fabulous.*”

Representatives observed an excellence in the provision of activities to enhance the experience of residents. One to one time sessions supported by generous staffing levels and willingness by staff to engage with outside resources. A “Can Do” attitude prevailed and residents were actively encouraged to take up new activities and be involved with the community.

There were good levels of quality monitoring and an ambition to maintain excellence witnessed by a comprehensive Relatives Quality Assurance Questionnaire a key question being. “*Our last CQC report was rated as good do you think we could attain an Outstanding?*”

Based on the criteria, the Enter and View Representatives gave the home an overall score of:

Green

Enter and View observations

Pre-visit and location

Prior to our visit we were able to access a comprehensive website, and at the time of our visit we were provided with a thoughtfully compiled facility brochure.

The home is located on the main coastal road overlooking Morecambe Bay and is well served by local bus and train services. Likewise, the village provides local amenities.

Representatives found the home a little difficult to locate as it was set back from the main road accessed by a private driveway and the signpost was similarly set back.

There were ample parking spaces to the front and side of the building and the driveway led to the front door at a gentle incline suitable for those with mobility issues. However, there was a step from the conservatory area which may have been difficult for those less ambulatory to negotiate. Similarly, representatives did not see specific disabled access or parking.

Green Amber

The external environment

The Thorns commenced service in 1990 and the assistant manager told us that it was the provider's former childhood home.

Set in an elevated position with enviable views of Morecambe Bay the detached older building is surrounded by equally impressive exterior landscaping.

Bay windows and a front aspect conservatory maximise the beautiful views with the brochure adding "*we have private access to the peaceful Lancaster Canal just behind the home.*"

The representatives observed a large pond framed by hard landscaping and wooden benches for residents to sit out. The grounds were well maintained with planters', statues and bird tables. The team observed that the garden areas had been provided with handrails in places where there was a change of ground level.

The reception was clearly identifiable via the front conservatory and the door was answered in a timely manner by a member of staff.

Green

The internal environment/reception-first impressions

Reception was preceded by a very welcoming conservatory area. Several notices on the windows indicating a close connection with Lancaster and Morecambe College in respect of work experience opportunities. Similarly, a Safeguarding statement indicated *“we are open and transparent and we want to make this a happy and safe home.”*

The small conservatory was furnished with very comfortable armchairs, footstools and soft furnishings. The team saw that magazines and newspapers were available and a gentleman showed us the seedlings and cuttings that he had planted alongside flowering houseplants. A wooden heart shaped plaque declaring *“Home Sweet Home.”*

Unfortunately the Assistant Manager said she had not received the letter and poster announcing our visit. Despite this, we were made very welcome and staff seemed happy to engage with us.

Representatives were able to sign into a visitor’s book and were told that antibacterial gel was placed at the reception desk. Key staff were easily identifiable by a smart black uniform and a photographic noticeboard gave their names and job roles.

A key feature of the reception area was a clear orientation board displaying the date, day, weather and season a cheery *“Have a nice day”* written alongside the list of staff on duty that day.

Green

The observation of corridors public toilets and bathrooms

The building throughout was decorated in restful and light colours with attractive soft furnishings. Artwork on the corridor walls had been contributed by the residents made during an Art Class, the class being described as encouraging the residents to *“get the most out of the class”* stating *“we talk, sing, laugh and listen to music.”*

Corridors were observed to be clutter free and easily navigable with some signposting, however this was not of a dementia specific type.

The Assistant Manager told us that all of the bedrooms at The Thorns had some bathroom provision and so the number of public bathrooms on the corridors was deemed sufficient for the number of residents. All the bathrooms we saw were clean and well stocked with soap, toilet rolls, and hand towels. Representatives observed that raised toilet seats and grab rails were provided as appropriate.

Green

The lounges, dining and other public areas

Representatives found the spacious lounge to be very homely and welcoming, having a dual aspect with front views over Morecambe Bay. Staff told us that a piano in situ was regularly used by one of the residents, with various armchairs, table lamps, and flowers adding to the domestic environment. A poster declaring *“We all appreciate having fresh flowers around us and we encourage residents to help arrange these around the home particularly in the lounge, conservatory and entrance hall.”*

Representatives observed high levels of interaction between staff and residents, residents being encouraged to participate in activities, and staff engaging them in conversation on a one to one basis. At the time of our visit we saw several residents playing dominoes with a carer in attendance. Similarly the team observed a central TV with a large library of CDs and DVDs for the residents use with the activity schedule indicating that Friday afternoon was reserved for *“films and nibbles.”*

A menu was written on a mirror at the entrance to the dining area, indicating lunch of Lancashire Hotpot with broccoli, sweetcorn and beetroot followed by ginger sponge and custard. Feedback from residents who responded to us in respect of food was generally positive describing the food as *“tasty”*. Likewise residents reported the opportunity to have fish and chips, curry and Chinese meals.

A sufficient number of tables to service the number of residents populated the dining room, representatives observing a resident enjoying the task of setting the tables. The tables were positioned the rear of the building looking very inviting with matching table linen and condiments.

It was evident that many activities focused on the dining experience we saw photographs of a beautifully presented cream tea, birthday parties, and special meals for Valentines day and Chinese New Year amongst others, the text alongside confirming the importance of the person centred experience *“the staff enjoy making sure that the residents are having a good time.....we buy individualised presents.”*

Similarly, photographs of a cake decorating activity were explained *“on occasion we enjoy cake decorating in the dining room we have before and after pictures for you to see. As you can see the cakes didn’t last long as the residents enjoyed the afternoon tea for dessert.”*

Green

Observations of resident and staff interactions

Representatives experienced the culture of the home to be open and transparent with staff and residents willing to share their experiences.

Staff told us they were a “*tight knit team*” and they were well supported by managers and the directors at least one of the directors attending the home on a “*weekly*” basis.

Similarly, there appeared to be a socially intimate environment between staff and residents. Representatives observed staffing levels to be high, with staff being attentive and proactive suggesting activities and offering refreshments.

Residents who preferred to sit in their rooms were comfortable in doing so and we were invited to chat to one resident who told us “*the staff go above and beyond, I needed to go into town and an off duty staff member came with me.*”

We observed that residents were able to order magazines and newspapers and listen to music; we were informed one resident used wireless head phones, and the home was receptive to technology such as Skype and You Tube.

Both residents and a visiting relative were very complimentary about the provision at The Thorns the relative referencing the home as “*Fabulous....the standard of stimulation and care, environment and staff.*” Similarly, residents told us they were “*absolutely looked after it couldn’t be better.*”

The Assistant Manager showed us a record of the activities at the Thorns and this was very impressive, we saw that Tai Chi was delivered by an outside provider. Similarly, there were Pamper Days a visiting hairdresser, Animal Therapy and visiting entertainers. The October activity schedule detailed a PAT dog visit, Church visits, Zumba classes, and a visit from local nursery children.

Staff told us that the next celebratory event was Halloween and they showed us the preparations they had begun with large plastic pumpkins witches and wizards’ hats and other smaller decorations.

In a similar vein residents were encouraged to enjoy and invest in daily tasks such as folding napkins, helping with laundry, and gardening.

The team observed a poster “*You’re never too old*”. Residents were urged “*do you have any dreams you want to fulfil? ...if we can help you achieve your dreams we will try....You’re never too old to have fun and feel GREAT!*”

Green

Additional information

The Assistant Manager explained that the home was heavily invested in the provision of activities and that this was due in part to their membership of the Lancashire County Council Activity Forum, which they found very valuable.

The Manager said that she was very happy to share her experience with other care home Managers and recommended attendance at the Lancashire County Council Activity Forum.

Representatives observed that the Quality Assurance consultation process with relatives and residents was successfully assessed using a comprehensive questionnaire based on “Personal Care and Support, Catering and Food, Daily Life and Social Activities, and Environment.

Feedback from residents

Environment

"This place has a very cosy atmosphere, and it's clean and tidy."

"My room couldn't be better; the view makes a big difference. There is plenty of room for my things and I can order the newspapers."

"The garden needs weeding."

"My room has a marvellous view but it's a little bit small for my collection of cacti".

"Everything seems fine."

"Very friendly residents and the staff are very good."

"My room is kept clean and I can find my way around the building ok. I can't remember going out in the garden."

"The building is tidy and clean."

"It's a lovely house and garden, well-kept and clean. They do the bathroom every day and the rest of it once a week. We do not have an odour here. I would rather be here than anywhere else."

"I do not feel comfortable in the chairs in the lounge so I like to sit in my room most of the time."

Activities

"We have entertainment, they come in and we play games."

"My niece takes me out, I am very satisfied."

"I propagate cacti and I like gardening."

"There are games and quizzes, lots of entertainment. A nursery school visits and another primary school."

"I have lived here for five years; they look after me very well. We have people playing piano to entertain us."

"I enjoy gardening and we out on day trips. We play games such as board games."

"I have my hair done every Thursday and feel better after this."

"It depends on the staff who are here, I will engage and I am prompted to take part in gardening, but I don't feel I am rushed into doing anything."

"There are plenty. There is an art class and a Tai Chi lady for exercise. A guitarist comes and plays and sings and then there is a lady who sings and she sometimes

comes with a choir. We have a superb cellist and also Ann on the piano. She is lovely. Also there is Jimmy with his reminiscences' bag, an accordionist, Country and Western music, all sorts. Musical things go down very well here. As well as those a dog comes every fortnight, a little pony sometimes and we get owls too. Sometime soon a mini zoo is coming. There are games and jigsaws if you want. We have movie days and special events days for example for birthdays, Easter, Valentine's Day, of course Christmas. There are things going on all the time. I can get a taxi into town. That's my treat."

Care

"I am absolutely looked after, it couldn't be better. If you need assistance the alarm is answered quickly."

"If anything we are over cared, they can't do enough, they are attentive and caring ten out of ten."

"I can't fault them they are patient the staff have been here a long time."

"I feel ok about my care."

"They go above and beyond, I needed to go into town and an off duty staff member came with me."

"A member of staff takes me out on Sundays."

"Staff are helpful and always good."

"Staff are very caring and have never refused my requests, they are very kind."

"They ask me questions find out why and what I need. I feel I can share niggles with them and they hear what I say."

"Yes of course the staff care. If it weren't for the staff life wouldn't be worth living. You can get help if you need it. I can take a taxi and go to Specsavers for my eyes."

Food

"It's very good it's sufficient and it's tasty. You don't really get a choice but if you ask you can have an alternative."

"It's good very good, I like Chinese and Indian and **Name** has said they will go out and get me one anytime."

"There are good choices of food I eat in the dining room."

"I think the meal times are at convenient times and I always feel the food is good standard."

“There is not always a choice of menu. If I’m not here for meal time I can eat later”

“Sometimes the food is a bit burnt on the bottom. There are two ladies who haven’t got good teeth and it isn’t easy for them to eat it. The oven temperature can be up and down. They can’t afford a new one they said.”

“Good choice of meals every day.”

“There are 2 chefs. Food is good on the whole. Sunday lunch is good. There’s no choice at lunchtime but there is at teatime. Occasionally we have chippy fish and chips which is nice. I have breakfast in my room.”

Relatives and friends’ views

How do you feel generally about the service?

“It’s fabulous there is a good standard of stimulation environment and staff care.”

Do you think that you are kept informed about your relative e.g. Health and future care plans?

“I get a letter and I am very well informed. I get a lot of information over the telephone.”

Do you know how to make a complaint if you need to?

“Staff are approachable for me to talk to if I have issues.”

Are you aware of the social activities at the service and do you feel welcomed to join in?

“Yes, there are art classes, music sessions, keep fit and board games. There is a good sociable environment.”

Would you recommend this service to others?

“Yes I feel there is a sense of community. I cannot find fault in this home, it was recommended by a previous resident’s family. The staff are very open and easily approachable.”

Staff views

Do you have enough staff when on duty?

“I am happy with the ratio. We have a good CQC report. We are normally at full capacity.”

“The staff ratio is very good five staff to ten residents. I am on call at weekends and weekdays if there is an emergency.”

“Yes we have enough staff. We even have a carer who can cook. We have rolling menus every 6-8 weeks and ask the residents what they need/want.”

“I feel we have enough. We have fewer over the weekend but that’s enough for ten residents as we don’t have as many extra jobs to do then. There are plenty of staff through the week.”

“There is always enough staff on duty.”

Do you feel supported to carry out person centred care?

“I feel well supported by the Manager and I have a good relationship with the rest of the team.”

“There are three directors at least one visits weekly.”

“I can turn to other members of staff when needed.”

“I feel very well supported, we are a tight knit team and I can ring my CQC Inspector. The GPs and nurses link with us quite well.”

“I am told if people have allergies so we can sort that out. We take personal needs into account.”

“We definitely get time for person centred care. We chat as we take teas round, or when taking residents into town or to garden centres or for a walk along the canal. There are lots of opportunities to go out and we encourage socialising. I bring my little girl in and she likes to help one of the resident’s who enjoys gardening.”

“If I ever need anything they are there to support me. I have never had a complaint and think it is really homely here.”

Do you feel you have enough training to carry out your duties well?

“We are on the ball training in house. We use a matrix online so she (the manager) can see whose training needs updating.”

“I organise the training and the directors are supportive, they owned the building and changed it to a care home.”

“I have a Leadership Diploma and I recognise that activities are important for stimulation.”

“Yes there’s lots of training.”

“Yes I have just done an End of Life course and there is always on-line training.”

Are you happy working here?

“Yes and it fits in with my other life.”

“Yes very happy here. It fits in with my childcare too.”

“I am very happy here I have been here fifteen years and worked my way up to deputy manager. We all muck in with things such as cleaning.”

“It is a pleasure to work here it is like a second home, I have worked here since 2016.”

“I am happy working here and think the staff are too. It’s a lovely atmosphere. I couldn’t work here otherwise.”

Would you be happy to recommend this care home to a close relative?

“Yes, there is excellent care and the location is beautiful.”

“I would live here!!! This is a well led home, the staff care for each other and feel enthusiastic.”

“Yes, I have had both Mum and Dad here and my Grandparents before.”

“Yes I would definitely recommend it.”

“I would absolutely recommend this care home, in fact I have already.”

Response from provider by email 19/11/2019

Dear Michele,

Thank you for the draught report, it was a pleasure to read, very positive and we are all proud of our home and efforts. May I just point out one amendment prior to publication; we do indeed have capacity for 15 residents. However, at the time of the report we had three vacancies not five.

Thank you once again

Kind regards Claire Robinson

Report amended 19/11/2018 MC

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