

## Findings of a dementia audit: The Boltons Care Home, Reading

**Where:** The Boltons Care Home, 2-4 College Road, Reading, RG6 1QD

**When:** 1 August 2018

**Why:** Healthwatch Reading is visiting all care homes in Reading and gathering residents' views. In addition, we are using a national audit tool during a separate 'walk-around' of six care homes to see how the environment has been adapted to specifically support people with dementia.

**How:** Healthwatch Reading visited at a pre-agreed time with the care home and then made observations for each of the seven themes used in the audit tool. The Boltons' deputy manager, Belinda Vickery, joined Healthwatch Reading for the audit 'walkaround', of the dementia section of the home, and answered any questions as they came up.

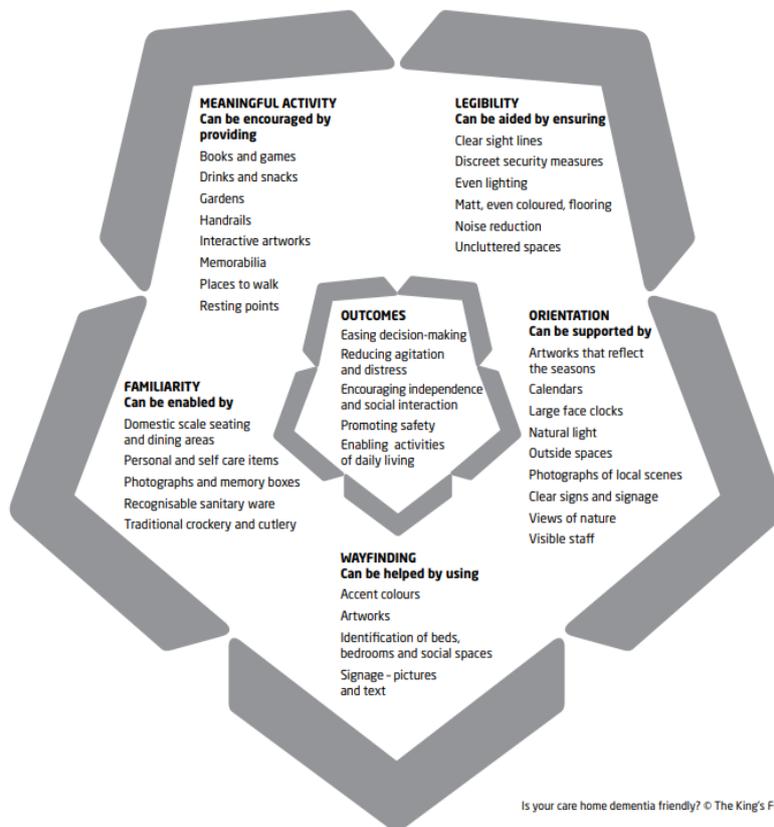
**Main findings\*:** Overall, we concluded that The Boltons is a dementia-friendly environment, which could be even better if colour contrast and signage were introduced in some areas of the care home.

*\*Our findings relate only to the date of the visit and changes may have happened since then. Prospective clients (and/or relatives) are advised to carry out their own visit to a care home before making final decisions on whether they feel the care home is suitable for their needs.*



## About the audit tool

Healthwatch Reading used an assessment tool called [\*Is Your Care Home Dementia Friendly?\*](#) It was developed by the national charity and research body, The King's Fund, as part of its Enhancing the Healing Environment programme, in 2014.



The tool is designed to be used during a walkaround of a care home. It is split into seven sections that ask up to 10 questions each, which should be scored from 1 (barely met) to 5 (totally met). A person can carry out the audit alone, but the King's Fund recommends it is done jointly with others involved in the person's care and/or life to ensure various views are considered and discussed.

Scores can be added up at the end of the exercise and used by

care homes to identify areas for improvement and/or make a case for extra investment, or by commissioners to compare different care homes in an area, according to the King's Fund.

## How we used the audit tool

The audit visits are the second stage of a Healthwatch Reading project on the experience of care home residents across Reading. This firstly involved visiting all residential and nursing homes across the borough to collect residents' views about their daily life. Individual visit reports with care home managers' responses have been published on our website.

This second part of our project aims to look in more detail at the environment of dementia-specialist care homes. This would help us to understand if Reading is 'a place where people can live well with dementia' - one of the priorities of the *Reading Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2020*.

Care homes voluntarily agreed to let us visit and carry out the audit and, in many cases, managers joined us for the exercise. We focused on observations and discussions about the seven themes rather than on scoring by numbers.

## The Boltons audit findings:

### 1. Does the environment promote meaningful interaction and purposeful activity between people who live in the care home, their families and staff?

We found the care home:

- has a welcoming feel, with an entrance sign and easy to use doorbell, and on arrival looks tidy and well cared for
- has big and spacious social areas with chairs in clusters to promote conversation between the residents
- has different types of chairs available, dedicated quiet areas and chairs and tables for residents to sit at and undertake activities
- has made books and puzzles available in the communal spaces for residents.

### 2. Does the environment promote well-being?

We found:

- there is a good natural light in the bedrooms and some residents have blinds in their room and others have blackout curtains
- there is also good natural in communal spaces from large windows and patio doors
- the home has different kinds of age appropriate memorabilia and mirrors on walls
- there is a dressing table with hairbrushes and costume jewellery that residents can wear, and a separate hat stand is also very popular
- residents have independent access to the garden through big patio doors.
- external planting has been chosen to be colourful and non-toxic
- residents also have a summer house where they can sit and be in the shade and walk around in the garden.

### 3. Does the environment encourage eating and drinking?

We found:

- the home has a cold drinks and snack station where residents help themselves, but it also reminds staff to offer drinks to those who are not mobile
- relatives can also make a drink for themselves in the kitchen, but residents are not allowed in the kitchen for health & safety reasons
- residents can choose to eat their meals in the communal area or their bedrooms
- the crockery and glassware are plain coloured, but some residents have bright beakers to make them more visible
- there is enough space for staff to assist residents with eating and drinking in the communal spaces.

#### 4. Does the environment promote mobility?

We found:

- there is sufficient space for residents to walk independently inside and outside
- floors are not shiny and are speckle and stripe free
- the handrails are wooden, but the home is planning to paint them in a different colour to make them more easily seen
- there are seating areas in the corridors, so residents can rest, and there also points of interests like photographs and artwork
- there is a sheltered area in the garden for sitting and encouraging residents to engage, there is a circular pathway and there is also a bus stop placed in the garden as point of interest.

#### Does the environment promote continence and personal hygiene?

We found:

- signage on toilet doors is too small to be seen from all communal areas but this is something that the home is planning to change by putting up bigger signage, with pictures, and also to change the colour of all the toilet doors, to help residents find a toilet when needed
- different coloured raised toilet frames are used in the toilets so, that residents can distinguish them from their surroundings
- taps are clearly marked hot and cold
- there is enough space for carers to assist residents in the toilets if needed
- there are no sensor lights in bathrooms, just the corridors.

#### 6. Does the environment promote orientation?

We found:

- around the home there are signs for residents to follow
- the home encourages residents to bring their own furniture and personal belongings which they can place and decorate in their rooms as they wish
- on the bedroom doors, residents have their picture or a picture of their choice on, so they recognise it's their bedroom
- there are visible clocks in all areas and in bedrooms, with some having illuminated clocks so they are visible in the dark
- the date is written on whiteboards in the communal areas which can be seen
- mirrors in the home have been covered with postcards and pictures and made into a feature
- doors that lead out of the garden are transparent and have a clear vision of the garden

## 7. Does the environment promote calm, safety and security?

We found:

- the home has double glazing windows and solid doors and the front door is locked and secure at all times
- the call systems and sensor alarms noise are kept to a minimum noise level
- residents are encouraged to take control on what they watch on TV and listen to their own choice of music.
- the home does provide facilities to support enhanced or end of life care by providing a fold up bed and a reclining chair for relatives to stay overnight
- all hazardous liquids and solids are locked away from residents.

### Areas for improvement

- toilet doors could be painted in a single, distinctive colour
- better signage is needed on toilet doors
- handrails could be painted in a brighter colour

(During our visit the home said it was reviewing the above issues)

*The King's Fund tool states: 'Not being able to find the toilet provokes anxiety and using the same signs and door colours to denote all toilets will help people find them more easily.' It adds that 'providing visual clues...including accent colours...will help with orientation'.*

### Response from The Boltons

*'We found the audit very useful. We plan to paint toilet doors a different colour, we are in the process of putting up large clear signage for doors as well.'*

## Acknowledgements and other information

Healthwatch Reading thanks the manager for welcoming us for an additional visit to carry out this dementia audit. Our findings relate to how we observed the care home on the date of the visit and the care home may have made changes/improvements since this date. Good practice guidance suggests that prospective residents and/or families carry out their own visits to a care home before making a final decision.

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