

Conifers Care Home Thornton-Cleveleys

Enter and View Report

Tuesday 22nd February 2022

1.30pm - 4.30pm



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:

Conifers Care Home
66 Victoria Road East
Thornton-Cleveleys
Lancashire
FY5 5HQ
Tel: 01253 822 122

Staff met during our visit:

Suzanne Clague (Owner and registered manager)
Kae Beckett (Senior staff member awaiting CQC registration)
Janet Swarbrick (Senior staff member awaiting CQC registration)

Date and time of our visit:

Tuesday 22nd February 2022
1.30pm - 4.30pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Maria Lord (Engagement Officer)



Introduction

Our role at Healthwatch Lancashire is to gather people's views and experiences, especially those that are hard to reach and seldom heard, to give them the opportunity to express how they feel about a service. This was an announced Enter and View visit undertaken by authorised representatives from Healthwatch Lancashire (HWL) who have the authority to enter health and social care premises, announced or unannounced. The aim is to obtain the views and experiences of residents, relatives and staff and observe and assess the quality of services.

The team compile a report reflecting observations and feedback. Healthwatch Lancashire is an independent organisation, therefore we do not make judgements or express personal opinions. The report identifies aspects of good practice as well as possible areas of improvement. This is sent to the manager for their opportunity to respond. Where appropriate, Healthwatch Lancashire may arrange a revisit to check the progress of improvements. The report is then published on the Healthwatch Lancashire website at www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk and sent to the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Lancashire would like to thank Suzanne Clague, Kae Beckett and Janet Swarbrick, the Conifers staff, residents and relatives, for making us feel extremely welcome and taking part in the visit.

General Information

Conifers Care Home is privately owned by Suzanne Clague, providing residential care for up to fifteen residents. There were twelve residents at the time of our visit.

Conifers provide care for those over the age of sixty-five who are affected by old age, dementia, cancer, stroke, and hearing or visual impairment.

Methodology

The Enter and View representative made an announced visit on Tuesday 22nd February 2022 from 1.30pm to 4.30pm, and spoke to three residents, five staff members, two visiting staff members, and one relative. An additional four relatives shared written feedback.

Healthwatch Lancashire obtain the views and experiences of residents, relatives and staff. Conversations with each are adapted to capture individual experiences to help assess the quality of services. Conversations with residents were structured around four themes (Environment, Care, Food and Activities). Conversations with staff included their experiences of staffing levels, support and training. Relatives were asked to speak about their general experiences including how they feel about the service, if they feel involved and informed. The team also recorded their own observations on the environment, facilities and staff-resident interactions.

Summary:

Conifers Care Home is situated in the town of Thornton. The large red-brick property is set back in its own grounds, and the two large conifer trees and clear signage near to the roadside are a prominent feature of Victoria Road East. The care home appears to be extremely well-maintained, both inside and out, with a meticulous standard of cleanliness and infection control. This was evidenced through the clear display of strict COVID procedures. Conifers is equally brimming with personality, with a high level of attention to detail to ensure a stylish, and homely environment. Fresh flowers were displayed in numerous locations and one of the residents explained that the staff *"make it as home-like as possible."*

All staff were observed to work with the utmost professionalism, all wearing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and being smartly dressed in uniform. Interactions with residents were observed to be caring and gentle, interspersed with humour and shared laughter. It seemed clear that staff had taken the time to really get to know residents. One member of staff commented *"They love it when you actually take time to chat to them."* Another explained *"They've had a life before Conifers and it's a privilege to share those memories."*

Residents appeared happy and relaxed at all times throughout the visit, engaging with each other, with staff and with our representative. One resident commented *"You're not alone here, you can talk to anyone, it's like an extended family."* Most residents were in the lounge, with a couple choosing to be in their rooms. 'Hoop-la', 'ping-pong' and 'hook a duck' activities were available on tables for residents to use if they chose to.

The responses from relatives were all extremely positive, with one comment in particular highlighting the efforts made by staff to ensure that their loved one is known and understood. *"Here, everyone is treated as an individual. When we first came here, they didn't just focus on asking about his health problems, they wanted to know his story, they were interested in him, they wanted to know 'my dad'."*

Enter and View observations

The external environment

Conifers Care Home is a large, red-bricked detached property, set back from the main road, in its own walled grounds. The entrance can be accessed by a gradual sloped pathway, complete with handrails either side. The front door entrance is flanked by two grand bay windows, which look out onto well-manicured lawns, surrounded by a selection of mature trees - two of which are large conifers. There are established plants and rockeries, a bird feeder and bird bath, and evidence of outdoor seating, although this did not appear to be in use at the time of the visit. At the side of the property, is an area of blocked paving, providing some off-street parking, but there is plentiful additional parking on the adjacent residential road.

The internal environment/reception -first impressions

Our representative received a warm welcome from senior staff member Kae Beckett and was advised of the COVID procedures at Conifers. In addition to requesting a negative lateral flow test, and evidence of vaccination, Kae provided our representative with a filtered mask, together with disposable gloves and apron. This was observed to be a very organised environment, with strict procedures for infection control. Personal Protective Equipment was also observed at the side entrance, which was used by relatives. In addition to masks, aprons and gloves, a hand gel dispenser stand and clear explanation of the 'Keeping our care homes safe' rules were located outside, to be read prior to entry.

Our representative was invited into the main building, and introduced to home manager and owner, Suzanne Clague. Suzanne welcomed our representative and accompanied them into the conservatory, along with senior staff members - Kae Beckett and Janet Swarbrick.

The observation of corridors, public toilets and bathrooms

Rooms could be seen to lead off two main corridors. The corridors were free of clutter and accessible, with handrails positioned along each wall to provide mobility support for residents. They were carpeted throughout and occasional pieces of art were displayed on the walls.

Toilet facilities were clean, with adaptations made to incorporate raised toilet seating and grab rails. Bathing facilities had been made accessible, there was a wall dispenser for hand soap, and paper towels were replaced after cleaning. Our representative considered that a dispenser for paper towels, and toilet rolls, alongside the few left visible, would ensure they could be readily available.

The lounges, dining and other public areas

There is a lounge to the left of the entrance, benefitting from a lot of natural light from a large window, which also has a view of the garden and bird table. The room is fully carpeted, and the décor and furnishings appeared to be good quality. An electric stove-effect heater and an ornate fireplace make a focal point of the room, along with a large television for communal viewing. There is ample comfortable seating and adjustable tables. The lounge was busy every time our representative entered, and residents appeared to be happily interacting with staff, each other, or catching up on the daily news.

The lounge flows through to a small dining area, with a serving hatch into the kitchen. The day's menu for lunch and tea were clear to see. It was also noticed that there were alternative choices available on request, along with a range of drinks and snacks available at any time of the day or night. Fruit and cold drinks were available if residents wished to help themselves. Towards the end of the visit, all three tables had been neatly set for mealtime, and there were flowers on each to match the room décor. In the corner of the room is a wireless jukebox and the manager explained that each resident has their own personal play list. It is this attention to detail that makes Conifers feel like a family home.

Further along the main corridor is a conservatory. Yet again this was observed to be a very inviting and comfortable area, with a sofa and supportive armchairs. A bowl of fresh fruit on the coffee table and fresh tulips on the side tables, again demonstrated the efforts made towards creating a homely environment. Our representative observed the corner of the room was used for storage of a wheelchair, and there was also a commode available, but these were neatly tucked away and did not restrict access. It was also observed that trunking had been used to neatly conceal cables on the walls. The manager referred to the recent installation of upgraded technology systems, and it was hoped that any cables clipped to the walls could also be hidden from view in future.

Our representative was invited to view one of the bedrooms, which had been newly decorated and furnished. The room was observed to be a good size, with the positioning of furniture along one wall to allow clear access for mobility aids or wheelchairs. The space had been optimised by the inclusion of a corner wardrobe, alongside a vanity unit, and comfortable chair. The muted colours of paintwork, carpet and furnishings, along with a choice of lighting resulted in a calming environment. The room has plenty of wall space, for the display of photographs or pictures, and a small amount of space for ornaments or personal trinkets.

Observations of resident and staff interactions

Our representative observed staff members busily fetching drinks, helping with toileting or assisting with mobility. Both senior staff members, Kae Beckett and

Janet Swarbrick, spoke fondly about residents and talked about the progress some had made since their arrival at Conifers. They showed our representative an example from the 'Positive Outcomes' record they kept, where it was evidenced that a resident had begun their Conifers journey presenting as shy and timid, but now they could be seen as relaxed, enjoying engaging with others.

Additional information

Our representative also spoke to two visiting staff members. One explained that staff were always *"friendly and welcoming"* and talked about Conifers being *"like a home from home."* Another talked about the staff being *"a great team"* who were *"very helpful."* He also commented on the *"attention to detail"* which could be seen particularly in the *"level of PPE and the safety procedures followed during the pandemic."*

Feedback from residents

Environment

Two residents commented on how homely it was at Conifers, with one saying *“They make it as home-like as possible”* and another nodding and agreeing that it was *“very comfortable.”* When asked about the décor, one resident said that they were happy to *“go with the flow with things like that!”*

One resident wanted to show our representative photographs of his loved ones which were displayed in his room. This led to lots of stories and reminiscing, with the resident fully engaged in tales from different periods throughout his life. When our representative referred to his display of birthday cards, the balloons and banner in the conservatory, the resident smiled and gestured to Suzanne, as they both began to sing Happy Birthday.

Activities

During the visit, our representative observed there to be tables set up for activities - one was a ‘hoop-la’ game, and another had boxes of equipment for ‘ping pong’ or ‘hook a duck’. There were not any residents participating during the time the representative spent in this particular room, but senior staff showed photographs of residents joining in with activities, and this had also been observed when our representative had viewed the Conifers Facebook page. After further discussion with the manager, it was explained that Conifers have strong links with local community groups. For example, a visit from a brass band and a local children’s choir have previously been organised for residents. Staff also explained that prior to COVID, lots of photographs had been displayed, but for now they had removed them to make it easier to regularly wipe down the walls in the communal areas such as corridors.

One resident talked about enjoying *“lots of conversations”* with Suzanne, the registered manager, and explained that they felt they could talk about anything *“I’d like to think we were friends.”* They expressed that sometimes they felt they were *“sat around not doing very much”*, but the manager explained that this had been due to the resident recently being unwell and unsteady on their feet. Another resident spoke enthusiastically about having the *“opportunity to chat to people”* and added *“You’re not alone here, you can talk to anyone, it’s like an extended family.”* They also said *“Some of the others watch TV in here, with company.”* When asked if they ever went out on trips one resident said *“I don’t think so”* however, our representative was mindful of the restrictions over the past two years and how resident safety has had to take priority. There was also lots of evidence of outdoor experiences on the Facebook page, and the manager further revealed that with restrictions easing, relatives can take residents out on trips

(e.g. to local garden centres). The manager also discussed that staff members can accompany residents and these outings are tailored to the individual. An example given by the manager was taking a resident to eat in the local fish and chip restaurant.

Care

One resident explained that *“We’re free to relax and be ourselves - as daft as you like! What you see is what you get!”* They added *“It’s my home, they make time for me. It’s no hardship being here!”* Another explained *“It’s great! The staff are part of our life, like a family.”* When one resident was asked about what it was like to be at Conifers, compared to the home he’d come from, he gave a huge smile and moved his hands jubilantly in the air.

Food

When one resident was asked to share their opinions on the food at Conifers they said, *“I’m not fussy, I’ve not really thought about it, so it must be alright!”* Another resident said that they really enjoyed the food and explained *“I’m always hungry, not because I don’t get enough, but because I like it.”* Another resident appeared excited that he was having a *“birthday buffet”* and *“birthday cake”* that day.

Relatives' and friends' views

How do you feel generally about the service?

One relative expressed infinite praise for the staff and the care they provided at Conifers. They explained that they had spent a long time looking at different care homes, but when they visited Conifers, they knew it was the right place for their loved one, so much so that they were *"willing to wait four months for a bed to become available."* When giving further details about what differentiated Conifers from other care homes, they explained *"Everyone is treated as an individual. When we came, they didn't just focus on asking about his health problems, they wanted to know his story, they were interested in him, they wanted to know 'my dad'."*

Praise for the service continued, as another relative commented *"It is a very good care home"* adding that their loved one *"is safe and happy."* A further relative expressed how happy they were with the service and expressed their appreciation towards the staff *"I think the care home is fantastic!"* One relative explained that on several of their visits, their family member had said that he feels he has *"won the lottery coming to Conifers!"* They continued by saying *"Conifers is immaculately kept, and the team interact really well with the residents."* This was reiterated by another relative who was impressed with how homely it feels, including that *"it doesn't look like or smell like other care homes!"*

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

All relatives were very satisfied with the levels of communication from staff. One relative explained *"We receive phone calls if need be"* adding that *"Janet speaks to us regularly about going forward with dad."* Another relative explained *"I'm always kept informed when I need to be."* One relative voiced their complete satisfaction with the levels of communication at Conifers by saying *"I receive regular telephone updates ... particularly if he has had a medical visit."* In addition to communication about health and wellbeing, one relative noticed that the staff *"keep in touch about everything"* and was appreciative of the calls about *"the little things, like calling to say dad is enjoying a John Smith's."*

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

Two relatives explained that they knew how to make a complaint if it was needed, with one commenting *"I haven't had to, but I would be able to do that."* Two relatives did not refer specifically to the procedures regarding complaints. Another did not have experience of making a complaint but gave a comprehensive

example of how responsive and proactive the manager was when it came to addressing a previous concern. They explained that additional staff training was *“implemented within twenty-four hours of the concern being raised.”*

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

All feedback from relatives indicated that they were fully aware of social activities at Conifers. Two residents explained that they hadn't been able to join in with activities recently, *“because of COVID”*, but one added *“I love seeing all the Facebook things - so happy!”* Another agreed that things had been *“a bit restricted due to COVID, but we know dad has activities he enjoys.”* The stream of activities on social media proved again to be very popular, as another relative commented *“They're always posting activities on Facebook. I can't sing their praises enough!”* Another relative said they knew what activities were available and were confident that their loved one was *“happy with everything that happens.”*

Would you recommend this service to others?

When relatives were asked if they would recommend Conifers to others, the response was unanimously positive. Three relatives were very clear in their succinct responses, with one saying *“Yes, 100%!”*, one commenting *“Yes, it's amazing - I still can't believe it!”* and another saying they would *“definitely”* recommend Conifers to others. One relative expanded by saying *“I would highly recommend it - the care home team are really proactive. My dad is my most important asset and they've let me be his daughter again, not just his carer.”* One referred to previously visiting family members in other care homes over the years and explained *“I do not think any have matched the level of care at Conifers.”* They continued by saying *“During the pandemic residents have had to rely on staff to effectively act as second families. The Conifers staff have done this brilliantly.”*

Staff views

Do you have enough staff when on duty?

All staff felt that there were always enough staff on duty. One explained *“Yes there are enough staff - always three or four during the day and two at night.”* Another added, *“Yes, there are always four staff on duty and I’ve got a lot of trust in my work colleagues.”* One member of staff explained *“Everyone has call buzzers, so if they need something we’re there. We even have ‘Ring for a Smile’ bells which residents use if they want someone to chat to or some company.”*

Do you feel supported to carry out person centred care?

All staff were confident in their ability to provide person-centred care for each resident and took great pride in it *“The staff know the residents really well and can make them feel at ease.”* It was clear that staff valued the time they were able to spend with residents *“The company, the little chats 1-1 with staff, whether it’s when playing a game like snap, or doing their nails”* which was echoed by another explaining *“There is quality time for beauty, hairdressing, activities and quality chatting time.”* Two members of staff specifically referred to how important it was to listen to what the residents wanted *“Everyone is different, so you can’t treat everyone the same - they want different things”* and *“Residents don’t all like the same things, so we do different things for different people. Some like playing the hoop game, or colouring and others prefer card games, especially animal snap.”*

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

All staff were overwhelmingly positive about the ongoing training they were receiving at Conifers. One member of staff said *“Yes, there is plenty of training. Suzanne is strict like that, but it’s so good and it keeps us all up to date!”* One of the most recent staff appointments said *“I’ve not been here very long, but I’m already thinking about doing an NVQ. Working here has made me want to do it!”*

Staff were keen to praise management for the support given to access training *“I feel really supported by the managers - they always say to let them know if we need anything, and even helped me access the training online”* Another member of staff explained *“Kae and Janet are really ace at giving support when we need it.”* All staff were enthusiastic about the level of training with one commenting *“I love the training here - I really do and I feel really comfortable asking Suzanne for*

help with things I'm not sure about. We use Social Care TV, which has online videos we can watch and then answer questions."

Are you happy working here?

Conifers has a very low staff turnover and that speaks volumes. Teamwork, coupled with an ability to evolve and to embrace positive change appears to be securely embedded *"I love working here. We have an amazing team"* *"Changes are ongoing and it's a privilege to be part of it!"* When staff were asked if they were happy working at Conifers, there was no hesitation in their responses *"Yes! It's ace. I love it"* and *"We're one big happy family! There are no downsides!"* Recognition was given to the drive towards providing the best possible care for residents. One member of staff described Conifers as an *"excellent place to work"* where *"residents come first."* Another added *"I wouldn't make any changes to it. It's a fantastic team and the residents are well cared for."* Staff also felt like they were equally supported and valued *"Both Dale and Suzanne have always been very supportive and both are always at the end of a phone if I need them"* This was reiterated by a further member of staff who said *"I feel really valued here."*

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

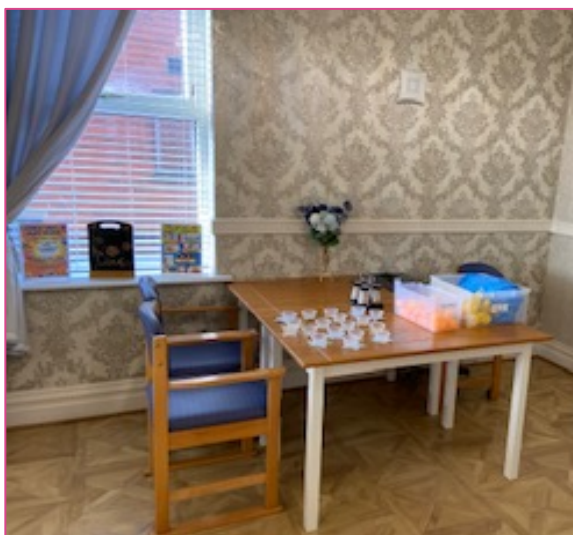
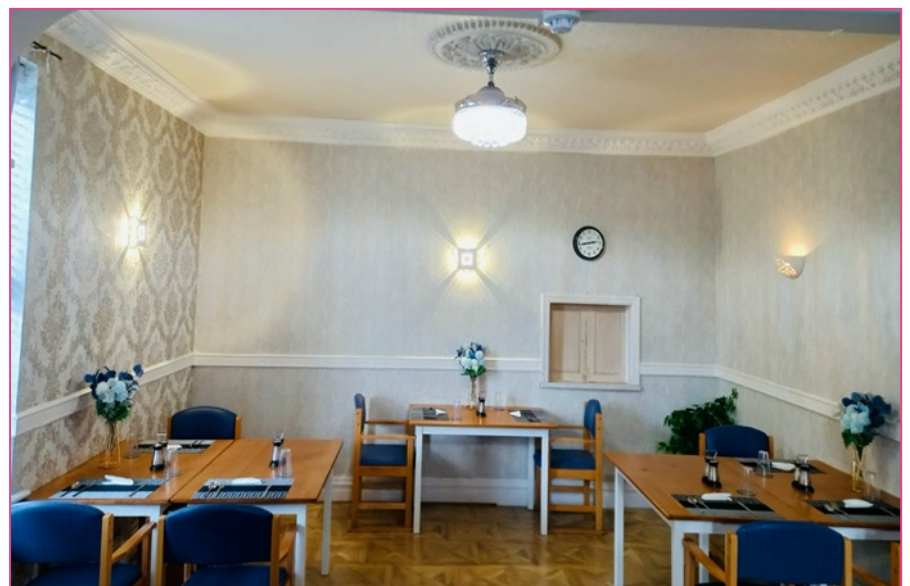
All staff explained that the high standards of care and attention would lead them to feel happy to recommend the Conifers to a close friend or relative *"The care is second to none!"* and *"Yes I would. It's a small care home so they get a lot more 1:1 attention."* Another member of staff commented that they would definitely recommend *"Yes I would. I feel very proud to work here - and we haven't had one case of COVID!"*

Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement have been highlighted from resident and staff feedback. These are not Healthwatch Lancashire recommendations but rather, areas for improvement suggested by residents and staff.

- . Consider ways of promoting activities to residents, so that they are aware of what is on offer.
- . Consider ways residents could benefit from more regular day trips, as restrictions lift in the warmer months.

Pictures taken during the visit





Response from provider

Areas identified for improvement	Action from provider	When by	Comments
Consider ways of promoting activities to residents, so that they are aware of what is on offer.	Actually we always do this and will continue to do so ongoing, we use daily activity boards, individual picture collages for each resident- due to cognition/ memory issues. Flyers with 'what's on this week' and our Facebook page.		
Consider ways residents could benefit from more regular day trips, as restrictions lift in the warmer months.	We had (prior to covid) an extensive list of days out, for example: Grand theatre Blackpool (musicals / shows) YMCA bowling, days out shopping 1-1, days out to local fish and chip shops/ cafes, ice cream parlours trips through Blackpool illuminations, garden parties and garden centre trips.		
Completed by	(Name) Suzanne Marie Clague	Date	05/05/2022

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