

## Healthwatch Kent Report : Care Home Series

### Alexandria's Care Home, Gravesend

May 2018

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Across the country, Independent Age has been working with Healthwatch to explore what people are looking for when choosing a care home.

They have identified 10 key indicators that they feel make a good Care Home. For example, they highlight important areas of dignity and choice such as residents being able to continue their hobbies and have an input into the running of the home.

Many Healthwatches already use the Independent Age indicators when visiting Care Homes and we have decided to adopt this approach here in Kent.

We have visited 24 Care Homes in total in recent months, two per District. It was important to us that we visited a range of homes from every area in Kent. Although we selected them at random we did check with the Care Quality Commission, Kent County Council and the seven Kent Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure we didn't clash with any visits they already had planned.

This report summarises the findings from our visit. We have of course shared our findings with the Care Home but also the Care Quality Commission, Kent County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Groups as each of them have a role to play in inspecting and commissioning care homes in Kent.

We will be following up with each home to check their progress against our recommendations and will publish an Impact report in around six months' time.

If you have an experience of a Care Home in Kent that you wish to share with us (good or bad) do get in touch. Call our freephone Helpline on 0808 801 0102 or complete a feedback form on our website [www.healthwatchkent.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchkent.co.uk)

Steve Inett

Chief Executive, Healthwatch Kent

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## What were we trying to achieve?

Using the 10 key indicators, as set out by Independent Age, we wanted to talk to Care Home residents and staff about their experiences of living and working in the home.

## How did we go about it?

We visited Alexandria's Care Home in Gravesend on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2018. **Our trained authorised visitors were Theresa Oliver and Pat Still.** During our visit we talked to seven residents, three families, three staff and the manager. We left questionnaires for those families who weren't there during our visit.

We were seeking to answer the following indicators.

A good care home should.....

1. Have a registered manager in post.
2. Have a stable workforce
3. Have staff who have the right skills to do their jobs.
4. Have enough staff on duty during the day and night
5. Be clear about how they will be able to meet residents' needs both now and, in the future,
6. Offer meaningful activity and enjoyment to suit all tastes
7. Enable residents to see a GP or other health professionals like a dentist, optician or chiropodist, whenever they need to
8. Accommodate your cultural and lifestyle needs
9. Show that they're always looking to improve
10. Provide nutritious food, plenty of fluids and a pleasant environment for meals

## Overview: What did we find?

### The home

- is in Gravesend in an older style converted building
- has 18 rooms most without en-suite facilities. There are currently 12 residents.
- accommodates for adults over the age of 65 years
- both inside and outside the decoration was tired but not unpleasant, and the home appeared clean and tidy.
- has a lounge and a separate dining room
- needs to re-decorate resident's rooms, some we saw were very impersonal and needed re-decoration
- is privately owned by Pathmanathan Nackeeran
- has a small enclosed courtyard/garden accessible to residents

The last CQC inspection report was on the 11 January 2018. Overall the home was rated as 'Requires Improvement' for being safe, effective and caring and 'Inadequate' for being well led, with 'Good' for caring. The full report can be found on this link <http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-129477690>

## This is what we found

### A good care home should...

1. **Have a registered manager in post.** The registered manager is the most important staff member in a care home - and the one responsible for ensuring quality standards and residents' needs are met. They should be visible within the care home, provide good leadership to staff, have relevant experience of the health and care system and qualifications to help them do their job.

The **owner** told us that he had been in the care sector for a long time and enjoyed the interaction with older people and the challenges of management. Although there was no manager currently in place (only an assistant manager), the staff told us that the new manager was expected to start very soon. Staff felt that they received lots of support from the owner and Assistant Manager and it was very easy to talk to them when they had any issues or concerns.

The new manager was due to start in the next couple of weeks.

Three **residents** either didn't know who the manager was or couldn't answer the question. One resident thought the manager had just changed but they got on with them fine.

The **family** members we heard from all knew the manager with one saying, she had just left but she was helpful and friendly, although one did say “*we could have seen more of her*”. Another person said that the manager was very helpful.



Based on what we heard, the home meets the indicator with some reservations

- 2. Have a stable workforce.** Care homes with knowledgeable, experienced staff who get to know residents can make the difference between an institution and a home. Where turnover of staff is very high, these qualities can be lost. It may also be a sign that staff are not happy working in the home.

The **owner** did not provide this information

- 3. Have staff who have the right skills to do their jobs.** Well-informed, skilled staff who are valued and developed as employees are vital to a smooth-running care home. All care homes should have a clear, comprehensive training scheme to ensure staff have the knowledge they need.

The **owner** told us that staff are expected to attend regular training and they hold special ‘Motivation sessions’. They are encouraged to do NVQ training to enhance their development.

The **staff** all said they were offered regular training and were encouraged to develop their skills.

Three of the **residents** told us that the staff were good with one saying they “*are lovely, very good*”. One resident told us, “*most are fine, but a couple are not so nice*”.

The **families** told us that they thought the staff all had good skills in caring for their relatives.



Based on what we heard, the home meets the indicator with no reservations.

4. **Have enough staff on duty during the day and night.** Many homes have a lower proportion of staff on during the night, but if the ratio falls too low - at any time of day - response times can be too slow.

The **staff** all thought they had time to talk to the residents with one saying *“we make time”*

The **family** members we heard from thought that staff had time to stop and chat with their relatives. One said they *“could do with knowing more about history and health”*. Another said that the staff knew their relative’s history and healthcare needs very well.

Six **residents** thought staff had time to talk to them. One said the staff didn’t have time to stop and talk to them. This resident said: *“I spend most of the time on my own”*.



Based on what we heard, the home meets the indicator with some minor reservation

5. **Be clear about how they will be able to meet residents’ needs both now and in the future.** Many residents will develop more care needs as they get older - particularly if they have a condition like dementia. It is vital that homes can spot changes to their health and respond appropriately - consulting other health professionals where necessary - to provide the right level of care and prevent residents from having to move again.

The **owner** told us that they find out about the residents life history and care needs from talking to families and residents and health and social care professionals to produce care plans which are regularly updated and reviewed with staff.

**Staff** said from talking to the residents and families they could find out more about the life history of their residents and any changes to their needs. The staff all said they enjoyed talking to the residents, *“making them smile and giving them the best care, we can”*

**Families** said that the staff noticed when their relative’s needs changed. One person commented *“they are very good at noticing”*



Based on what we heard, the home meets the indicator with no reservations

- 6. Offer meaningful activity and enjoyment to suit all tastes.** Care homes should not be boring places - they should offer an interesting range of activities and entertainment that match the tastes and preferences of their residents, including individual activities. Homes should take steps to stop residents from becoming isolated or lonely while respecting their privacy and choice

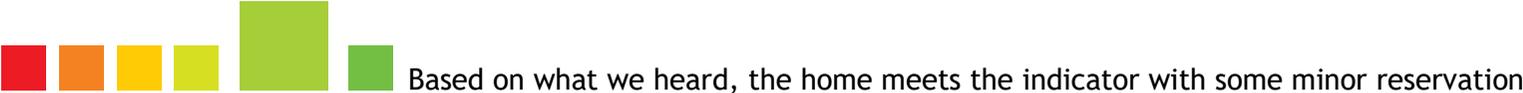
The **owner** told us that there was an activity organiser who provided a range of activities including indoor games, quizzes, BBQs and that they celebrate the Queen’s birthdays. He also said that often the residents love games when presented with them but if asked, they often refuse. The activity organiser was there during our visit and five of the residents were joining in with a game. He also said that often the Activity Organiser will do an individual activity for people who don’t like coming out of their room

**Staff** said the Activity Organiser comes in most days and in addition to the games, does cooking and singing. They said that they join in and encourage the residents and they know what activities the residents enjoy most.

The **residents** all said they liked the activities and found them easy to join in. One person told us, *“I like the activity organiser and do everything”*, Two of the residents said they enjoyed knitting and the home supplied them with materials they needed. Most didn’t go on trips outside although one resident did say they had been to the pub. Another said that that they would go if it was offered. A couple mentioned that they use the garden in summer.

All the **families** thought that the activities were good with one saying they are *“very good”* and all thought their relative was encouraged to join in. One person said that the activities were good in the morning but *“not so much in the afternoon”*.

When asked if they could do activities they were doing before they came into the home one person said they enjoyed all different sports but couldn't do them now due to poor mobility, and another said they loved cooking but wasn't allowed to do it now. Another said they would like a piano.

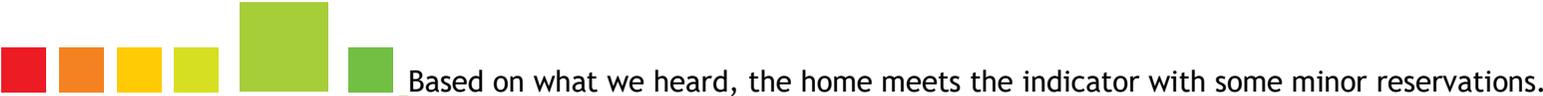


- 7. **Enable residents to see a GP or other health professionals like a dentist, optician or chiropractor, whenever they need to.** Residents should have the same expectation to be able to promptly see a health professional as they would have when living in their own home. Care homes should be able to explain the relationship they have with their local NHS services - does a GP visit regularly? Can they call a GP out in an emergency? How easy is it for residents to see a dentist, optician, chiropractor or physiotherapist, either for a check-up or in an emergency?

The **owner** told us that the GP and Optician come regularly and a hairdresser once a fortnight. They currently take residents to a dentist close by, but the owner is in the process of trying to organise a regular dentist to come into the home. **Staff** thought that residents were given regular eye and hearing check -ups.

Four of the **residents** couldn't answer the question. One person had been to an optician and dentist six months ago and two had seen an optician at the home, but one of these would like to see a dentist.

The **families** thought that the optician and dentist were contacted only when there was a problem.



8. **Accommodate your cultural and lifestyle needs.** Care homes should be set up to meet your cultural and lifestyle needs as well as your care needs and shouldn't make you feel uncomfortable if you do things differently to other residents. They should also be proactive in finding out what your needs are, so that they can accommodate them.

The **staff** said that if someone has specific cultural or religious food requirements they would be catered for.

The **family** members we spoke to thought that religious and cultural needs would be met wherever possible.

Four of the **residents** didn't know or couldn't answer the question. One person said their needs were respected and two residents mentioned that someone came in from local churches to visit them personally.



Based on what we heard, the home meets the indicator with no reservations

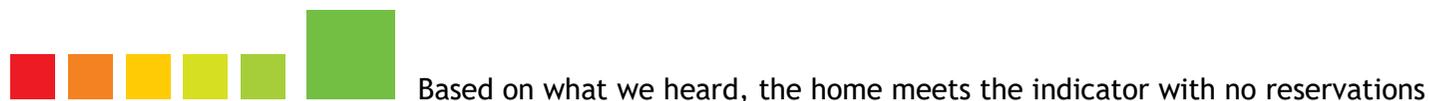
9. **Show that they're always looking to improve.** You should be able to find out what current residents, their families and friends think about the home. The care home should be happy to help you do this - for example, by putting you in touch with a residents and relatives group or allowing you to speak to residents and visitors in private. They should also have support in place for people who wish to make a complaint any time, and there should be a healthy culture of challenge and feedback between residents, relatives and staff.

The **owner** told us that families residents and staff can all input ideas, suggestions and concerns at regular meetings but are encouraged to input at any time. **Staff** agreed and said: *"we are like a family and know we will be listened to"*.

**Residents** either couldn't answer the question or did not want to change anything. One person said, *"everything is fine for me"* One resident had asked for a wheelchair to aid their mobility and enable them to go out but had not had a response. Two residents said they would speak to the manager if they had a complaint.

All the **families** we heard from said they were made to feel welcome. They said there was a book for comments or they would make an appointment with the manager or social services if there was an issue. They all felt confident about making a complaint saying, *"I'm sure it would be acted on"* One person had used the website to complain in the past.

One **family member** said, *“if we are unhappy with anything we only have to let the manager know”*. Another said they would be confident making a complaint and was sure it would be acted on swiftly.



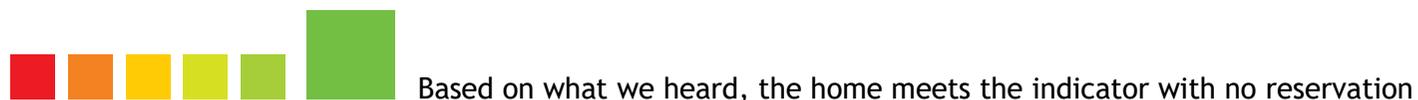
#### 10. Provide nutritious food, plenty of fluids and a pleasant environment for meals

The **owner** said that they got to know what food people like and sometimes the staff eat with the residents to encourage a social atmosphere.

**Staff** said residents were offered a choice but could be given alternatives if they didn't like something.

The **families** all thought the food choice was good and their relative was encouraged to eat.

Five **residents** thought the food was good, with one person saying *“good, otherwise I wouldn't be here”*. One resident said it was much better now and one wasn't really interested in food. All those who answered thought there was a good choice and that they had plenty to eat. One resident said *“If I don't like something they get me something else”*.



#### What have we recommended?

- Once the new manager is in post ensure that residents and families know who they are and that they are available to listen and deal with any issues or suggestions. In the meantime the Assistant manager and the owner should continue to support staff and residents as it was clear there was some confusion about who to go to if there are issues and who oversees the day to day running of the home.

- Clarify whether routine dental and optician appointments take place and inform the relatives if they do. It would be a real plus point if you could secure the services of a dentist regularly which would hopefully reduce the need for emergency appointments and detect /prevent problems occurring.
- Ensure a method of keeping hot food hot for all residents even if they don't eat in the dining room.
- Explore the possibility of providing a sport activity such as table football. Local sports clubs might be able to help with this or provide access to sport events
- Explore links with community groups, school and nurseries for the stimulation and mutual benefits that this would bring.

### **Disclaimer**

Please note this report relates to the findings on the day stated at the beginning of this report. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all staff, residents, family and friends, only and account of what was contributed and observed during our visit on that day.

### **Healthwatch Kent**

Healthwatch Kent is the independent voice for local people in Kent.

We gather and represent people's views about any health and social care service in Kent.

Our role is to understand what matters most to people and to use that information to influence providers and commissioners to change the way services are designed and developed.

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