
Healthwatch Kent Report : Care Home Series

Birkin Lodge Care Home, Tunbridge Wells

May 2018

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 details the findings from Birkin Lodge Care Home in Tunbridge Wells. We have published a report which summarises the findings from all our visits. 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 within 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

Steve Inett

Chief Executive, Healthwatch Kent

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, families and staff about their experiences of living and working in the home.

How did we go about it?

We visited Birkin Lodge Care Home, Tunbridge Wells on 12 February 2018. **Our Enter and View Authorised Visitors were Mike McKenzie, Ray Fairburn and Theresa Oliver.** We heard from five residents, four family members, two staff and the manager

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 Hawkenbury, Tunbridge Wells in a quiet cul-de-sac in a modern purpose built building.
- has 45 rooms all with en suite facilities
- accommodates 50 residents
- was clean tidy and well decorated both inside and outside with a light airy feel and a welcoming entrance hall
- is privately owned by Brighter Kind
- has a large landscaped garden
- is close to local shops and public transport.

The latest Care Quality Commission Report was on 19th July 2017 and overall rated as 'Requires Improvement', although was rated 'Good' for caring, effective and responsive and can be found on the link below. <http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-2454405518>

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 family members and all the residents knew the manager by name and said that he *“was very friendly and helpful.”*

Staff told us that he *“was very supportive” “great with an open-door policy”* so *“we can go to him anytime”*.

Residents said: *“he is lovely”*, *“very nice”* and a *“good bloke who doesn't miss much”*.



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

All the **families** we heard from thought the staff had the time and skills to care for their relative saying “*very much so*” and they are “*very good*”. They all felt that the staff knew their relative’s life history, care needs and likes and dislikes. One person said “*they are still getting to know my relative*”.

Staff said that they have enough time to talk to the residents and know their background.



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

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 **manager** said that he encourages Senior staff to do supervision with their staff to promote managerial skills. There is a structured on-going training programme for all staff.

The **staff** told us that they were always encouraged to develop their skills with company providing ongoing training and support both for individuals and across the region. They told us the manager holds a 'Reflections' meeting three times a week for staff to discuss issues.



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.

Staff felt that they had enough time to chat to residents

All the **residents** said that the staff were very good and that they time to stop and chat even though they are busy, and all said the staff knew what their likes and dislikes were.

The **families** all thought that the staff had time to talk to their relative and find out about them.



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

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 - in order to provide the right level of care and prevent residents from having to move again.

The **manager** told us he does the initial pre-admission assessments himself and talks with families so they know what level of care to expect as the home is not equipped to care for patients with Dementia or other complex conditions. He felt this ensured that the family expectations are addressed before accepting a new resident.

Staff said residents have a ‘passport’ with personal details about food preferences, which activities they like as well as any specific care details. Care plans are regularly reviewed and there are daily handover meetings.

Residents and families thought that staff met their needs very well and notice when their needs change.



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.

Three **family** members said that they thought that the range of activities was good or very good. One told us it “*could be better*” but their relative “*doesn’t always want to join in*” but they also felt their relative wasn’t always encouraged to join in.

Residents told us there were lots of activities including bingo, scrabble, cooking, reading, talking, and visiting singers. One told us that “*Alberto (the Activity Co-ordinator) is very good*” Another resident said “*there is a list and they come and tell you what’s on*”. They all said they go outside when the weather is better. One resident said they were taken out on walks but would like to go more often and another mentioned a train trip. One resident said that the TV is “*dreadful*” and they would prefer to do more activities.

One **resident** liked to do knitting and embroidery before coming to the home but doesn’t get to do it now, and one person said they would like to go to the pub occasionally.

Staff told us about the Wishing Wells where residents record something they would really like to do and the home tries to fit those in. They said they had a minibus and links with Tonbridge Football club and go shopping, visiting the castle, gardens and the cinema. Their sister home Acer Park is nearby, and they have exchange visits.



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

7. Enable residents to see a GP or other health professionals like a dentist, optician or chiropodist, 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, chiropodist or physiotherapist, either for a check-up or in an emergency?

The **manager** told us that the company offer free eye and hearing tests and dental treatment is arranged when needed. However recently a dentist had refused to come for routine check but the manager was working to address this.

Staff told us that an optician, GP and chiropodist visit regularly.

Two **families** we spoke to were unsure about whether the optician or dentist came but one said *“I think if we asked these services would be provided”*. Two other family members thought they came regularly.

Residents were happy that visits would be arranged if needed. One person told us *“they keep an eye on me”*



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

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.

There did not appear to be very diverse religious or cultural needs in the home at present, but the **manager and staff** said that any needs would be identified at the initial assessment.

Most **families** said their relative did not have any specific religious or cultural needs or that they were accommodated. Some mentioned the church service which takes place at the home, although one person told us it only happened irregularly. Another said that although their relatives vicar called in sometimes “*there was no religious feedback back from the home*”.

Four **residents** said they liked and joined in with the church service, but one said it “*doesn’t come around very often*”.



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

- 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 ant any time, and there should be a healthy culture of challenge and feedback between residents, relatives and staff.

The **manager** handed out our survey packs to families and put up a poster advertising our visit and we were encouraged to speak to any of the residents and staff.

All the **family** members we heard from felt that they were welcome participants in the life of the home and that they could have a say about how the home was run. They would speak to staff or “*speak to the manager or at the regular meetings*”. One person told us “*they encourage feedback from residents and relatives*”.

Staff, residents and families seem to have confidence in speaking to the manager if they have any suggestions or concerns and two **families** mentioned the regular resident and family meetings.

All the family members we heard from knew how to make a complaint and one said “*they did and knew it would be acted upon*”. Another said: “*we have never had to make a complaint in four years*”.



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

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

The **family** members we heard from all thought the food was good or very good with one saying it was “*good and varied*”, and another “*well balanced*”. They all thought their relative was well supported to eat, although one said “*more encouragement to drink more water would be good*”.

The **manager** told us that residents can get tea, coffee or juice anytime in the lounge and that they try to make mealtimes sociable by encouraging staff and residents to eat together when possible.

Staff told us there are kitchen facilities available so that residents can eat and drink outside mealtimes if they wish. We were also told the head cook comes out and talks to the residents at every meal.

All the **residents** we spoke to thought that the food was good, with three people saying it was “*very good*”. One person said it was “*alright*”. They all thought there was enough choice and one person said “*they will do something else if you don’t like the choice*”. The residents we spoke to ate in the dining room and said they enjoyed their meals and liked the company.



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

What have we recommended?

- Regular visits from the dentist should be reinstated. It is important to prevent poor oral health as this can lead to a range of serious health conditions such as pneumonia.
- Religious activities should be provided regularly and families made clear what is available.
- Additional activities should be provided especially for those residents who enjoyed a hobby prior to moving to the home.
- Establish links with local schools, nurseries or community groups to provide interactive activities.
- If fluid intake is recorded make this information available to the families.

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 an 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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