

The Close Care Home, Burcot

Enter and View Report



March 2024

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Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Oxfordshire would like to thank all the people we spoke to and heard from, and all staff at The Close Care Home at Burcot, Abingdon for their support and contribution to the Enter and View visit.

1. Visit details

1.1 Details of Visit

Service Address	The Close Care Home Abingdon, Burcot Oxon, OX14 3DP
Service Provider	Cavendish Close Ltd
Date and Time	January 11 th 2024, 10am to 1pm
Authorised Representatives	Amier Alagab, Katharine Howell, Brian Allan, Paul Walker
Contact details	01865 520520 Healthwatch Oxfordshire

1.2 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

2. What is Enter and View?

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 legislation allows Enter and View activity to be undertaken on premises where health and social care is publicly funded such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists, and pharmacies. We visit:

- To gather the views of health and social care service users, families, and carers'
- To report what we see and hear to improve the quality of health and care services.

More details about Enter and View visits can be found on our website:

www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-work/enter-and-view

2.1 Purpose of the visit

- To observe how the facility operates and provides its services.
- To collect views from residents, volunteers, and staff on services.
- To identify 'Best Practice' and highlight any areas of concern.

2.2 Strategic drivers

Healthwatch Oxfordshire commenced a programme of planned Enter and View visits to Care Homes in Oxfordshire to look at the quality of life of residents from a resident, care, and relative point of view. The visit to The Close Care Home was part of this programme as a planned visit.

3. Summary of findings

Please note these findings represent **a portrayal of what we observed and heard about the experiences of the service users and staff on the day** that we visited:

- The care home is an excellent and happy care home with amazing facilities, and an obvious caring and person-centred approach.
- The care centre's staff and the environment were very welcoming.
- We spoke to nine members of staff, two residents and three family members on the day of the visit.
- The Close Care Home is managed by a dedicated staff team whose aim is to deliver excellent person-centred care and who work hard to make it possible.
- We observed an animated and engaging atmosphere in the entertainment room, a singer/guitarist was performing. That combined with the staff's encouragement and individualised attention, reflects a holistic approach to providing meaningful and inclusive entertainment for the residents.
- The welcoming and cheerful nature of the staff had a profound impact on the overall atmosphere within the care home. Their positive attitude contributed to the residents' happiness, comfort, and well-being, and fostering a sense of community and positivity within the care home environment.
- We noticed a resident who assists with maintenance jobs and had a maintenance team uniform and toolbox. Another resident was helping to deliver clean laundry in the short stay hub, exemplifying the meaningful engagement of residents in activities that align with their interests and abilities.
- The approach of furnishing and decorating residents' rooms with a combination of accessible furniture and items from their former homes, along with personal photos and souvenirs, reflects a commitment to promoting personalised, comfortable, and emotionally enriching living spaces within the care home. This approach supports the residents' individual identities and contributes to a sense of familiarity.
- The dementia residents' sitting room at The Close is thoughtfully designed to provide a comforting and interactive environment for its residents.
- The presence of voting tubes by the reception area, where residents can place balls to provide feedback on the types of activities they would like, reflects a proactive approach to engaging residents in decision-making and activity planning within the care home. However, there is no suggestion box for visitors and relatives to leave comment or suggestions.

- In every resident's room and communal rooms there is a book of staff photos and information called 'Welcome to Your Close Care Home Family'.
- There is a QR code available on the activities board, allowing residents and their families to leave reviews at carehome.co.uk.
- The care home's willingness to care for individuals with rare conditions or complex combinations of illnesses, underscores its commitment to inclusivity and expertise in managing diverse healthcare needs.
- There is a hospital hub with 15 stepdown beds, overseen by a senior John Radcliffe Hospital nurse.
- The care home has a staffing ratio of 1:2.5 (staff to residents), which was described as one of the highest in Oxfordshire.
- There is a Bistro-like a café for residents to use and take guests. It is open 9am -5pm, seven days a week. It has a licenced bar, and coffee machine, and low prices (cost + 5%). Photos of the staff who made food items are included on the packaging.
- The Close actively recruits staff from overseas, sponsoring visas and providing pastoral care and accommodation for staff.
- Residents and family members had praise for the staff and valued the care and support they received.
- Residents and family members generally feel able to raise concerns with the staff team verbally about their loved one's treatment and care.
- Clear and visible external signage is essential for The Close Care Home, it appears there has been some confusion with the signage at the main road when people are trying to locate the care home. However, it once inside the home, the signage was clear. It's important to ensure that the signage is clear and easily visible from the main road to assist visitors in locating the care home.
- There is no hearing loop for the home, but some residents have specific hearing loops in their rooms, others have manual hearing loops.
- The care home website does not include much information about the services provided and information about what activities take place at the care home.

General findings

- Before entering the care home, we were each required to sign in.
- The care home in general was very clean; the carpets, paint, kitchen, and the entrance area were tidy and clean. We noticed a pleasant aroma within the care home, indicating a proactive approach to creating a welcoming and comfortable environment, which can contribute to a positive sensory experience and overall well-being for residents, staff, and visitors.
- The garden had chairs and tables, all of which were in good repair.

4. Recommendations

- 1) The care home would benefit from improved directional signage from the turning from the Abingdon Road, this would help visitors and residents navigate to the home easily.
- 2) There is opportunity for relatives, visitors to give feedback via online methods about the care home, as well use of 'feedback tubes' for residents using coloured balls to vote and nominate specific feedback on activities provided. However, we suggest that you could also provide an opportunity to enable relatives and visitors to leave general suggestions and comments in written and paper form about the care home.
- 3) Demonstrate how general comments and suggestions from visitors and family members about the care home are responded to.
- 4) Some we spoke to would welcome more comprehensive information on the website about the range of services offered at the care home.

5. Service response to recommendations

The Close Care Home response to specific recommendations above are as follows:

- 1) Care home response: This is all the directional signage that we are permitted according to planning permissions. We have on countless occasions requested white directional and brown signs from the Oxfordshire County Council and highways agency – however every time they are rejected.
- 2) Care home response: The website has a feedback module on the contact us page. We host regular events for residents monthly and stakeholders quarterly to receive feedback. We have the feedback tubes also. We have residents that directly email the management team with feedback and several that use the post box and love writing letters to us with suggestions.
- 3) Care home response: The Close was the first home in the country that created the YOU SAID WE DID template, and this was referred to in a CQC report years ago. We have moved on and now and innovated to a more accessible version where we feature responses to requests directly as minutes and responses in

the monthly newsletter that we make and distribute to residents and family members. These are taken from the monthly resident meeting.

4) Care home response: Unfortunately, we are not a tick box home and look at people as individuals and are VERY customised. There is a clear explanation (on the website) of the services we offer, the units and the way the home is designed around the different needs of the residents. We don't have a definitive list as a number of residents we care for, it is the first time we have ever worked with residents with those needs. WE do not want to exclude anyone so have purposely created a sense, our choice, that want to be as open and welcoming as possible, while highlight what we are able to do.

In addition to the specific responses noted above in relation to the specific recommendations, we would like to make the following comments:

In relation to the food offered at the care home:

We would like to note that we have spent a considerable amount of time and resources developing and becoming the leader in texture modified foods (IDDSI) and dignified dining for Oxfordshire.

From state-of-the-art cutlery and crockery to give independence and dignity back to the individual to building a one of a kind in the care industry kitchen to produce cutting edge texture modified foods for individuals that require it, not frozen manufactured but freshly made on the day identical to the standard menu to enhance inclusion and dignity.

This not just unique to The Close Care Home, it's unique in the industry worldwide. We are the only care home in the world to offer a "nil by Mouth menu" we have developed in conjunction with Biozoon, all a unique and massive resource or undertaking for the home.

Example of dementia friendly practice:

Example in design of the doors of resident's rooms: Door on the right in the photograph on page (17) of the report, is an actual photograph of the individual's door from their home. This is designed to support him to identify his room as that was his actual front door. We went and during his onboarding and admission process when to his house and took a pic of his actual door so that he would be most comfortable and feel at home.

Promotion of events and activities at the home:

The newsletter has the full month plan, and the website is updated with all the events taking place also <https://www.theclosecarehome.co.uk/care-home-events/>

6. Report: Visit to The Close Care Home on January 11th, 2024.

Methodology

We follow Healthwatch England guidelines for Enter and View visits. The steps below summarise the process:

- **Plan:**
 - Appoint an Enter and View lead for the visit.
- **Communicate:**
 - Inform the provider of the visit, and relevant details including the purpose, date, time, estimation of how long it will take, how many people will be carrying out the visit, and the name of the lead person.
 - Prepare visit posters including the purpose of the visit, time and date, and dispatch these to the provider for display, so that people using the service are clear why the visit is taking place.
 - Include information about how members of the public can contact Healthwatch Oxfordshire if they are not able to when the visit is taking place.
- **Prepare:**
 - Prepare resources such as surveys and questionnaires.
 - Identify any requirements for special support necessary to facilitate the visit such as access or security. This must be done before the visit, as you may be refused entry.
 - Meet with the service provider before the visit.
- **Report:**
 - On completion of the visit a draft report is shared with the service provider requesting comments on factual accuracy and responses to any recommendations within 20 working days.
- **Follow up:**

The final report is published on Healthwatch Oxfordshire website and shared with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and service provider.

The visit took place from 10am to 1pm on January 11th, 2024, with four trained Enter and View authorised representatives.

During the visit, the team were able to spend time observing the daily working of the care home, speaking to the residents and their families and staff. Noting the general environment of the home such as cleanliness, comfort, and information displays.

Service background

The Close Care Home, Abingdon is a family business. The building is well-furnished and equipped, there are 90 rooms, managed by 102 staff.

The Close Care Home provides a wide range of care areas and specialised services to cater to the diverse needs of its residents:

- High dependency nursing.
- High and low dependency dementia.
- Palliative care.
- Acquired brain injury.

More details about the home can be found on their website by following the link below:

<https://www.theclosecarehome.co.uk/>

Medical support

The care home provides on-site GP services, during the visit we met the GP who usually visits the care home twice a week. Nurses and assistants were looking after the residents, delivering medication, and carrying out other caring duties.

The families were updated about their loved ones through a regular care plan and could discuss the resident's plan upon arrival and receive updates during each visit or by phone if necessary, depending on agreement with the family. This communication helps ensure that the families are well-informed about the care and well-being of their loved ones in the care home.

Dentistry services are offered to residents on their routine appointments.

Activities

During our visit to The Close Care Home, we noticed two vehicles in the car park with the care home's name and logo. These vans are used for residents trips and activities. These vans provide a means of transportation for the residents enabling them to engage in recreational activities and outings.

The Dementia residents' sitting room was equipped with an interactive table, dementia-friendly animals, sandboxes, and vinegar spray to evoke seaside memories on "fish and chips Friday".

The care home has a clear activity plan for the year 2024 on display.



Illustrated Board

During our visit to The Close Care Home, we observed a large gathering of residents and staff in the entertainment room. The residents and staff were engaged, dancing, and smiling whilst a singer was performing music with guitar and songs. This type of event can have several benefits for the residents and contribute to their overall well-being.

The care home has a dedicated activity co-ordinator offering a comprehensive range of indoor and outdoor activities during the year. These are also outlined on the website.

Residents are free to take part in activities as they choose, and no resident felt forced to engage.

The Close Care Home aims to encourage and support residents to be able to continue to engage with the activities they enjoyed before returning to their rooms for reading, watching TV etc.

Mealtimes

During the visit, we observed lunchtime in the dining room. Some residents engaged with each other in a social environment. There were good facilities available and support from staff who provided food for residents and a selection of food to choose from.

Meal plans and menu choices are organised in advance to ensure an efficient meal service in the care home. This allows staff to prepare and deliver meals according to residents' preferences and dietary requirements. Regular communication with families also plays a role in updating and discussing the residents' care plan, including their meal preferences and any necessary adjustments.

The Close care home, offering a “nil by mouth menu” which is unique.

Overall, there were many dining rooms, they were very clean, well-organised, and the tables were laid ready before residents' mealtime with all their requirements.

There is a juice machine at the nurse's unit which is available 24/7 for hydration.



Juice for residents



The menu of the day

Resident movement and safety

The division of The Close Care Home into different zones based on support needs is a common practice in care homes to ensure that residents receive the appropriate level of care and support. This zoning system helps the home in providing specialised care and creating a safe and comfortable environment for residents, each zone is secured with control locks.

Residents were free to move around within their zone.

At The Close Care Home, the risk assessments are reviewed by the GP, who plays a vital role in evaluating the residents' health conditions and providing medical guidance for their care.

Complaints and communication

The manager demonstrates and conducts regular meetings with staff, engages in daily chats with residents, and maintains an open-door policy. These practices contribute to a positive and supportive environment within the care home, where staff, residents, and their families feel they can communicate openly, address concerns, and work together providing quality care and support.

The environment

The cleanliness and pleasant aroma of The Close Care Home contribute to a welcoming and comfortable environment for residents and staff. There was a busy schedule on the day we visited which reflects the vibrant and active nature of the care home.

The lounge was very clean with comfortable seats. Staff were welcoming and we observed staff and resident interactions which were friendly.

Different sizes of sitting rooms, well designed, and decorated to be Dementia friendly and for residents' privacy, were available on the ground floor and first floor as well.



The Lounge

There is a hairdressing unit, which offering services five days a week run by a professional and dedicated hairdresser.

We saw a busy and well-organised laundry in action.

There were many gardens and views from the different communal rooms, the gardens were very well maintained with chairs, tables, and a BBQ area.



The gardens

Information on display

The main building had information displayed at reception and in all the resident's sitting rooms at different locations throughout the home including the staff, and training room.

At the main entrance lounge, there was a range of useful information on display. We saw a Care Quality Commissions (CQC) report, an Activities board, Dementia board and a "Thank You" (staff recognition) wall.



Certificates on display

The Close Care Home leads on good practice and has received many awards between 2020 – 2023 including 'Best Outdoor Environment Award', 'National Care Awards', Activities Team of the Year', all of which are on display.



Awards Certificates

We saw information displayed on the complaints process. Whilst there is opportunity for online feedback on the website, we did not observe a way of giving general written comments and suggestions in the home. There are 'voting tubes' by reception where residents can place balls in the tubes to feedback on what kind of activities they would like.

We did not observe information on how comments and suggestions were responded to.



Activity Voting Tubes

We saw facilities had been designed for residents with dementia in mind from their original home backgrounds, and colours of doors as example.



Dementia Rooms

There is a well-established and maintained library available for those residents who love reading with comfortable chairs near the bookshelves.



The library

Resident' feedback

We spoke to two residents on the day of the visit.

When asked how they felt about living at The Close Care Home residents told us that they were happy about the service and enjoyed life at the care home. They told us that they had made new friends and enjoyed the company.

Feedback about the staff was positive. Residents told us that staff were *'always chatting'* with them and communicating in a very friendly way. Residents told us one of the best things was *'having people around, getting good care and having their needs met'*. We heard comments such as that they *'feel lucky'*, and that it was *'like being on holiday'*.

We heard from residents about their favourite things in the care home, they said:

'I like playing pool and darts, my mum and brother bought me a dart board and it's in the Clifton dining room'.

We asked resident what would they change if they could?

'I would like to go on holidays, sometimes we go to the pharmacy in Abingdon or to Notcutts, I'd like to do something like going to Perranporth.'

'I wish there were more English people who were carers, it's hard to get to know people when you're speaking in broken English.'

Residents told us they were happy about the way that medication was handled, with care and on time.

When we asked residents to tell us the best thing about The Close Care Home, residents told us they enjoyed the environment and the company with other people and the support given during personal care.

Residents were happy with the food, many residents mentioned the food was good and that there were many options available. The menu plan was always discussed during the care plan meetings, and no suggestions for change were made.

When asked about how they would make a complaint or suggestion residents told us they would speak to the staff or manager, give feedback at residents' meetings, or tell their relatives.

We were told by a resident about how well they felt the staff looked after them, and that all their needs were met.

Residents appreciated the hairdressing service, which is available with a permanent professional staff at the care home.

Relative's feedback

We spoke to three relatives on the day of the visit, all of whom were happy with the care provided to their loved one. They told us they felt their relatives were safe, and that the care home was excellent and well maintained. They were always welcomed and told us they felt part of the family.

They said the care home involved them in the annual care plan meeting and any further meeting related to their loved ones, and always updated them about the care services.

We heard there are no restrictions now for visiting their loved ones, but they still think care should be taken to achieve better infection control and that wearing of face masks inside the care home is optional.

We heard that:

'Hand on heart, I've got peace of mind. The staff are lovely, helpful, the manager's absolutely superb, any problems they call me.'

'The hair lady needs a special shout out – she gives therapy, not just hairdressing. If she doesn't have clients, she will go round talking to people. She'll compliment Mum and she just lights up.'

One family member commented: *'Sometimes official communication is a bit slow, though it's got better. But the communication between people about Mum is good.'*

(Some commented that the website could be more detailed in the information about the support provided at the care home. (Note - all activities and events are available on the website here: <https://www.theclosecarehome.co.uk/care-home-events/>)

'Without this place Mum wouldn't be alive now. The key thing is the people – all the lovely other things are bells and whistles, but the key thing is the people, and the atmosphere – it doesn't feel clinical'.

'I've had no reason to complain – and wouldn't know how to.'

Staff feedback

We received feedback and comments from nine staff on the day, representing a cross section of roles within the care home.

The positive feedback from the staff reflected a strong sense of dedication and commitment to their work. Their emphasis on valuing the interactions with residents and family members demonstrated a compassionate and person-centred approach to care.

The recognition of management's efforts in supporting a learning environment reflected a proactive approach to staff development and underscores the value placed on ongoing learning and improvement within the care home.

One staff member mentioned that there are no barriers to training, but it would be great to have access to papers.

In general, all staff said they had the basic training required to support them in their role by the care home or their agency.

We heard positive feedback from staff about the working environment which highlighted a strong sense of unity, harmony, and inclusivity across different job roles, all aspects considered the best thing in their job.

Many new staff had joined recently. We heard from them how happy they are, and how they love the interaction with every resident, and making sure that they have done their job to the best of their ability.

We heard that staff are supportive to each other and always work as a team.

Staff appreciated the free food offered by the care home and accommodation offered with reasonable cost near the care home.

Staff told us that the present management are open to suggestions and feedback, they commented that they felt listened to and felt able to make suggestions on the care home. They said they felt that their concerns would be taken seriously.

When we asked staff about the best thing working here, they told us: *'good, calm and safe environment and it also encourage me to develop my interpersonal skills.'*

We heard from staff that they always keep families updated about any future assessments or hospital visits for their relatives. This demonstrates a proactive and transparent approach to communication. This can help alleviate concerns and ensure that families are well-informed and involved in important decisions regarding the care and well-being of their loved ones.

Staff told us the willingness of family members to engage in open conversations and the commitment of staff to provide updates reflects a culture of open communication and collaboration within the care home.

Residents and individual needs

We asked staff how they meet the residents' needs. Staff seemed knowledgeable about the principles of person-centred care including individuals' care plans, offering choice and helping to support residents to achieve their aims. We were told they encourage residents to take part in surveys, voting, meetings, and any activity they wish to do e.g. cooking, walking and social activities at the lounge. They noted that if residents do not want to join group activities, they will find something alternative they would like to do. Dietary requirements are considered by the chef and are documented in the resident care plan.

What are the challenges staff raised?

We asked staff to tell us about any frustrations or challenges with their work, they told us; ordering medication and registration with GP may take 10 days sometimes. Comments also included the challenge of staff recruitment.

What suggestions did staff make?

Staff did not have any suggestions for improvement and what we mainly heard was:

"There is always room for improvement to better where you work and the way in which you work."



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