

Experts by Experience

Home: Woodside (1 / 2 volunteer visits)

Date: November 2014

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.

Woodside is a clean and orderly home, well looked after and with a high standard of tidiness. The home has some large windows which means that most of the common areas are well lit and bright giving a more positive atmosphere. The home has a lived-in feel (a comment not intended as a criticism) with an overall feeling more similar to a resident's home than to an institution.

The day was very sunny although the temperature outside was low. However the home felt warm and inviting and on a couple of occasions windows were opened as it was getting quite stuffy.

To be honest I did not spend as much time looking at the rooms of the residents (my colleague Yvonne spent more time on that I think) but it was clear that they had been able to personalise their rooms. Outside a number had photographs or keepsakes attached to the wall or door. In the corridor there were displays about the Royal Family and various Warwick sights.

I joined the residents for lunch (first floor) and there was a relaxed and happy feeling there.

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.

I met a number of members of staff during the day and all were very welcoming. I was asked many times if I needed a drink or if there was anything that they could do to help. I don't think that this was anything put on for my benefit - everyone received the same level of attention. I was very impressed with the way that the staff members had the interests of the residents at heart: whenever they could they would spend time with the residents, use their names, ask if everything was ok. During the day I saw them show many small kindnesses to the residents and all of these were appreciated. At lunchtime it was clear that they knew the likes and dislikes of the residents, even those who were newly arrived. Everyone was asked if they needed more or if there was something else that they would prefer. Even with the most challenging residents they were calm and patient and made every effort to do their best.

Wendy was the manager during the visit (Vicki was on emergency leave). She was very helpful, took us on a tour of the home when we arrived and checked with us during the day about anything that we needed. The same positive attitude was evident in all staff.

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.

There were two organised activities that I witnessed. In the morning, Kat, the activities co-ordinator, lead a group of ladies on the first floor in 'Reminiscences' which got them all chatting about times past and how things used to be. This encouraged them to talk to each other and Kat moved between them, spending time with each person and getting them all to participate.

In the afternoon, Gaynor performed some songs and got the residents to participate in singing and dancing (really just moving their feet in time to the music). This was wellattended. So well-attended in fact that I had to go into the corridor or there would not have been enough space for the residents. My impression was that this weekly event was very much enjoyed. During other conversations with the residents they mentioned how much they liked to have people who came to the home with entertainment, especially singing.

One of the residents was quite insistent that the television go back on after the 'Reminiscences' session ("Put it on ITV") but this was the only time that I saw anyone watching tv.

What would residents be doing normally? Difficult to answer with any accuracy but when I asked a few people what they did at home before coming here, most replied that it was getting more difficult for them to do things such as shopping and housework. Being in Woodside felt safer than being in their own home.

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.

I was present at breakfast time on the second floor. Two people were eating and were having their favourite breakfast foods. Those who needed help received it. The food looked well presented and tasty.

During the morning endless refreshments were served and residents were encouraged to take biscuits, chocolates and sweets.

At lunchtime I set with Elsie and Dennis, a recent arrival. I had soup followed by gammon which was very good. There was a choice of main course and everyone had something different. Elsie doesn't like meat - just vegetables - and this was noted.

Dennis can only have soft food and this was also remembered. The ladies on the other table all had something different or in different combinations. Everyone was asked what they wanted and adjustments were made to the standard menus to take account of what people did and didn't want. (Unless they were on a specific diet). No-one had to wait for food and the servers made sure that everyone was eating and had drinks. If there was something that they didn't like then they found an alternative.

When I asked residents about the food I heard only good things. They were pleased at the variety and the quality. Two people said to me that what they really liked was that they did not have to prepare food (or wash up!) anymore This had clearly become a difficult task for them when living at home but now they did not have to worry about this anymore. They knew that they were getting well fed and this was one less thing to worry about.

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 home contains a lot of frail people, a high number with dementia and very few who can walk unaided. Looking after them is very labour intensive and, clearly, not all can be washed and dressed at the same time. Several residents mentioned to me that they were 'early risers' or that they 'liked a lie-in some days' and this was respected by the carers and staff. At the beginning of the day a couple of ladies were in their dressing gowns having breakfast but shortly afterwards were taken to their rooms to be dressed. My impression was that everyone's needs were taken care of and that the staff had a good understanding of who wanted to be prepared and when. Everyone was wearing clean clothes that had been washed and ironed. There were no signs that people were being ignored or neglected.

Staff were checking with residents all the time if they wanted refreshments. Staff always went to great lengths to include everybody and to make sure that everyone was comfortable.

Chatting with the residents my impression was that most of them understood that they were there because living in their own home, on their own, had become more difficult if not impossible. Some of those who had more recently arrived were not quite so reconciled to this state of affairs but both said 'well you have to make the best of it'.

There were times when a group of residents might be left for a short while to chat together. Occasionally they became a bit anxious if there was no carer or staff member in the room. They did appreciate that staff had other jobs to do and did seem to understand that they would come in to talk with them at any chance they got.

Any other comments?

As in my previous visit, there was a high proportion of the residents that I could not speak with because they were confined to their rooms, too ill or too frail. Those I did speak to were very complimentary about the home and the staff. Everybody seemed to be well looked after.

The staff were very caring, keen to help and available at all times. Even with residents who struggled to express themselves they made every effort to find out what it was that they could do to make the residents' lives more comfortable.

In my first visit (The Limes) I asked myself a simple question: would I be happy for my 86 year old father, currently living on his own, to go into this home? The answer for Woodside is the same as it was for The Limes: 'yes'. I would be confident that he would be looked after well and cared for.