
Meeting: Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 17 December 2012

Subject: LINK Report

Report of: Bob Smith, Chairman of Bedfordshire LINK

Summary: The report is to advise members of the completion of the LINK enter and view project to six care/nursing homes in Central Bedfordshire. It gives an overview of the key findings and comments from the residents and staff about their experiences. The reports have been shared with Central Bedfordshire Council's Compliance Team and the Care Quality Commission. A comment from the CQC is included in this report.

The full visit reports can be accessed on the LINK website at www.bedfordshirelink.co.uk

Contact Officer: Charlotte Bonser (Bedfordshire LINK Operations Manager)

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

1. Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.

Financial:

2. Not applicable.

Legal:

3. Not applicable.

Risk Management:

4. Not applicable.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

5. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

6. Not applicable.

Public Health

7. Not applicable.

Community Safety:

8. Not applicable.

Sustainability:

9. Not applicable.

Procurement:

10. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the report as appropriate.

Background

11. The LINK report focuses on feedback from the recent four visits to care/nursing homes in Central Bedfordshire, namely Greenacres, Meppershall, Swiss Cottage and Ridgway Lodge. This now completes the LINK's enter and view project to 6 care/nursing homes in Central Bedfordshire. Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will be responsible for future Enter and View visits
12. A review of the Enter and View project took place on 20 November with all LINK members who visited the Homes to discuss the experience and to feedback on what needs to be revised or improved to ensure a robust Enter and View process.

Findings from Enter and View Visits**Greenacre Care Home, Dunstable**

13. Residents comments:
 - Staff are very kind and helpful and look after us. –from the step up/ down unit.
 - Meals are a bit boring as they are repeated after only a few days.
 - We are not allowed drink in here. I would really like a pint of beer. He specified his two favourites. (The deputy manager later said that many drinks were always available from the kitchen)
 - It is very nice but I am looking forward to going home soon.
 - Well I suppose you could make a cup of tea but they do not like you doing it.
 - I only get a newspaper when my son comes in.
 - I do not read much because of my glasses.(this person then said that the optician had seen him and they were still wrong)
 - Yes, there are lots of books over there on the shelf. She had not read them apparently.
 - You leave your laundry and tell the carer and they are done for you by the next day. Very good.
 - One lady said she was now relaxed, rested and more prepared for her daughter to leave her. Prior to this she had been nervous about this. Daughter praised all the staff.
 - Gentleman said that he had lots to do and was happy.
 - One relative, on behalf of other residents, said that the beef was often too tough to eat and so was wasted. She suggested cooking it the day before she said but this was not possible due to the regulations on food hygiene and re-heating food.

- This was later discussed with the deputy manager and she said that she was aware of this and that the cook was looking into other ways of cooking or purchasing this.

LINK recommended:

We would like to see more space for general activities which seems to have been 'lost' when the step up/ step down unit took over the large day centre area.

Outside contacts for the more able would be appreciated by the many who seemed quite able to enjoy these.

Could volunteers be recruited, perhaps from the locality, U3A members locally, or other groups? Perhaps to visit on a regular (not necessarily frequently) to arrange music afternoons, games, competitions or one of very many activities either individually or in a small group.

Have residents been encouraged, with their families, to create 'Life Books' to recreate the main events, perhaps with photographs, of their lives? This would have the added benefit of aiding new staff to make meaningful conversation. It is extremely helpful in understanding any problems that may arise later, particularly those with a dementia.

Deputy manager said that she would like to repaint the doors and toilet seats in the dementia unit as they were red at present and she felt that the residents associated that with danger.

She would like to repaint a softer colour, perhaps a warm yellow as this is more relaxing but still strong so that residents recognise their own unit. We feel this would be an advantage.

She would also like to find the funds to replace some of the carpets.

It was noted that only one room had en-suite facilities and although we are aware that this would be difficult to add at a later date without a great deal of cost and loss of beds, it would be an advantage for the future as the bedrooms are not very large at present.

14. Meppershall Care Home, Shefford Road, Meppershall.

Discussions were held with two respite residents, both local. One responded to questions that they did not like the Home but for the only reason that it was not their home – very pleased with meals and service staff. The other respite resident seen had her carer and a neighbour visiting at the time and seemed to be very pleased with all facilities.

There were a group being 'entertained' by a helper in discussing recent events such as the photos of the Duchess of Cambridge.

A couple of the male residents were spoken with, they were both happy with their experiences in the home, although one was fretful because his feet were elevated. It was explained that this was part of his treatment and had to be borne until the nurse on duty lowered his chair. Despite this a very cheerful pair, even though one appeared to be a stroke victim both were surprisingly "with it".

LINK recommended:

- Attention to electrical wiring on floor areas – possible falls hazard.
- Greater security to key area in Manager's office.

- It is hoped that with the recent change in Manager that the two Deputies continue to provide excellent service.
- It was noted that at some locations the self-adhesive signs on doors that denoted their function had become partially detached doubtless due to exploring fingers. This could be termed a possible infection hazard, and if the sign were completely missing the function of a room could easily be mistaken, leading at the least to some embarrassment and possibly in the event of an emergency to more serious consequences.

15. Swiss Cottage Care Home, Leighton Buzzard

Residents Comments: Generally positive and happy to be in this home, and spoke openly about the care they receive.

We talked to several residents and received the following comments.

- One resident told us we have residents meetings. I don't bother attending them anymore, as nothing comes out of them.
- I made a complaint about the night staff, and this was dealt with to my satisfaction.
- I have been here 2 years and have never heard a carer be unpleasant, I am confident in the care staff. I miss our old Manager.
- This new company have sent in 2 trouble shooters to lift the place up, but they have gone about it the wrong way, staff morale is poor.
- I don't always receive personal care until later in the day but I don't mind, as staff are so kind. I'm just sorry so many have left.
- One lady said very clearly that she would love to tell me all the things that were wrong and indeed was encouraged by a member of staff to tell me, but she said if she did her life would be in danger. Despite many approaches, she would not elaborate.
- This lady was in the Dementia unit so it was difficult to judge how real her concerns were.

Staff comments have been included for this home, as they echoed some of the concerns expressed by the residents:

We spoke to very many of the staff, who were quite anxious to express how they felt.

- They were clearly disturbed by all the changes and generally did not feel supported or valued by senior staff.
- They felt when staff members ring in sick there were not sufficient staff to bring in cover, which they felt left them under staffed.
- They worried that this would have a detrimental effect on residents care.
- It was suggested by some staff, high levels of sickness may be due to stress.
- Although not ideal, they would like to see some use of agency until a pool of bank staff is recruited.
- They also felt enhancements for weekend work would help with staffing on these days.

- They reported having staff meetings but felt nothing was then carried out following these.

LINK recommends:

The host (support organisation) may need to seek clarification in respect of comments and concerns raised by residents during our visit.

Structured supervision, continued training, clearer consultation, to lift low morale.

Following completion of refurbishment and Inspection by Care Quality Commission another visit from Bedfordshire LINK or Healthwatch within the next 12 months.

16. Ridgeway Lodge Care Home, Dunstable

Residents Comments:

The majority of the residents on the 1st floor have varying forms of dementia. We talked to some 10 residents on both floors during our visit and received the following comments.

- The lunch is good
- It is a set menu we do not have a choice
- The food is good and the (portions) are big enough, I have made friends here and like eating with them
- I like it here, I have made friends...I have spoken to the staff and they were helpful (Concerns relating to what might happen if the resident's money ran out).
- I don't like being old...I am well looked after here.
- No relatives requested to see us, however, a group of adult sons and daughters visiting their parent made the following comment.:
- The home is good, we have no complaints.

During the course of our visit we noted that all the areas that were in use were clean and with one exception there were no undue odours. Once the manager was informed of this, it is noted that the matter was dealt with promptly. The food produced for lunch looked appetising. Systems are in place for the administration of medication and security. Disabled access is available to the majority of the buildings. Information is on display or available on request. There are a range of services and activities available for the residents. We observed how the staff respected and treated the residents, speaking softly and using prompts without rushing the residents. The residents and staff that we spoke to made positive comments about the Ridgeway Lodge Home as a service provider and employer.

We recommend:

- That the manager address one resident's choice on his personal plan for a male care assistant to provide personal care
- That another visit take place by Bedfordshire LINK or Healthwatch in one year's time.

General Feedback from the visits to Care/Nursing Homes

17. Generally members felt the whole process had been a lengthy one, which started in November 2011 and has taken a year to complete. This period has however included the development of clear guidelines to conduct the visits and training for members.
18. Members felt the project had been useful and helped them to understand the current standards of care in these homes. One member said that it had been a humbling experience to see some residents in varying stages of dementia. There was concern in some cases of the isolation faced by residents who were mentally and physically able to be involved in social activities, but either there was little available or their perception was that they wouldn't be allowed to do something, e.g. have a beer. On the whole residents observed seemed content with their care. It was acknowledged the LINK project group had done a lot of the ground work so in future, the organisation and progression of visits should be straight forward.
19. Staffing levels seemed to be an issue in all the homes visited, and the experience and aptitude of the home manager appears to contribute to how happy residents seemed on the day and in creating a good living environment.
20. There was general discussion regarding the social isolation aspect of residents. Members wondered if the voluntary sector could be encouraged to offer activities to care home residents who were still physically and mentally active to participate. Members gave examples of community initiatives being organised including by the University of the 3rd Age. It was acknowledged there may be challenges in attempting to do something like this, but if the voluntary sector were able to make some sort of provision available through accessing grants, it could be subsidised by the use of personal budgets?
21. The issue of staff training was discussed. Members felt that it would be useful to understand the compulsory training required by care home staff and if they participated in other short courses. Members felt that the training should include the area of the care relationships with clients. It was indicated that in the area of falls training, members had attended events and found that many care home workers are not in attendance, but it was acknowledged that these staff have other pressures and commitments.

Meeting with the Care Quality Commission

22. The LINK Chairman and LINK support Manager met with the CQC Compliance Manager, Maggie Hannelly and Barbara Mulligan, the CQC Inspector for Central Bedfordshire on 29 November 2012 to receive an update on the remit of CQC and to discuss the LINK enter and view work carried out.
23. It was noted that CQC intends to inspect all adult social care, independent health care and NHS trusts at least once between April 2012 and end of March 2013. Locally they are on track to do this and will also inspect 35% of dentists across Bedfordshire. It was indicated that the CQC had received additional funding from Central Government which has enabled them to recruit more inspectors and by January 2013, they will have a full complement of staffing within their compliance teams.
24. In terms of the LINK work, the following comments were received in writing from Maggie Hannelly :

“Barbara and myself were impressed to note the work that has been carried out by the LINK and could see that things were coming together in a way which is able to support the work of other authorities such as CQC, we really valued your time and thank your members for sharing the recent enter and view reports.”

Background papers and their location (open to public inspection):

None