

Healthwatch Coventry

Suggestions for quality measures for Care Home contracts June 2015

Introduction

Healthwatch Coventry is the independent consumer champion for NHS and care services, operating to give local people a voice in their services.

Healthwatch Coventry began a programme of 'Enter and View' visits to Coventry care homes in December 2014 to look at quality of life factors for residents in both residential and nursing facilities. To date we have visited 10 care homes of varying sizes.

Markers of quality

Healthwatch has identified through our visits some factors, which should be defined as markers of quality within contracts with care home providers:

1. **Access to natural light and sufficient levels of lighting** within the care home premises for residents. This can be especially important for residents with visual impairment and/or who are confined to their room
2. **Regular time spent outdoors** (residents often say they like to go outside. This also brings benefits of access to sunlight generating vitamin D plus a sense of wellbeing). This is something some homes are good at and others are not. Not all have access to gardens so there is a need for staff at those homes to be creative and find ways for residents to get access to natural light and outside spaces. Some homes are near to public outside space but do not seem to capitalise on this.
3. **Well trained staff:** Staff training is important both for new and existing staff and regular refresher and updates are required. Most staff expressed that they are expected to undertake training in their own time. More care home managers are using distance learning packages to allow flexibility. Healthwatch believes that some paid time should be made available for staff to undertake some courses, which are related to their jobs and their development and benefit the quality of care they provide. Commissioners could identify which training should be undertaken in this way.
4. **Not having to share a room with someone you don't know:** Shared rooms were a concern for us. Whilst ensuring there is provision for cohabiting couples is important it does not seem appropriate for sharing of bedrooms

between strangers. This is because it could be very unsettling for someone who has been used to living independently prior to moving to a home and could impact their sense of wellbeing. There are also risks that privacy and dignity will not be maintained. There are also issues with the sharing of rooms when one or other of the parties has dementia. When we have asked about sharing of rooms we have been told that people can be given a choice but we wonder how real this choice actually is and if circumstances make people feel they need to accept this option because others are no or few others. There are where we would like to stipulate that shared rooms are only to be offered to cohabiting couples.

5. **A range of activities** (one to one and group suitable for both men and women): activities are very important for residents in care homes and there needs to be a mix of group and one to one activities to increase interaction and stimulation. It is also important to incorporate a selection and variety of activities which cater for men and women. We have found from our visits that there is more that can be put in place with regards to activities and one to one time with individual residents. There should be a benchmark for quality around this; activities should be part of 'care' and not perceived to be an additional extra.
6. **Physical environment which facilitates mobility:** homes should have an environment, which both encourages and enables residents who can to move around by themselves. With appropriate lifts and hand rails and other equipment to facilitate this. Promoting mobility should be a quality standards as it is concerning to hear to some residents quickly lose mobility after entering a care home setting. For those who use a wheelchair or other mobility assistance - they should be able to access all of the facilities of the home which other mobile residents can access.

We have also seen from our visits that there needs to be a range of provision within Coventry including small homes. This is so that different needs and personal preferences can be accommodated. E.g. some people may prefer a larger facility within a modern environment; others may prefer a smaller more homely setting and would not like being in an environment with lots of other people. We believe our Enter and View visits have revealed good practice within different sizes of homes.

Healthwatch Coventry
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Healthwatch reports of care home visits can be downloaded at
www.healthwatchcoventry.co.uk/content/reports-visits-care-homes