

To Paul Snell, The Commission For Social Care Inspection.
in Care

From Eileen Chubb, Compassion

I visited.....referred to as home number one, these are my observations.

I approached the home from the street so the entrance was not visible, I saw two members of staff sitting on chairs outside who were deep in conversation, I asked them where the main entrance was and was told very abruptly " Round there". It was very clear to me that these two staff had very poor communication skills and as their attitude was one of annoyance at having their conversation interrupted, I would question their suitability to be working in an environment where patience, compassion and good communication is a basic requirement.

I entered the building at 11.10 and told the staff member that I had made an appointment to view the home, I was told to take a seat and they would fetch someone, which I did. I observed two staff members had set up a table to give manicures, these two staff were very kind to the residents they spoke to, however it seemed a strange place to carry out such a task. There were two residents with their hands soaking in tubs of water, one was asleep and the other kept saying she could not hear what staff were saying to her and was obviously distressed and frustrated at this, she was not wearing a hearing aid in spite of there being a clear need for one.

In all I counted nine residents sat in this front lobby area, most were asleep in chairs. After five minutes a staff member came and said there was nothing in the book about me viewing the home but they would get a staff member to show me around, which they did and took someone of care duties to do so.

I was shown the ground floor first, I was shown the main lounge where I was told activities took place every day between 11 and 12, there were two care staff sat talking in one corner and one resident asleep in a chair in another corner. The carer showing me around saw the clock and added in a embarrassed tone that activities were canceled that day but they took place usually.

I saw no other staff or residents on the ground floor and we went up to the first floor and saw one resident sitting in their bedroom with two visitors, one of these visitors had just passed us in the corridor and made no eye contact with the carer showing me around, nor did they speak which I thought strange. I saw the district nurse through the open door of another bedroom, she was bandaging a residents legs.

We reached a lounge and kitchen area, one resident was sat at a table and a second resident was sleeping sound enough to have slumped sideways in the chair. A male member of staff was sat in an armchair which he had pulled quite a way forward so the residents were not in his line of vision and he was intently watching the T.V, he glanced around at us when he heard us talking but he did not speak nor did he look towards the residents in his care.

Apart from the TV there was total silence and no other residents or staff, I asked if most of the bedrooms were occupied and she said yes, I asked if the residents had gone on an outing that day and she said no but a lot of residents liked to use the library and were most likely there, I asked if I could see it and was shown the room, however the only two occupants of the room were two care staff sleeping in makeshift beds, The carer said the room doubled as a staff room by way of an explanation. I saw no other staff except for one lady in the laundry room.

I saw only 14 residents in all and the home has places for 38 which I found of grave concern given that I was told most of the residents had dementia and I wondered if they were behind the closed doors of the bedrooms we had passed. People are living in a care home because they need some level of care, that care would involve at least a degree of observation.

I was shown three bathrooms and a shower room, only the shower room had any evidence of recent use as there was condensation. The home seemed clean and there were no odours but there was a deathly silence everywhere. We returned to the main lobby where the same two residents were sat at the manicure table but the staff had gone.

I asked if there was a booklet or guide I could have and the carer went into the office where there was one member of staff but they did not know where they were kept and suggested I ring the head office, I left the building at 11.55.

The last CSCI inspection report for this home was dated July 07 a gap of 11 months, the report lists the previous inspection as July 2006, a gap of a further year. This home has been awarded 2 stars and may not be inspected again, instead the home will be assessed by itself! This will be done with the ticklist known as AQAA. These are supposed to reflect the reality in the home however the most recent inspection report notes that 16 surveys were returned to them but 13 had been filled in by staff. That box can be ticked as the staff were positive about the home.

Throughout this inspection report the staff are repeatedly commended by the inspector, this could be because every time something negative is found there is a desperation apparent to say something positive, the staff are praised extensively for "Their rapport with residents"

The home gets top marks for providing a service user guide to all perspective clients, I was not provided with it as no one could find it. The inspector relies on the fact that if the document exists than it must be provided.

On page 10 of the report it states that one of the two relatives who returned surveys said

"Differences are respected and catered for whether it is in respect of behaviour food or religion, the home tries to create a communal atmosphere"

What extraordinary terminology for a lay person to use, it is exactly the terminology you would hear from a home manager for example.

The report comments extensively on care plans which I did not have access to however it is noted that there is a past history of poor record keeping and states things have improved but there are inadequate risk assessments and general information contained in the care plans. Not inadequate enough to warrant a shortfall grade.

The home is also rated as good for its activities and daily life as the manager said some of the residents had a day out and plan another, this amounts to life on one day as opposed to daily life.

A residents activity group was taking place or it would have been but one resident said they preferred to have a chat instead of the planed quiz.

The manager says that quarterly residents meetings take place which she chairs and takes notes.

One relative who returned a survey said, " There need to be more staff " Another relative spoken to said " Staff are never constant so you do not get used to the same faces but they are very nice"

This is clear evidence of a high staff turnover which makes it difficult to check on training, however the report states that residents are protected from harm by the homes recruitment procedures but it noted earlier that high use of agency staff were used, did the inspector check if the agency had robust recruitment procedures, or did they presume it was so?

This inspection could be summed up with the words,

Presumptions based on tick lists,

Over reliance on hearsay,

Complacency that amounts to negligence,

The most worrying thing for me is that this last report may well mean the home is not inspected again so even this pretence of protection becomes not regulation but a licence for a home to do what it likes, after all who is looking? There were no " Dignity Guardians " on duty here. I hope Mr Snell that you will look into this matter without delay and that my actions in inspecting this home will lead to some improvement in the lives of those residents, which is after all what inspections should do.

I look forward to hearing from you,

EILEEN CHUBB