Enter and View visit to Brandon House Nursing Home

December 2023

Your healthwatch Leeds

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Summary

Introduction

Healthwatch Leeds carried out an announced Enter and View visit to Brandon House Nursing Home on 18th December 2023. The visit was undertaken as part of a planned series of visits to care homes in Leeds and had been prompted by the feedback we had received from Leeds City Council and members of the public.
From both postal surveys and speaking to residents and relatives during our visit, we received 13 responses, from a total of seven people currently living at the care home and eight relatives (two responses were completed jointly by a resident and their relative).
We also spoke to the registered manager, who has been in post since January 2023. It was evident that since starting her role, she has been implementing various changes which according to people's feedback have been improving their experiences of care.

Key findings

1. The majority of people (92%) we got feedback from found all or most of the staff to be caring. All who were able to answer said staff were respectful and that they or their relative felt safe at Brandon House.

2. 11 out of 13 (85%) responses stated that they felt that care met their needs (or those of their friend/relative), with two saying they weren't sure. The reasons given were that they would like staff to give more attention to care needs.

3. People were very positive about the activities they took part in at Brandon House. There was evidence that staff encouraged people to participate and that activities were flexible according to people's interests and preferences. However, according to people's feedback, activities didn't always happen when scheduled, particularly at weekends when the Activities Co-ordinator wasn't working.

4. Most people who were able to respond felt that they or their relative was given a choice about their daily routine all or most of the time and encouraged to be as independent as possible.

5. Most people who were able to answer (4 out of 5) said that they felt that their religious and cultural needs were met. Several people mentioned the vicar who visited the home regularly.

6. Although we didn't specifically ask about food, there was mixed feedback about it with one person saying that there wasn't much choice and another saying it wasn't always healthy or nutritious.

7. Just under a third of respondents (31%) said that their care plan was regularly reviewed with them although some said that they felt able to talk to staff if they wanted changes in their/their relatives' care.

8. There was a mixed response in relation to opportunities to give feedback with 6 respondents (46%) saying they did have opportunity, 5 (38%) saying they didn't, and 2 (15%) weren't sure. Most people mentioned informal ways of giving feedback such as speaking to the manager or other staff. Only two respondents said the care home had shared with them any changes that had taken place as a result of feedback they'd shared.

9. All respondents said they knew how to raise a concern or complaint and would feel comfortable doing so.

10. We observed recently refurbished communal areas of the home to be bright, comfortable and relaxed spaces.

11. Our experience was that it was difficult to get through on the phone to Brandon House and our messages were not always returned. This was echoed by the feedback we had from one relative.

Key recommendations

1. Review whether activity provision is taking place at weekends as scheduled and if not put measures in place to address this.
2. Ensure that residents and/or their family members understand what a care plan is and where appropriate are routinely invited to be involved in reviews.
3. Improve methods to regularly get feedback from relatives and residents and feed back any changes that have happened as a result. This should include ways that people can share feedback anonymously.
4. Improve the choice and nutrition of food offered at Brandon House. This could include seeking feedback from residents as well as getting nutritional advice.
5. Improve the reception system so that people trying to contact the home by telephone can get through and that messages are routinely responded to.

About the visit

Background

Brandon House Nursing Home is situated in the Meanwood area of Leeds and provides accommodation for up to 42 older people who require nursing, residential or dementia care. At the time of the visit, there were 40 residents living at the home, 16 of whom were living with dementia. The registered manager has been in post since July 2023.

Why we did it

As part of Healthwatch's role, we have a statutory right to Enter and View publicly funded NHS and adult social care services, in order to get the views of people using their services and their relatives/carers. The visit to this care home, was part of a planned series of visits to care homes in Leeds and had been prompted by feedback we had received from Leeds City Council and members of the public. At the time of the last inspection by the Care Quality Commission in August 2022, the care home had been rated as 'requires improvement' under all five domains: well-led, safe, effective, responsive, and caring1.

What we did

This was an announced Enter and View visit that took place on the morning of 18th December 2023 for a 2-hour period. Prior to the visit, we left surveys at the home to be posted out to all relatives. The surveys were put into envelopes and included a Freepost envelope for returning directly to Healthwatch Leeds.

A team of four volunteers and one Healthwatch staff member carried out the visit. We spoke to residents and relatives on the day and carried out observations around the home. We also spoke to the registered manager.

The survey and the observations focused on five key areas:

- Quality of care.
- Activities.
- Choice and involvement in care.
- Opportunities to give feedback.
- Living environment.

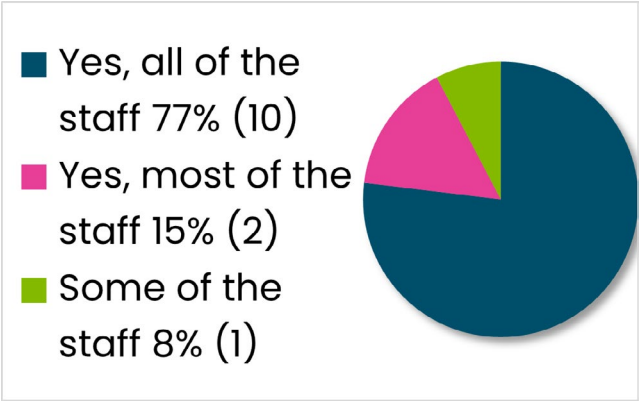
We received a total of 13 responses to the survey of which four were from residents, seven from relatives/friends, and two were joint responses from a resident and their relative.

Out of the 13 responses, seven were completed during the visit with relatives and residents and 6 were received by post following the visit.

What we found

Quality of care

Do you think staff at the care home are caring?



The majority of people (10 out of 13 responses, 77%) said that they felt that all the staff were caring. Staff were described by residents and relatives as "kind", "caring", "friendly", "understanding" and "helpful".

> **"I have not encountered anyone who has not provided good care."**

Two people mentioned that staff varied in how caring they were, with one of them mentioning that whether or not they were from an agency was a factor.

> **"There are some really attentive regular staff, but they seem to get a fair few agency staff who obviously aren't as familiar with the residents and don't seem to show the same level of attention or care."**

All 13 respondents said they felt that staff treated them or their friend/relative with respect. The staff we spoke to appeared to know people living in the care home well.

"Always very friendly and respectful - I have a good relationship with them."

"Always maintain dignity and privacy."

We asked people whether they or their relative/friend felt safe living at the care home and all of the people who were able to answer (12 out of 13) said that they did feel safe.

11 out of 13 (85%) responses stated they felt that care met their needs (or those of their friend/relative), with two saying they weren't sure.

"I feel well looked after and I have a button if I need anything from the staff."

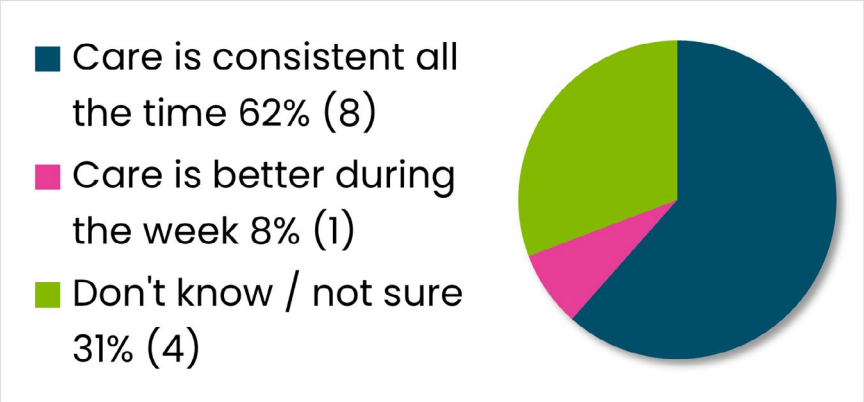
One person mentioned that the home has a visiting hairdresser and chiropodist. One of the people who answered "not sure" made the following comment:

"The home are aware of [my relative's] needs but carers don't always have the time for as much direct personal attention as is needed e.g. asking if [my relative] needs the toilet or changing their pad as often as they could."

During our visit, we observed people to be well-dressed, clean and well cared for.

Only one out of 13 respondents said that they felt there was a difference between care during the week and care on evenings and weekends. They said that it took longer at night to get care when they rang their bell.

The remainder said that they either couldn't answer the question as they didn't visit during those times, or that the care was the same.



Activities

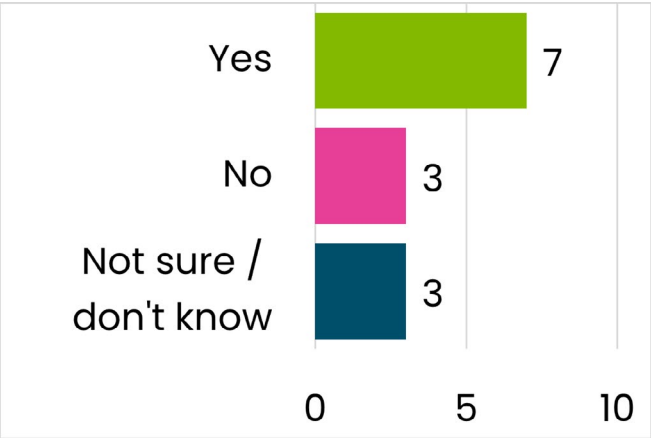
Brandon House employs an Activities Co-ordinator who works Monday to Friday, although we were told that activities were taken on by other staff during the weekend. We were shown some videos of recent different activities that had taken place on the care home's Facebook page and told that people's relatives enjoy being updated in this way. There was a really clear and accessible activity board showing what activities were planned for the week in pictures and large print. The Activities Co-ordinator said that activities were planned in relation to what residents wanted, what was seasonal (e.g. they were having Christmas themed activities the week we visited), and that residents can request changes if they want to do something else. The board explicitly said on it that if a resident wanted to request a different activity, then they could. We observed posters about other activities such as a visiting brass band, and a regular primary school visit. The home has a dedicated activities room which was equipped with lots of things to do and visual stimulation such as drawing and art supplies, board games, DVDs, CDs, jigsaws and books.

Just over half of all respondents said that they or their friend/ relative enjoyed the activities at the care home and that they reflected their interests.

"We play bingo. I do jigsaws a lot, with help. Whatever they are doing, I join in. The telly is not a need."

Several people told us how much they had enjoyed the Christmas activities they had done such as making and printing cards and decorations.

"They have dances occasionally and I like the music. I paint (resident showed me the Christmas tree decorations that he instigated and then painted). We can make suggestions about activities, and they have done some of what has been suggested."

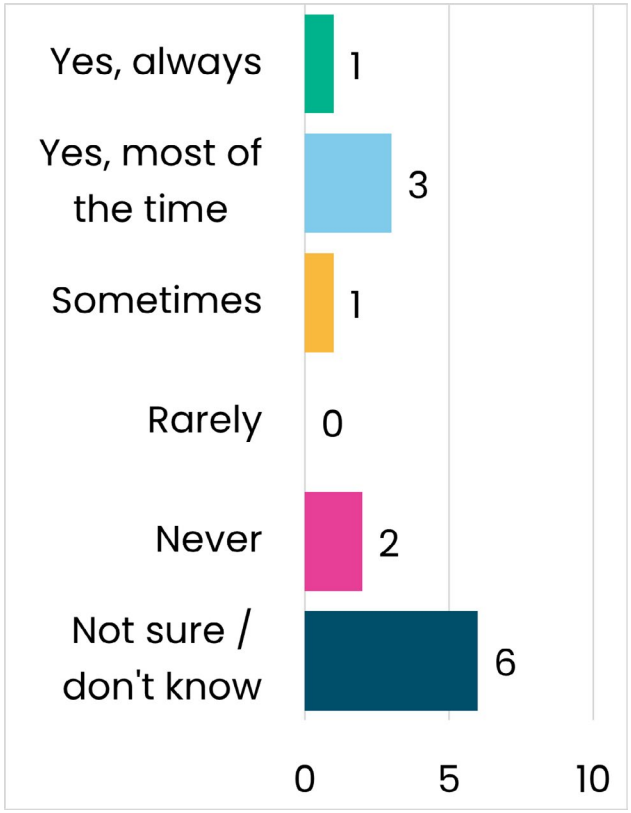


Of those who said "no", or "not sure", reasons were given such as "prefers to stay in own room", that they were "bedridden" or "refuses to join in any activities". There was an indication from some of the comments that staff were pro-active in encouraging residents to participate in activities.

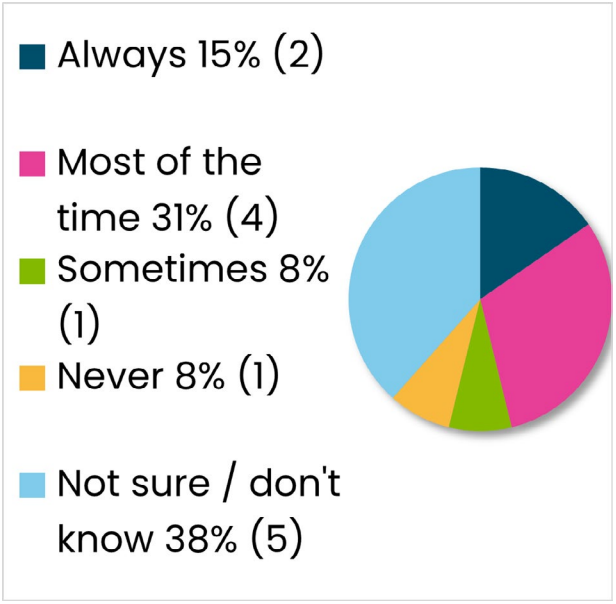
"The manager and staff have had several discussions with me to try and find a way of getting my wife involved in various activities and there has been improvement, but her condition varies very quickly, and she does not focus on anything for long or at all most of the time."

There was a mixed response as to whether or not activities happened according to the timetable. Of those who were able to answer, just over half (4 out of 7) said that activities took place when scheduled either "all of the time" or "most of the time." Two people said they never took place when scheduled, and one person said they "sometimes" don't take place.

"The staff are busy. It is short staffed. Doesn't always happen at weekends when [the Activities Co-ordinator] does not work."



Choice and involvement in care



Most people who were able to answer (6 out of 8) said that they were given choice about their daily routine either always or most of the time. People mentioned being encouraged to choose what they wanted to wear each day.

"I prefer a bath, and when I ask for one, I get one. I decided when to get up. The food here is alright. We have a choice."

There was mixed feedback about the food with one person saying they really enjoyed it and that they could request something different if they didn't want what was on the menu. Another person said they were given "the same choice every day."

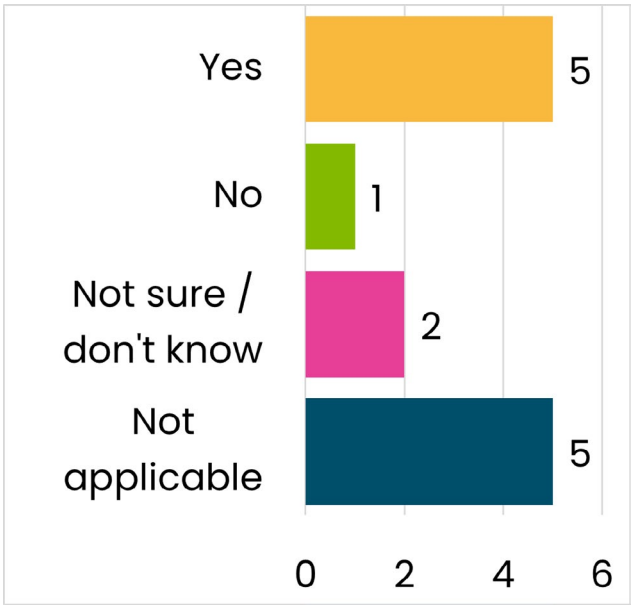
The resident who answered that they were only "sometimes" given choice about their daily routine, commented,

"It depends who is in charge. It is not consistent."

The relative who answered that their loved one was "never" given choice about their daily routine, went on to say,

"[The resident] is not able to make these decisions for themself. I do feel that they are often woken up early to have a body wash and dressed at 6am or even earlier."

One person told us that they get sad when their preferred routine doesn't go to plan.



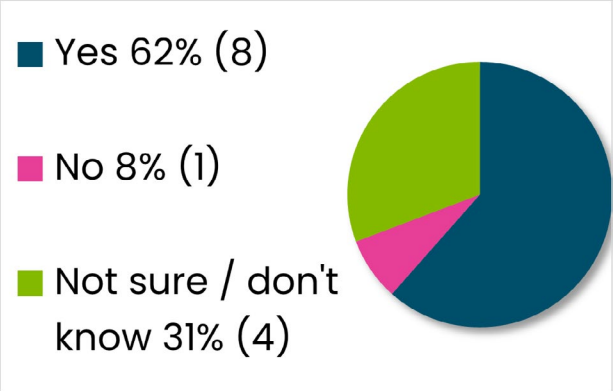
The majority of people who were able to answer or to who the question was applicable (4 out of 5) said that they were asked about and supported with cultural and religious needs. Several people mentioned the visiting vicar, which they said the new manager had enabled to come more often than before.

"I go to church. My son sometimes takes me. Sometimes someone comes here."

"He's a Muslim, so they watch what he eats and drinks."

The relative who responded "no" said they weren't actively asked but did indicate that they felt needs would be met if they addressed it.

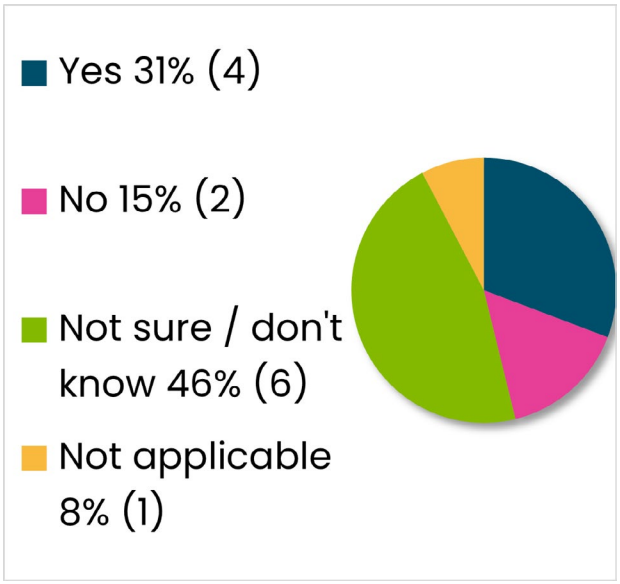
"No, they haven't specifically asked but if we needed to specify anything we would do directly with them."



The majority of people who were able to answer this question (8 out of 9) said that they or their relative were supported to be as independent as possible. One resident talked about being encouraged to bath or shower each day, whilst others said they were encouraged to choose what they wear each day.

"I try to be independent. I try to help others. This morning, I picked my own clothes."

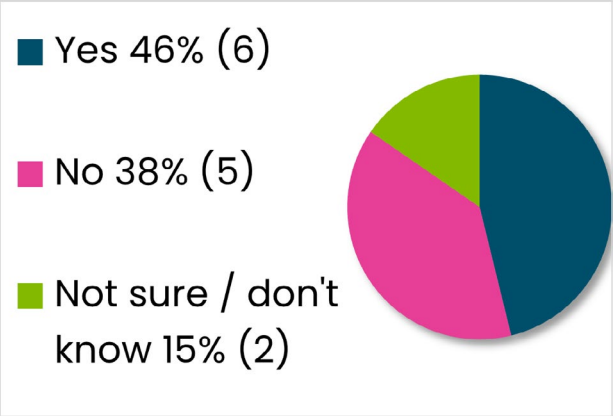
The relative who answered "no" to this question went on to say that this was because their loved one was "not able to be independent".



Only three relatives and one resident (31% of respondents) said they were regularly involved in care plan reviews. Of people who weren't sure, one resident said they could talk to staff about their care if they wanted changes, and another resident said that their relative dealt with that side of things on their behalf.

"We were offered a review meeting however I was unable to attend so will re-arrange. I'm sure the home would accommodate if I wanted to view the plan or query it."

Opportunities to give feedback

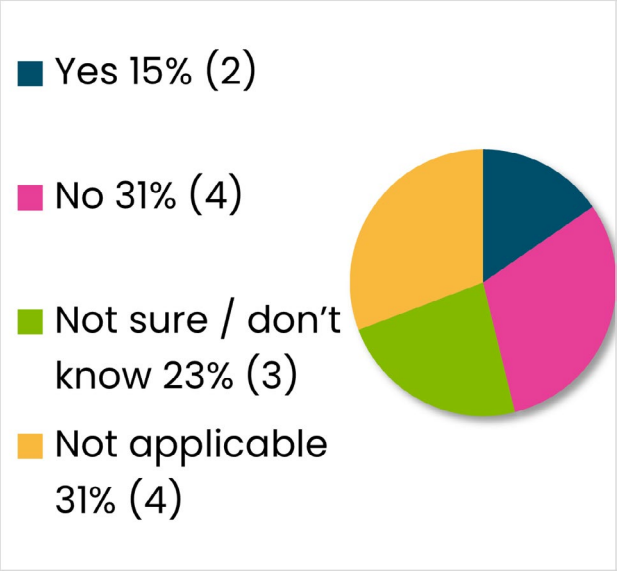


There was a mixed response in relation to opportunities to give feedback. Some people talked about informal ways they felt comfortable giving feedback such as speaking to the manager or other staff, whilst another person mentioned meetings.

"I've never seen any feedback forms/questionnaires however I'd feel confident offering feedback if I felt I needed to."

"We have groups in the activity room, and we have conferences where we talk to staff about what we want."

The manager told us during the visit that she has tried putting on relatives' meetings in the past but that no-one attended. However, she said she gets a lot of people speaking to her when they visit. She acknowledged that this is an area that she'd like to develop as she wants to find the best way to get consistent feedback from relatives and care givers.



Only two respondents said the care home had shared with them any changes that had taken place as a result of feedback they'd shared.

"There was a problem with the food for a while which has been resolved. I was asked for opinion and advice on the menu."

All survey respondents said they would know who to talk to if they had a concern or wanted to make a complaint, the majority saying they would go to the care home manager. All respondents said they would feel comfortable raising a concern or complaint if they needed to.

Living environment

The environment felt relaxed and relatively quiet, with just the usual noises to be expected from a busy environment. We observed lots of different communal spaces where people could sit. There were no unpleasant odours.

The manager explained that some areas of the home have recently been refurbished to make it a nicer environment to provide care and live in. She explained how staff had been engaged in this process and we saw that the recently refurbished activities room and other communal spaces were clean, bright and well maintained. Due to the time of year, we saw lots of Christmas decorations up and photos displayed from Christmas activities that had taken place. Outside in the courtyard area there were lots of well-maintained plant pots that contributed to a pleasant outdoor environment.

Outside the manager's office, there was a board which had lots of information about the home and information about advocacy. It was good to see 'Meet the Staff' posters which had pictures of the staff with their names and jobs in large print and also staff wearing name badges to make it easier for people to identify them.

Other feedback and suggestions

We provided space on the survey for people to share any other feedback they had. There were several positive comments from people praising staff and saying that they were happy living at Brandon House. One relative said they felt the home was managed well. This feedback was backed up by our own observations as we spoke to staff, residents and relatives who talked about significant improvements since the new manager had started.

"Brandon House is fabulous for my [relative]. Doubly incontinent (never smells). Room never smells, all staff are fabulous."

"I can't see much that needs changing. I think this is a good place to live."

There were a couple of suggestions from people for improvement. The first was around ease of contacting the home. We also experienced similar difficulties to this person when trying to arrange the enter and view visit with Brandon House.

"Telephone communication with home is lacking i.e. when phoning home very hit and miss if call is answered. Left lots of messages and never got replies from home. Better reception required. The actual reception area was at the front on entry but has been changed to seating area. Was a lot better before."

There were also a couple of comments about the quality of the food.

"The quality of the food is poor, I'd like to see that improved where possible with more fresh fruit and vegetables, I often see just sandwiches or pizza for some meals, not healthy or nutritious."

"It's the same choice every day. Things like sprouts/cabbage they don't really have the staff to prepare [the food] properly."

Our recommendations

1. Review whether activity provision is taking place at weekends as scheduled and if not put measures in place to address this.
2. Ensure that residents and/or their family members understand what a care plan is and where appropriate are routinely invited to be involved in reviews.
3. Improve methods to regularly get feedback from relatives and residents and feed back any changes that have happened as a result. This should include ways that people can share feedback anonymously.
4. Improve the choice and nutrition of food offered at Brandon House. This could include seeking feedback from residents as well as getting nutritional advice.
5. Improve the reception system so that people trying to contact the home by telephone can get through and that messages are routinely responded to.

Next steps

The report will be shared with Brandon House Nursing Home, Leeds City Council and the Care Quality Commission. We will agree with Brandon House Nursing Home the next steps to be taken in response to our recommendations and work with them to ensure any agreed actions are followed through and implemented. We will undertake any follow-up work required to ensure there are real changes made to the services so that it is a good experience for everyone.

The report will also be published on the Healthwatch Leeds website.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their feedback with us, and to staff at Brandon House for welcoming us on the day. Thank you also to our Enter and View representatives Stuart Morrison, Dianne Parker, Denise Wall, Pat Newdall and Meg Polese for undertaking the visit.

This report has been written by Harriet Wright, Community Project Worker at Healthwatch Leeds.

References

1 Care Quality Commmission, Brandon House Nursing Home overview: https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-126778737

Committed to quality

We were awarded a committed to quality marque from Healthwatch England. To obtain this we did an in depth audit which will be reviewed.

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