

Experts by Experience

Home: Westlands (1/2 volunteer visits)

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.

At the start of my visit I was given a tour of the Home by Theresa This included all 3 floors, but not the kitchen or laundry.

The home felt bright and airy with contrasting colours, wide corridors and large windows. There was a lively feel with people moving around (not always quickly!) and interacting. Looking in residents' rooms I noticed that they had many features that made them home. Maintenance was good both inside and out. It felt and smelt fresh

It did not feel clinical or like an institution

Staff Attitude

Score: 4.5/5

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.

I spent my time on the ground floor in different areas. There were several places to sit. I saw plenty of staff on duty and witnessed a range of interactions. There were many small acts of kindness. A concerned resident had just learned that her brother had died, clearly not for the first time. Nevertheless this was handled with compassion and I spoke with this resident for a while. Residents were addressed in a range of ways that suggested this had been tailored to the person. I generally introduced myself and this was then how I was addressed.

There was clear respect for residents and people behaved as though they were respected.

Staff were universally friendly and willing to chat.

What was happening in the home?

Score: 4/5

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.

In the day centre I joined in with a word game that seemed popular, although the TV was left on at the same time. As I have a hearing impairment (corrected with aids) this was distracting. Someone was painting and drawing with their work displayed. A resident told me about her knitting, a communal tapestry project and the Easter displays now on the tables.

The activity co-ordinator role was spoken of with enthusiasm by both staff and residents.

I saw a resident doing some washing up, going for a smoke and taking a biscuit. All suggesting it was 'life as normal'

I didn't see anyone with a newspaper. Several told me they had a TV or a radio. Listening to the radio seemed very popular. The radio was on in the dining room.

Eating and mealtimes

Score: 4/5

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 ground floor dining room is a pleasant place with laid up tables and different sized tables each with a different type of view (into the room, out a window or towards a wall). Residents had clear preferences as to where they sat. I was offered a drink during the morning (and brought a biscuit tin)

A 2 course lunch was on offer. I was asked if fish and chips would be OK for me (and it was). The menu this day was not as set out in the table menus as I understand that it was the cook's day off and a recent recruitment drive had led to a late withdrawal by the selected candidate. The desert of ice cream and tinned fruit was just served to my table without asking (but proved very acceptable). I was offered a choice of drinks.

I noticed that meal times were busy and few needed any encouragement or help. All seemed to get fish and chips which seemed very popular. When I asked a day centre attendee what he most valued about his visit he said the food and company in equal measure. He enjoyed being out of his house. He spoke with resident people and thought that they valued the day visitors.

Fruit and snacks were evident.

Quality of Life

Score: 4/5

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?

Both staff and residents were very tidy, looked clean and well dressed. The lady residents in particular could have been ready for a day out with well-groomed hair, nails and accessories to their dresses such as jewellery and scarves. Those who needed some protection to their clothes at mealtime had appropriate attire. A serviette was on the table for everyone as well.

I saw a compliments book with many letters of thanks from relatives.

Call bells were answered in a timely way.

Easter had given the opportunity for table decorations which were evident in many places.

There were many opportunities in the building to make it like moving around one's home and these were well used. Pictures, small pieces of furniture and knick-knacks.

A resident told me some adaptations had been made to improve the quality of her life.

When asked a question about a resident the Care Manager immediately knew the history and circumstances of the resident.

Other Comments

The leadership team on the day were very motivated by recent changes to staffing structures and roles. They also expressed clear and detailed knowledge about the direction of travel and aspirations for WCS. There was an infection control problem with the bathroom/toilet opposite room 20 that only had a difficult to reach basin some 18" from the floor. The proper height basin had no working taps. On the top floor the large windows that gave a very open feel to the kitchen area had no blinds to shield the summer sun.

A high proportion of the garden was inaccessible to reduced-mobility residents due to the slope, however the paved area with flower beds was delightful, although one resident commented adversely on the seating. The garden, which would be important to me, seemed a missed opportunity. The notice boards in reception area were tidy with both resident and staff notices which gave me the impression of organised management. Tricky to read from a wheel chair though! The receptionist was very smart and helpful which inspired confidence.