healthwatch Cheshire West

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Residents' and Friends and Relatives' Experiences of Care Homes during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic November 2020 - March 2021

Residents' and Friends and Relatives' Experiences of Care Homes during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

- Due to the pandemic and guidance around social distancing, we have been unable to conduct our regular statutory Enter and View activity since March 2020, which serves to provide much of our intelligence around care homes and is a valuable resource both for commissioners and members of the public. Being unable to visit care homes and experience them first-hand during this period means that our ability to gain the views and experiences of those who use these services has been reduced.

- To maintain our connection and to enable us to continue gathering opinions across Cheshire we developed two questionnaires to gain the views of those living in care homes, and care homes with nursing, and their experiences of care during the COVID-19 pandemic, and also of their friends and relatives. These were co-designed with input from care home staff, commissioners, and relatives of people living in care homes. We encouraged Care Home staff to provide their comments using our online Feedback Centre.

Survey Responses and Reports

Top: Healthwatch Cheshire staff preparing the delivery of care home questionnaires; and Bottom: Healthwatch Cheshire staff collecting care home questionnaires from a care home

- **Over 6,000 paper copies** of questionnaires were hand delivered to **138 Care Homes across Cheshire** and completed versions were collected by Healthwatch Cheshire staff. These included links to online versions of the questionnaires, which Care Homes shared with residents and their friends and relatives.
- In total, we received **829 responses** to our surveys relating to **102 care homes** across Cheshire (356 responses relating to 45 Care Homes in Cheshire West and Chester; and 457 responses relating to 57 Care Homes in Cheshire East), and would like to thank the care homes for their support in helping us to receive so many responses.
- Reports on the findings are split into 102 individual care homes and 17 individual care communities.

Overview of findings across Cheshire

- Staff going above and beyond for residents, with praise for their dedication and adaptability. People feel residents' safety has been put first, but it has been a challenging time, and they will be glad to resume normal visitation and activities again.

- People feel safe, their environment is clean and personalised. Residents feel a sense of belonging and the majority felt well cared for.

- There was a mixed response regarding communication. Whilst some residents and families felt they have been kept informed of changes occurring in the Care Home, others reported that this was not always the case.

- Residents and their friends/relatives told us they don't know who their GP is, or that they are hesitant to engage with them as they have been moved away from the GP they had previously.

Overview of findings across Cheshire

- People have been able to have access to devices e.g. phones/tablets to maintain contact with family and friends. However, it is not always efficient as it requires support to be available and isn't preferable for everyone. Difficult not having visits from friends and family.

- Residents have felt somewhat segregated from their friends and family both inside and outside the home, but they understand why this is happening. They have particularly missed outside entertainment, visitation and exercise internally and with family. This was also affected by poor weather.

- The vast majority of people enjoy the food that they are offered, however some feel there could be improvements made in the quality and variety of food that they're offered, with particular attention to personalisation and special dietary requirements.

- Challenges for staff, including visiting restrictions, staff testing, sickness, and COVID-19 outbreaks.

What happens next?

- Healthwatch Cheshire recommend that the findings and richness of people's experiences within these reports are reviewed by providers and commissioners of services.
- Healthwatch Cheshire recommend that these reports are used to feedback on the positivity and hard work of care home staff.
- Each care home will receive their individual reports, and have been invited to feedback.
- Reports will also be grouped by Care Community and shared with the Integrated Care Partnership, Local Authority commissioners, Care Community leads, NHS Cheshire CCG, CQC, Healthwatch England, and voluntary and community organisations.
- Individual reports and Care Community grouped reports published on our websites:

  https://healthwatchcwac.org.uk/what-we-do/enter-and-view/care-home-surveys/

  https://healthwatchcheshireeast.org.uk/what-we-do/enter-and-view/care-home-surveys/

This presentation report comes with huge thanks to our small team of committed staff, and the incredible volunteers who work to deliver Healthwatch Cheshire, particularly in these changed, and changing, times.

We know and appreciate how difficult a period this has been for people living and working in Care Homes, and their friends and families, with changes to the way things have been happening on an almost daily basis and restrictions on visiting having to be put in place. We would like to say a big thank you to everybody who has taken the time to respond to these questionnaires, as well as to Care Home staff for their support in ensuring access to the surveys and in assisting people to respond.

Healthwatch Cheshire Feedback Centre can be found at:

www.healthwatchcheshire.org.uk

Or contact us on :

0300 323 0006

@ Email: info@healthwatchcheshire.org.uk

@HealthwatchCW and @HealthwatchCE

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