

Beechwood specialist services

Enter and view report May 2024

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Introduction

What is an Enter and View visit?

Healthwatch Liverpool has powers to carry out what we describe as 'Enter and View' visits. These are visits to health and social care settings which help us in our role as the independent local champion for health and social care. Enter and View visits are carried out by small teams of trained members of our staff and volunteers to observe a health and social care service at work, for example at a GP practice, a care home, or a hospital. We only visit services that are publicly funded, e.g. through the NHS or via local authorities.

What happens during an Enter and View visit?

During an Enter and View visit we talk to people using the service, whether patients or residents, and to friends and relatives where appropriate. We also speak to staff to find out where they think the service is working well, and where it could be improved. We also observe the service. We write up our observations and the feedback we receive and publish it as a report. Our report is sent to the provider of the service, as well as to regulators such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the local authority, and NHS commissioners when appropriate.

If there are recommendations in the report, the service provider is asked for a response, which we later publish online alongside the Enter and View report.

Details of the Enter and View Visit:

Name of the service visited: Beechwood specialist services

Address: Beechwood Road South, Aigburth, Liverpool, Merseyside, L19 0LD

The Date of the Enter and View Visit: Thursday the 23rd of May

The Time of the Enter and View Visit: 10:00–12:00

The names of the members of the Healthwatch Enter and View Team that undertook the visit were:

Engagement and Project Officer Terence Ferguson

Engagement and Project Officer Claire Stevens

This was an announced visit.

We would like to thank Beechwood Specialist Services staff and residents for facilitating the visit and for taking the time to talk to us.

Why did we carry out this visit?

Enter and view visits can take place for a variety of reasons, for example to find out more about a particular service, or in response to public feedback.

The Enter and View visit to Beechwood Specialist Services was to learn more about the service, and to find out from observations and speaking with people where the service appeared to be doing especially well, in addition to finding out if any improvements could be made. The visit was not in response to any prior feedback or concerns identified relating to the quality of this service.

Safeguarding

Healthwatch Liverpool Enter and Views are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies, and the Local Authority will be notified on the same day as the Enter and View visit. There were no safeguarding concerns identified during this enter and view visit.

About the Service

Background

Beechwood Specialist Services is a specialist nursing/care home. They have 60 beds but on the date of our visit they had 39 residents all of whom lived on the ground floor of the home. Beechwood does not charge top up fees.

Discussion with the manager

We met directly with the manager Carl McGuinness who has been the manager at Beechwood for the last two years and has had 5 years of experience in managerial positions and 10 years' experience in total in the care sector.

Quote from staff member

"Carl's (the manager) door is always open to people"

Staffing

At the time of our visit the manager advised they were pleased with the current staffing levels with 67 permanent staff and that the home had been successful in recruiting multiple new permanent staff. The manager say they were taken aback by the influx of new applicants as there are often challenges in recruiting for the sector. Staff we spoke to were very pleased with the recruitment of new permanent staff and advised they had seen the benefits of this.

The manager advised he is proud that the service is good at managing and caring for people that have struggled elsewhere. They have never had to send a resident away because they can't meet their needs and staff are proud of this. He advised that the shared challenges of residents help to build a camaraderie, and this contributes to the care home working well.

We spoke to some care staff who felt that they would benefit from more in-person training. They advised that trainers used to visit to provide on-site training more regularly, but this is no longer the case as it is deemed 'too expensive'. However, it would be welcomed by staff – particularly in relation to specialist care skills. For example, a trainer from the Huntington's Disease Association used to provide specialist training. Management advised that Mersey Care is offering in person training which is welcomed.

Some staff advised that agency workers have sometimes only carried out online training and are shocked by the realities of the job and the complexities of the residents and the level of care needed.

Quote from staff member

“Staff deal with challenging behaviour, verbal abuse, racism. You need to have a thick skin”

We spoke to some staff members who advised that incentives need to be provided to keep permanent staff as caring is low pay for challenging work. Staff advised that there used to be a ‘buddy’ system which they feel should be brought back. This is when new members of staff would be paired with experienced staff and allowed for more in-depth training and emotional support.

They advised that there is no specific mental health support offered. When incidents happen there is a debrief and some staff use emotional intelligence to identify when a colleague is still struggling. The staff members say this is where the buddy system can support growth.

Quote from staff member

“The more you work with someone you get to know them and when their emotions are triggered. You need to nurture new staff.”

Relationships with GP/Pharmacy/Dentists and local partners

Beechwood residents are registered with Fulwood Green Medical Centre and the manager advised they “they are great and there when they need them”. They also advise that they are pleased with their community matron “Sharon the community matron is excellent for the service”.

Management advises they are pleased with the dental services provided by Everton Road Dental Access Centre and advise that they are really helpful, and they have no problems with the service.

Management did report they have been having issues with residents accessing the community mental health teams which can lead to 6-month delays in accessing services. Management feels that cases are often bounced around the mental health teams and closed incorrectly.

Staff also had praise for the local Aigburth Toby Carvery chain which provides a seating area that is quieter for residents enabling them to spend time in the wider community. The carvery staff are described as being great with them.

Some staff advised there is a feeling that sometimes “those that shout the loudest get the most” – whether residents or family members. These staff felt that care and attention to individual needs should be standard for all residents and mentioned using Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs to support this.

Hospital trusts and Immedicare

Management described hospital admission and discharge as ‘swings and roundabouts’ with most admissions being fine but a lack of consistency when things do go wrong. Staff have found that they have more issues with the Royal

Liverpool Hospital than with Aintree University Hospital which seems to be doing better. Communication is reported as the main issue when things go wrong, and staff advise they wouldn't mind as much if they were contacted when there is a mistake. Management do advise there has been a reduction in late night discharges from hospitals which is welcome.

Mersey Care is offering in person training which management and staff are keen on as this will upskill staff. Staff were impressed as Mersey Care worked with the care home to make sure the needs and times of staff were accounted for.

Telemed/Immedicare is described as is a great service when it's working. Management advised they have had to change the computer 3 times due to technical issues and have been feeding this back during this process. Management advised at the time of our visit everything seems to be working well. The training provided was described as "rubbish" with some nurses just reading from PowerPoints and not providing engaging training. There was praise for the diabetes training as there was more interaction and the nurse seemed a specialist in the subject.

Residents

Management advise they establish residents wants and needs during the pre-admission process with the resident and their friends/family. Management advises there is an element of trial and error when establishing interests and wishes due to residents often complex needs and communication difficulties. This information is recorded digitally and is available to staff on tablets alongside the resident's care plan.

Quote from staff member-

"We try and do assessments in people's homes so we can meet them and their family initially, it's about how they feel. Relatives don't need to make an appointment to visit the home as we don't have anything to hide. What you see is what you get."

There is also a 1-1 care plan available on paper for more complex clients. Some care staff felt that one-page profiles should be available for all residents and not just residents with complex needs. They felt that it would help new and agency staff in supporting residents.

An example staff gave of this was a resident who presented with anxiety and paranoia around medication and would memorise the appearance of tablets. Permanent staff were aware of this and discuss any medication appearance changes to help them to feel safe, but agency staff are not aware of these finer details.

The home uses a hospital passport which is sent upon admission to support residents. This is sometimes useful, but staff report it can be frustrating as it is sometimes ignored leading to needless duplication and delays.

Management advise they have a resident who is bilingual. The resident uses both their languages and the resident's family provides information to support staff in their other (non-English) language. We observed the resident taking part in activities with staff and they appeared to be happy and enjoying themselves. We also saw evidence of literature in the resident's other language around the home. Another resident uses lip reading as their primary method of comprehension. Staff have a dry marker board to assist communication with this client who can struggle with their lip reading when overwhelmed.

Visitors can use the quieter lounge to meet with loved ones as it is more relaxed than the larger rooms and is less overwhelming. Rooms can be booked as needed and families can also visit residents in their bedrooms.

We saw that some residents had relevant, beautifully mounted photographs outside their rooms (e.g. shipbuilding, car manufacturing, RAF, Laurel and Hardy), staff were able to use them as a way of interacting with residents, and calming them, if necessary, by drawing them into a conversation about their hobbies and interests. We understand that this is a staff initiative, and it would be good to see replicated more widely across other care homes.

Glasses and clothes are named with room numbers using markers. There have been cases of clothes being mixed up as marker fades and they are looking into a machine to stamp clothes labels more permanently.

Activities

Beechwood has 2 activities coordinators one in post for 8 years and one for 18 months. They have access to a minibus and took a recent trip to a safari park. There is an outside smoking area and staff accompany smokers. Activities include games and baking with most mornings started with relaxation exercises. There is a difference in some activities available (e.g. takeaway nights/zoo trips) for those who can afford them. This caused some resentment with residents we spoke to. Staff advised that these residents were awaiting benefits that had not been transferred over correctly due to faults at the benefit end.

They do have relative and resident meetings, but these are not always well attended by relatives. Some relatives due to circumstances have not seen family members in a long time. Staff did relay that they recently supported a resident to travel to a wedding in Dorset.

Some care staff advised that since the Covid pandemic relationships built up with outside organisations had fallen by the wayside. Staff mentioned they used to have connections with the universities who would create art projects that involved the residents but has not happened as often. They also discussed less interactions with the Brain Charity and the Huntington's Disease Association.

Food

There is an onsite chef who has worked there for 3 years and a cook who has been in post for 8 years. The care home has a 4-week rolling menu with more than one option that changes according to the seasons (lighter meals in summer etc). Staff speak to residents to help them pick the food, but menus are not currently provided in Easy Read. They have multiple medical restrictions on

diet but at the moment no residents with cultural/religious restrictions, but that these would be catered for.

Observations

Observations on arrival

Beechwood Specialist Services is located in a quiet wooded area just off Otterspool Promenade. The care home has access to multiple areas of natural beauty in the area and strong transport links. The sign for the home has been blown down in previous high winds. Management advised that they are sourcing a replacement, but the owner is particular about getting it done right. The car park was clean and free of hazards and the building and surrounding areas seemed well maintained.

The front door was secured, and we were admitted by Reception who checked our credentials and made sure we signed in and out. Reception staff were friendly and welcoming and helped direct a Healthwatch colleague travelling to the care home. There were comfortable seats and a fish tank in the reception area with clean water and fish that seemed healthy.

Observations of the building and facilities

We were shown around the home by two members of the care staff team.

Staff advised us that the current owner is very good at providing activities and has invested in landscaping, equipment and décor. Mobile big screen televisions are now available, as are sensory activities including interactive games. There's a cinema space and when films are shown staff will include an interval where they provide choc-ices and treats for residents. Easy Read signs and documentation were in use throughout the home.

Lounge 1

The lounge had been decorated with a 'stately home' look, including views out to a garden area and murals showing Japanese-themed garden views. There was music playing during our visit. There is a screen that is used to show a log fire burning and other relaxing images and a large television. The area had multiple seating arrangements and was clean with multiple staff supporting residents (4 staff to 6 residents). There was a newspaper in the room written in the language of a bilingual speaker.

Lounge 2 (conservatory/dining area)

The lounge has large windows looking onto the prom with a big conservatory that lets lots of light in and looks onto more gardens. The room is very welcoming with art on display created by residents in a joint project with university students. There are multiple comfortable seats and a large television in the lounge area and the conservatory has tables and chairs and is set up for family and friends to visit relatives. There was again a good ratio of staff members to residents, and we saw a staff member supporting a resident in completing a jigsaw.

Activity Lounge

A relaxation session was in progress when we visited with relaxing ballet on tv. Residents' artwork was displayed on the walls. There were also photographs of days out and various activities including baking and a Liverpool FC-inspired day, and art created by residents. The room had one window and did feel cramped as it was not a large space compared to other rooms. There were 9 residents some with wheelchairs plus 2 staff members in the room. Some were playing card games on the table with staff whilst others were tapping along to the dancing. Staff were interacting well with the residents and appeared familiar with the residents and caring.

Residents rooms

Residents have the choice to have their names or pictures on the doors of their rooms. There were specific pictures placed outside of resident's rooms which corresponded to their interests and past working life. These are chosen as part of the discussion with residents and family during the process of establishing wishes and needs. Examples of these pictures were pictures of the Ford factory, Cammell Laird ship building and Royal Navy ships. Staff advise these pictures help the resident feel more at home, provide good topics for discussion with the resident and are a good starting off point for new staff to build rapport with residents.

Hallways

The hallways were decorated with pictures of residents including of a recent trip to a safari park. There were posters for Friday take away nights. We have had previous positive feedback from residents of other care homes about how much they enjoy these and that they foster a feeling of 'normality'. There were multiple framed pictures and Easy Read signage was in place throughout the care home. There were multiple hygiene stations around the home.

Some of the windows overlooking the garden have curtain rails with curtains hanging low. We asked staff if there was a ligature risk from the curtains but were advised they have been risk assessed but they don't like them. They advised the curtain poles have been pulled down and used as weapons by residents previously.

Garden

There is a large shared central garden that is looked onto from multiple windows in the care home. The garden is well maintained with multiple spots for seating. The garden is a central hub and is used by both residents and the staff and it seems a very nice area.

Visitors Room/Quiet Lounge

This room has good views to the gardens and the river and the promenade. There are multiple paintings, tables with vases and replica flowers. There is comfortable seating available decorated with cushions. There was a good selection of CDs/DVDs and books which residents can use in their own rooms. Residents have TVs in own room as well as a cinema set-up in the care home.

Hair and Beauty Salon

Staff advised that the hairdresser attends monthly. Staff also make use of the room to provide pamper sessions to the residents. The room is also used by the visiting chiropodist, Pauline, who is described as having an excellent relationship with both staff and residents. This is in part due to her past experience working in the care home in a caring role.

Kitchen

The kitchen has an Easy Read sign and residents can use the kitchen independently following a risk assessment. There is a tea trolley with snacks that attends to residents as well. Staff advise residents can always get snacks outside of meal times.

“Residents can sit where they want at mealtimes and can go anywhere, it’s their home. Restrictions can escalate behaviours”

Relaxation/Sensory Room

Staff have independently created a sensory room which they hope will have more money/equipment invested in it and are exploring funding options. The room is dark with sensory lighting and a large artwork on the back wall created by a relative of one of the residents. Staff feel it helps to calm residents when they are agitated or overstimulated and can reduce the need to medicate residents by preventing them reaching negative thresholds. It can also be tailored to individual needs with an example given of one resident who calms down when in the room listening to their favourite artist.

“We don’t like giving medication, it’s a last resort. The room is good as a de-escalation technique, and we individualise the environment”

Observations of the how Beechwood Specialist Services engages with friends, family and residents.

We witnessed a member of staff de-escalate an incident with an agitated resident who was showing signs of wanting to lash out. The resident was in a narrow corridor with a newer staff member nearby. The staff member cleared the area around the resident and spoke to them gently using his name and maintaining open body language. Using her knowledge of the resident she asked if he wanted to call his mum which calmed him. The staff member took him to a quieter area so he could call her. This was a fantastic example of de-escalation using a good knowledge of the resident’s needs and wishes that he would struggle to convey due to communication difficulties.

The interactions we witnessed seemed uniformly positive with the use of people’s names, caring tone of voice and open body language. It felt like staff knew the residents and came across as caring and dedicated.

Feedback from residents, relatives, and staff.

Healthwatch spoke with 7 residents and 5 members of staff.

(some residents conditions may influence their responses, but we present them as they told us)



"I like it here, food is good, big portions can pick different, very friendly, films good, I like Madagascar"



Feedback from residents

(what are the activities like?) "Blackpool all different places, can't wait for Christmas".

(How is the food?) "Good chips, big portions."

(How is the food?) "The food is bland. I always have to ask for salt and pepper. I like Chinese food but I never get it, including on takeaway nights."

(What are the activities like?) "I'm always stuck in my room, it's boring. I wasn't invited to the Safari Park I have to just watch out this window."

(What would you like to do?) "I like to go shopping; I've not been out for 2-3 weeks."

(Staff member advised us that the residents money has not been getting paid to her as it should be. Staff have been chasing this but have been left frustrated by the benefits team)

Summary and recommendations

Summary

During our visit to Beechwood Specialist Services the home seemed to be working well. They have residents with challenging conditions and behaviours and staff seemed to be rising to the challenge and delivering excellent personalised care.

Management and staff appeared open and honest with us during our visit and did not shy away from discussing challenges that the home and the wider industry faces. Staff came across as committed to providing the best care possible and really did seem to care about the residents and view them as individuals and considered Beechwood to be the residents' home.

Some of the initiatives spearheaded by staff were very impressive including the personalised sensory room and the use of individualised pictures of people's lives. The pictures displayed outside people's rooms of past jobs and key images seems to be a fantastic idea in sparking conversations and supporting residents to be seen as individuals with unique pasts. We found the idea and execution of these pictures to be excellent and have championed the idea to other partners.

Recommendations

We make the following recommendations for Beechwood Specialist Services.

1. *Consider implementing the 'buddy system' used previously to support new staff and encourage the building of strong relationships in the home.*
2. *Try to build up relationships with outside organisations who can add further value to residents' experiences.*
3. *Explore options for more in-person training to help upskill staff and create a more confident workforce.*

Response from Beechwood Specialist Services

We shared our recommendations to the manager at Beechwood who responded promptly and advised the following-

1. Buddy system implemented prior to receiving report, we have had some recent success in recruitment.

2. Huntington's training arranged from Huntington's disease association. We are reaching out to other organisations to improve our community outreach.
3. In person training planned and some completed, staff have given positive feedback.

Positives and good practice

We found during our visit examples of positives and good practice which included but were not limited to

- Staff members from management through to carers were open and transparent about the challenges faced. The staff were not afraid to give their opinions and ideas for change and there seemed to be a great deal of trust and camaraderie built between staff.
- The caring nature of the staff we met really did shine through. From skilled interactions we witnessed through to the spearheading of initiatives such as the sensory room and personalised memory pictures. Staff were proud of the home and proud of their residents' achievements.
- The external areas of the care home are very appealing and included a large well maintained garden, the Otterspool promenade and woods and fields close by. The nearby public transport links and the minibus available provides multiple opportunities for residents to experience the outdoors and the health benefits this can offer.

Resources

- 1- Huntington's Disease Association (HDA)



Telephone: 0151 487 6514

Email: anita.daly@hda.org.uk Specialist Huntington's Disease Adviser Merseyside

Website: <https://www.hda.org.uk/>

- 2- The Brain Charity



Locations: Norton Street, Liverpool, L3 8LR

Telephone: 0151 298 2999

Website: <https://www.thebraincharity.org.uk/>

3- Tide - Together in Dementia Everyday



Telephone: 0151 237 2669

Email: carers@tidecarers.org.uk

Website: <https://www.tide.uk.net/>

FACT - Dementia Friendly Screenings



Locations: FACT, 88 Wood Street, Liverpool, L1 4DQ

Website: <https://www.picturehouses.com/event-details/0000000031/dementia-friendly-screenings>

Telephone: 0871 902 5737

Appendix

Healthwatch Liverpool – Powers to Enter and View Services

Healthwatch Liverpool was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and came into being in April 2013. We work to give local residents a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided.

We enable people to share their views and concerns about local health and social care services, helping build a picture of where services are doing well, and where they can be improved. Enter and View visits are undertaken in accordance with the remit of Healthwatch Liverpool, and assist us in carrying out our statutory functions under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Enter and View visits are not designed to be full inspections, audits or an investigation of the service, rather they are an opportunity for us to get a better understanding of the service by seeing it in action and by talking to staff and service users.

We aim to identify and share good practice wherever possible. However, if during a visit we identify any aspects of a service that it has serious concerns about, then these concerns are referred to the appropriate regulator or commissioners of the service for investigation or rectification.

Any safeguarding issues identified will be referred to the Local Authority for investigation. Addressing issues of a less serious nature may be done directly with the service provider.

For more information about Healthwatch Liverpool, please visit our website www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk or contact us using the details at the end of this report.



healthwatch

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