

Experts by Experience

Home: Drovers House

Date: April 2015

What is Experts by Experience?

Several WCS homes have been scrutinised by Age UK Warwickshire volunteers to find out what life was like for people living there. Volunteers explored all aspects of home life, from atmosphere and cleanliness to mealtimes and culture.

As well as using discreet observations, the Age UK also volunteers mingled with people who lived there to find out how they felt about their quality of life. Each volunteer filed a report rating things like cleanliness, staff attitude and atmosphere from poor to excellent, and also commented on how each score was derived. A first round of visits gave 16 'excellents', 16 'goods', and 3 'adequates', however more visits are planned throughout 2015. **Volunteers' names have been redacted, but here are their comments published in full.**

Note: All volunteers' comments are black, while their instructions from Age UK are in Magenta.

Sections:

Home Environment

Staff Attitude

What was Happening in the Home?

Eating and Mealtimes

Quality of Life

Home Environment

Score: 5/5

Describe your own experience of the quality of the home environment. Please consider things like:

How clean the home was, how it was decorated, how homely and comfortable it was, how the home was personalised to the people who live there, how the home smelt and whether the facilities were comfortable, pleasant and easy to find.

Drovers House is a modern, purpose-built block close to the centre of Rugby, which has a very welcoming atmosphere. I mean it as a complement when I say that it feels more like a modern hotel than a traditional care home.

The building is able to include more adequate infrastructure such as lifts, together with open spaces and more natural light that would be difficult to have in an older building that had been converted for care home use.

The home is organised into 6 'houses' that each accommodate 10-13 people. The layout of each house has an emphasis on an open-plan environment with kitchen facilities in a prominent central position, with a couple of areas for eating, relaxation and television watching, and then bedrooms around it. This layout enables residents who wish to mix together to be able to do so but also stay in their own rooms if they wish. The rooms are of a good size.

On the ground floor there is a small 'cinema', shop, coffee area and a smokers' corner. It would probably be difficult to include all of these in an older building that had originally been designed for another purpose.

There were lots of personal materials and photos prominently displayed with clear markings for where each resident lived.

Drovers House has a focus on caring for those with dementia and related problems, so it is more difficult to assess what they would be doing at home in the same circumstances.

Staff Attitude

Score: 5/5

Describe your own experience of the attitude of staff. Please consider things like:

How you and others at the home were treated, whether people were listened to, whether people were treated with dignity and respect, whether staff were polite and courteous? Whether they had a rapport with you/and other, how you/people who lived there were addressed (eg what name was used and whether you were asked what you'd like to be called), how you and people at the home were treated, whether people were listened to and whether they were treated with dignity and respect.

After being taken on a tour of the building I spent most of my time in Station House. My main staff contact was Kate, the senior carer in Station House. Other members of staff assisted Kate during my time there. All the staff members were very good at attending to the residents, always making sure that they were visible or within earshot. They kept an eye on everyone and made sure to deal with any requests or concerns that the residents raised.

The staff were extremely patient with residents who repeatedly asked the same questions, such as the lady who kept asking if she had had her sandwiches (she had) and another who asked several times over a five-minute period 'will someone take me to my room at 7'oclock please?'

The same courtesies were also extended to me and I was asked several times if I needed refreshments. I had no sense that this was being tailored for me but rather that all visitors were treated this well.

As on other visits I was impressed by the endless patience, dedication and kindness of all the staff that I encountered in the home.

What was happening in the home?

Score: 5/5

Describe your own experience of what was happening in the home. Please consider things like:

What people were doing – whether it seemed to be their choice, whether people were doing what they might have been doing living independently, whether people's interests and hobbies were being supported, the organised activities you observed, how were people encouraged to join in activities and could people choose not to join in.

I was at the home between 3 pm and 7 pm. No organised activities were going on when I was there but it was only a short visit. It was an afternoon when nothing was planned but there were items scheduled for other days. There was evidence of other activities that had taken place and residents spoke about organised activities that they had attended and enjoyed.

I spent an hour or two, on and off, chatting to one of the more talkative and less frail residents, [name redacted by WCS Care]. She spoke well of the staff and the home comparing it very favourably to other facilities where she had lived. She enjoyed some of the organised activities but said that they were not all to her liking but that she had been to the cinema to see 'South Pacific', one of her favourite films.

Televisions were on in the communal areas but were not intrusive nor did it feel like they were being used to babysit the residents.

Eating and mealtimes

Score: 5/5

Describe your own experience of the meals and eating. Please consider things like:

The comfort and atmosphere at the mealtime(s) you participated in, the quality and quantity of food offered and the way it was presented, whether people got choice about their food and could they serve themselves, how staff supported people during the mealtime, whether people could choose when and where to eat, whether people could help themselves to drinks and snacks whenever they wished? Whether there was a variety and were they visible to people and the comfort and atmosphere at the mealtime(s) you participated in.

The two main meals of the day where residents are most likely to be eating together are breakfast and lunch and these were completed by the time I arrived so I was not able to see them first-hand.

I was present for tea-time being served. This is a less formal meal: some residents were having hot food snacks while others were having sandwiches depending on their preference.

Where necessary staff helped residents with their food. Requests for more, or less, food were dealt with easily and quickly with care and attention to make sure people got what they wanted. Everyone was asked if they had had enough or needed more. I heard no negative comments about the quality and quantity of food.

Quality of Life

Score: 5/5

Describe your own experience of quality of life for people. Please consider things like:

The general appearance of people (clothes, hair, teeth, glasses), whether people's personal appearance choices and preferences were supported (eg men wearing their tie, women wearing makeup or jewellery), whether call bells were intrusive? Were they answered in good time, whether significant events and anniversaries were observed, whether the staff know people who lived there (their interests, preferences, life histories, family) and whether people were enjoying themselves in the home? Was there an atmosphere of calm, laughter, fun?

The residents that I saw in the downstairs communal areas and in Station House were all well dressed and clean. There were no signs of neglect.

On the ground floor is a hairdressing salon which is made good use of and this is preferred to a weekly visit by a hairdresser.

When wandering around I saw evidence of celebrations of birthdays and anniversaries. In Station House there were a few residents watching television and the rest were in their rooms. At one point the carers were out of direct sight of the television watchers as they were delivering food to people in their rooms. One resident became concerned that she could not directly see anyone. In fact the carers were very close by and re-appeared about 15 seconds later. It made me realise that some of the very old, frail residents are easily distressed if they sense that no-one is around.

Other comments

As on my previous two visits to different homes I was made to feel very welcome. Having more modern facilities is undoubtedly an advantage and although the weather outside was rather dull, the building design, space and its decoration made it feel very light and homely.

This was a shorter visit than the ones I had done previously so it was not possible to speak to many residents or staff. I was able to have a long conversation with one resident, [name redacted], but some of the other residents - as elsewhere - are just too frail or bewildered to spend any time with me or for me to get useful input. However I was allowed to wander around (whilst respecting privacy) and to observe many things of myself.

Overall this is an excellent home with a very high standard of care with dedicated and caring members of staff.