

# Beaconsfield Court

## Enter and View Report

### 8th December 2025



**Disclaimer: This report relates only to the service viewed at the time of the visit and is only representative of the views of the staff, visitors and residents who met members of the Enter and View team on that date.**

# Visit information



## Service address:

112 Galgate  
Barnard Castle  
DL12 8ES



## Service provider

HC-One Limited



## Service manager

Lyndsey McMullen



## Date of visit

Monday 8th December 2025  
9.00am-12noon



## CQC rating

Rated as good in July 2023



## Healthwatch County Durham Enter and View Officer

Claire Sisterson



## Authorised representatives

Rosemary Chessum - Volunteer  
Judi Evans - Board member

# Introduction

Our role at Healthwatch County Durham is to gather people's views and experiences, especially those that are seldom heard, to give them the opportunity to express how they feel about a service. The aim of an Enter and View visit is to gather views and experiences of residents, relatives and staff of a service and observe the environment to assess the quality of the service.

This was an announced Enter and View visit undertaken by authorised representatives who have the authority to enter health and social care premises, announced or unannounced. The team collate feedback gathered and observations made to compile a report. The report identifies aspects of good practice as well as possible areas for improvement. Healthwatch County Durham is an independent organisation, therefore we do not make judgements or express personal opinions, but rely on feedback received and objective observations of the environment.

The report is sent to the manager for their opportunity to respond before being published on the Healthwatch County Durham website at [www.healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk).

Where appropriate, Healthwatch County Durham may arrange a revisit to check the progress of improvements. The report is available to the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations.

## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch County Durham would like to thank management, staff, residents and relatives, for making us feel welcome and for taking the time to speak to us during the visit.



## General Information

Beaconsfield Court is a residential care home for older adults with and without dementia. There are 31 bedrooms, at the time of the report and all were occupied. Beaconsfield Court is a purpose built premises, over three floors. Each floor provides a lounge and dining area. There is also a hairdressing salon and treatment room on site, along with landscaped gardens.

The care home employs approximately 30 members of staff, including a housekeeper, kitchen staff and an activities programme coordinator. CQC inspected the property in March 2023 and it was rated as good.

# Methodology

The Enter and View representatives made an announced visit on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025. We received feedback from 9 residents, and four staff members from a variety of roles.

Two weeks prior to the Enter and View visit, we publicised our visit by leaving a display about Healthwatch County Durham and details of our visit. In order to capture as many residents and their families as possible, we left surveys and a 'post box' to be completed and left for our return. We didn't receive any responses in writing.

We spoke extensively with the manager to ensure we could best meet the needs of the residents and enable them to share their experiences. We asked residents about 4 areas of their care; communication, environment, social preferences and the staff and service. We created an easy read version of the survey and also used visual prompts and emoji faces to gain insight into specific areas of the service. The team also recorded their own observations on the environment and staff member interactions. Interviews were conducted one to one, and where necessary, staff assisted with communication. All responses were recorded anonymously.

To retain confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, any identifiable details have been removed from quotes.

Of the residents we spoke with, 7 were female and 2 male. Staff respondents included healthcare workers and kitchen staff.

Please note that approximately half of the residents at Beaconsfield Court Care Home are living with dementia. As a result, some individuals found it challenging to follow our discussions or respond directly to certain questions.

# Summary

An Enter and View visit took place on 8 December 2025, gathering feedback from residents and staff about life at the home. Overall, the home is described as caring, friendly, and homely, with residents feeling safe and generally well supported.

Residents said staff are kind, approachable, and responsive to their needs. Communication is usually good, and people feel listened to, although staff being busy can sometimes limit time for conversation. The environment is seen as comfortable, with private rooms and quiet spaces, though some issues were raised around room temperatures and occasional disruptions.

Activities and social opportunities are available and appreciated, but experiences vary. Some residents enjoy taking part, while others prefer quiet time. A few people reported feelings of loneliness or limited contact with family and friends. Meals are generally viewed positively, with some improvements already made following feedback.

Staff spoke positively about teamwork, training, and support from management, particularly noting recent improvements in stability and leadership. They emphasised the importance of providing person-centred care, especially for residents living with dementia.

In summary, the home provides a supportive, caring and respectful environment. Key areas for improvement include increasing social interaction, supporting residents who may feel isolated, improving consistency in the environment (such as temperature), and ensuring staff have enough time to engage meaningfully with residents.

# Findings

## Communication...

Residents generally felt that their communication needs were well supported. Several people reported having access to mobile phones and iPads, which helped them stay connected. Many also said they felt listened to by staff and that their requests were responded to appropriately. However, one resident did express that conversations could sometimes be disrupted by other residents interrupting while she was trying to speak.

*"I can be interrupted which I find annoying especially by other residents or people like the district nurses"*

*"If I was not happy, I feel that I would be able to tell the staff and that there would be some resolution"*

*"[The manager] asks how I am all the time"*

Staff keep relatives informed with a notice board which details activities on offer and the weekly newsletter along with other useful information.



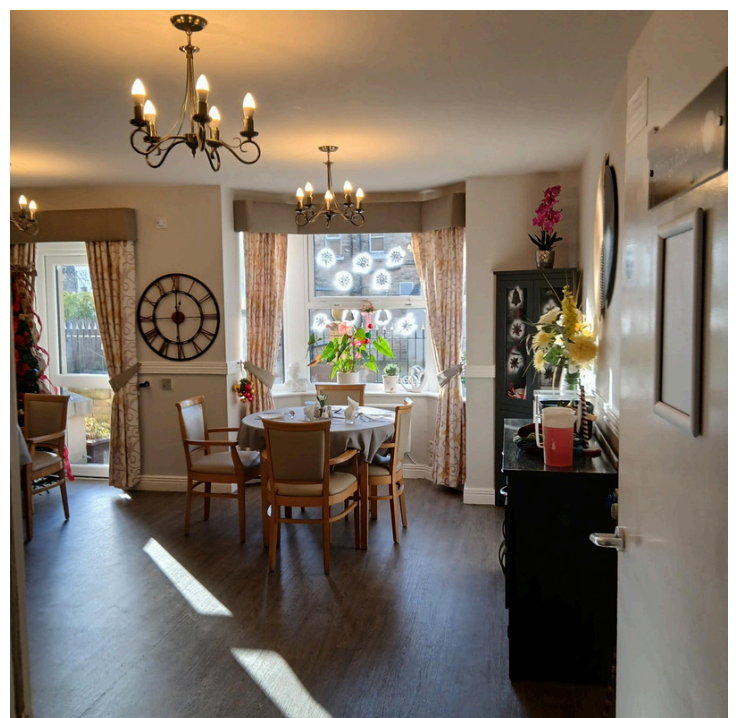
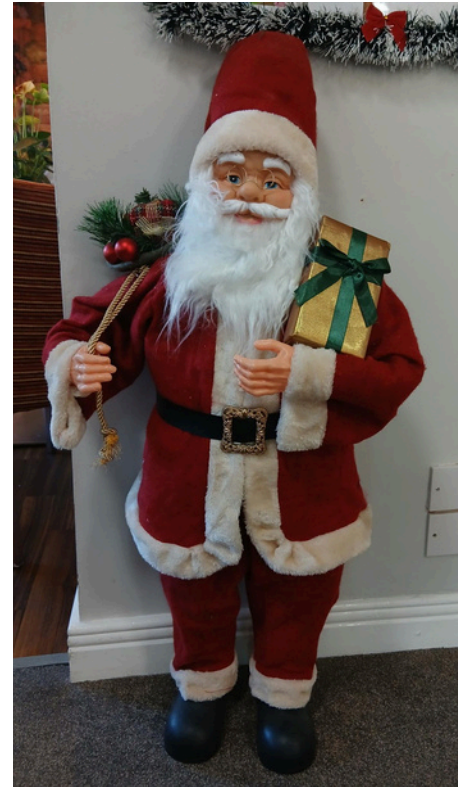
## Environment...

Residents generally describe the environment of the home as pleasant, comfortable, and satisfactory, some highlighted the benefits of large, ensuite bedrooms. The home provides quiet areas, which several residents appreciate, particularly those who prefer spending time reading, doing puzzles, or relaxing in their rooms. Additional services and features, including hairdressing, decorations, and seasonal activities, help create a welcoming and homely atmosphere. Residents also report that they have access to both baths and showers, and their preferences for personal care are usually respected.

"I sometimes feel the heat too much and I'm on oxygen, so in other rooms I have to open the window and people complain"

"I like peace and quiet, I like that and I get that here"

"I love to sit in the seat by the window so I can wave to the children as they walk to school"

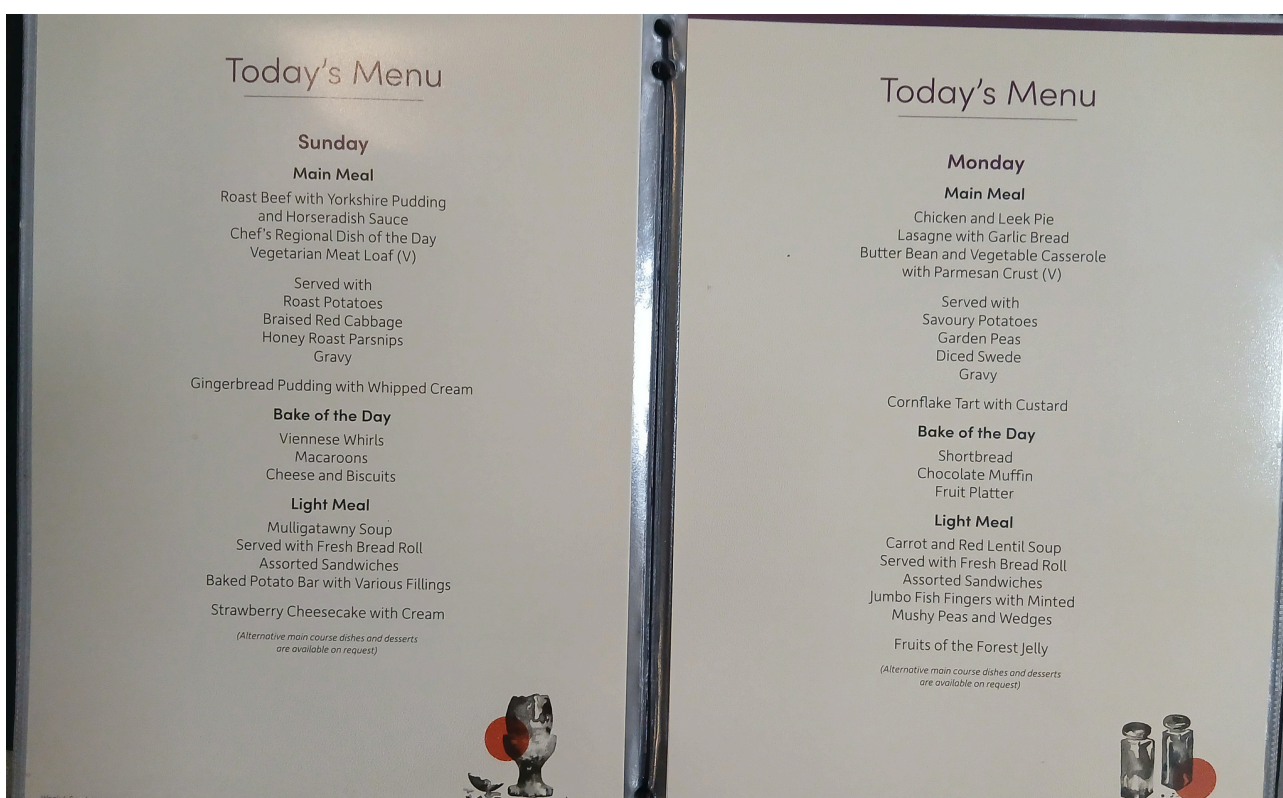


A few residents mentioned difficulties regulating room temperature, particularly those with medical needs such as oxygen use who may need windows open, which can sometimes lead to complaints from other residents who feel the cold. There are also occasional disturbances, such as ambulances arriving or other residents entering rooms, which can interrupt the calm environment. In addition, mobility limitations can restrict some residents' ability to go outside or take part in outings as often as they would like.

Overall, the environment is viewed positively and provides a comfortable and supportive setting for residents. Some residents also expressed nostalgia for their previous homes, gardens, or pets, reflecting the emotional adjustment involved in moving into residential care.

## Social Preferences...

In relation to food and dining, residents generally describe meals as good or acceptable, and they appreciate having meals regularly provided. There were some concerns raised about the quality of certain meats, particularly lamb and beef, although residents noted that improvements had been made following feedback. A few residents also mentioned that food could sometimes be served hotter. Residents show a range of social preferences, with some favouring quiet, independent activities such as reading, puzzles, or using technology in their rooms, while others enjoy occasional social engagement, including outings and organised events. Some residents prefer to observe rather than actively participate, and a few expressed limited interest in forming friendships, particularly for one resident where there is a noticeable age difference. Residents appeared happy with the social activities on offer.



There are also some social challenges, including difficulty connecting with others and limited visits from family or friends, which can contribute to feelings of loneliness. In addition, cognitive impairments may affect some residents' participation in activities. Overall, residents value having choice and flexibility in how they spend their time, balancing social opportunities with personal independence.

*"I like the hairdresser coming in, she is here often and I enjoyed going to the farm"*

*"The food is nice yes, I've had a nice breakfast"*

*"A little while back I complained about the butcher as the lamb and beef that was being bought was old. Since then the beef has improved and the meat has improved generally"*

## **Staff and service...**

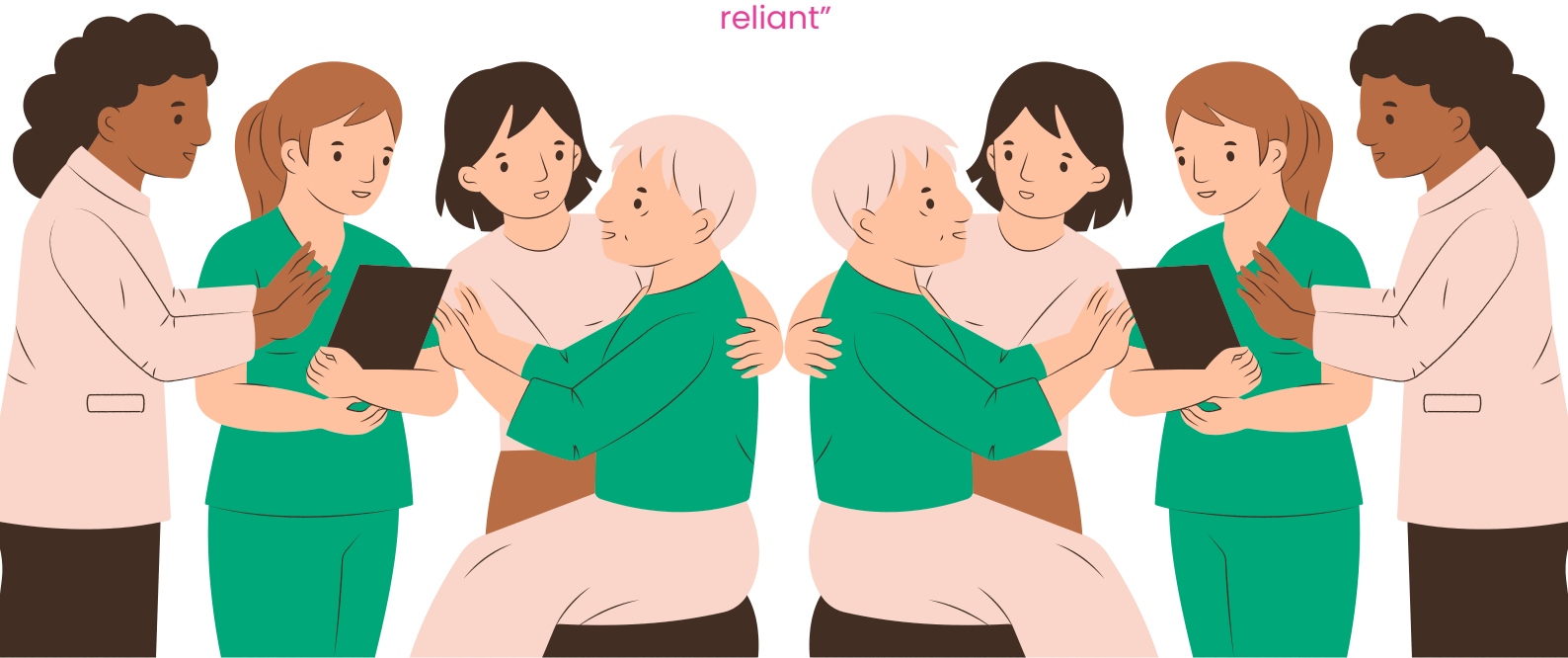
Staff are generally described as helpful, approachable, and available when needed. Residents reported that staff assist with tasks they cannot manage independently, including personal care, and that individual preferences are usually respected. There is also evidence that concerns raised by residents are acted upon, for example improvements in food quality following complaints. Staff were also seen as welcoming towards visitors and family members, contributing to a positive atmosphere within the home.

Some residents noted that staff are often busy, which can limit opportunities for conversation or social interaction. There are occasional disturbances during care routines, and one issue was raised regarding preferences around personal care from male or female staff. Overall, staff are viewed as supportive and responsive, though workload pressures may sometimes affect the amount of time available for interaction.

*"Staff talk to me and they do things for me. Some visitors would be nice"*

*"If something I can't do myself they will sort it out, they have a nice attitude"*

*"The staff are always busy doing things so it doesn't matter as they are busy I'm fairly self reliant"*



# Staff feedback

## Communication

Staff told us that communication is a central part of care, highlighting the importance of conversation, listening, and spending time with residents when possible. They reported that they encourage residents to share concerns or complaints and try to make residents feel valued through reminiscing about their past experiences. Staff also noted that if a resident does not understand something, they will take additional time to explain or involve a manager where necessary. Communication within the staff team was generally described positively, with one member referring to a “happy staff group” where different roles work well together.

However, some challenges were acknowledged. Time pressures mean staff cannot always respond immediately when busy with other duties. Overall, staff recognised that patience, calm communication, and attentive listening are particularly important when supporting residents with dementia or those experiencing distress or frustration.

“I recognise the differing need of the residents because of the varying degrees of dementia, mental illness and physical challenges, that they have”

“We always take a chance to remind them of their past and talk and make them feel special through reminiscing”

## Environment

Staff describe the home as calm, relaxed, and very homely, with a focus on making sure residents feel at home rather than in a workplace. One staff member spoke of the importance of ensuring the residents felt at home and it was the staffs responsibility to work within their space and not the other way round. The space supports this, with gardens, lounges, and social areas that encourage interaction.

After a period of instability with temporary managers, the current permanent manager is seen as bringing stability. The home has also moved away from separating residents with dementia, adopting a more integrated approach that many staff see as a positive change.

“There is a relaxed and calm atmosphere within the home”



“We, the staff are living in their home, they aren't living in our home”



## Social Preferences

Residents have a range of activities to enjoy, including puzzles and games, weekly hairdresser visits, seasonal events like Christmas parties, and outings. Trips can take place in the home's minibus, with some staff reporting weekly outings and others fortnightly, visiting local farms, shops, or cafés. Individual outings can also be arranged for residents seeking something specific, such as time outdoors. Staff emphasise making residents feel special through these interactions, while recognising that some residents may need support to get along with others with different needs.

Meals are flexible and tailored to each resident's preferences, including portion sizes, dietary needs, and cultural or religious requirements. Typically, residents have three main meals a day with snacks available in between and food can be provided outside regular mealtimes if needed. Staff highlight the importance of choice, allowing residents to request alternatives if they don't want the menu option, reinforcing a resident-centred approach.

*"We are 100 percent happy to make any meals as we strongly believe in residents choice"*

*"As part of person centred care all staff in Beaconsfield Court know exactly what all the residents like, their past interests, their favourite things, such as music, movies, and even know exactly about their religious needs"*

## Staff/Service

Staff at the home have a mix of experience, ranging from relatively new employees to long-term staff with up to 16 years' service. Some have progressed internally, moving from roles such as cleaner to care worker and then kitchen staff. Motivation for working at the home includes enjoyment of caring for older people, job security, and a positive team environment.

Training is comprehensive, covering areas like dementia care, person-centred care, moving and handling, and communication techniques, delivered through online, in-person, and hands-on formats. Staff generally feel well equipped for their roles. Management support is also a key strength, the new manager is seen positively, offering an open-door policy, professional guidance, flexibility for time off, and fostering a culture where staff feel valued and treated "like a family."

*"Support is really well and they treat us as one family"*

*"I feel much more optimistic about the current manager who was temporary but is now appointed to the position permanently. I feel that this manager listens to both staff and residents and this is positive"*

# Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated based on observations of the environment and feedback gathered from residents, relatives and staff.

## Communication

- Increase protected time for staff to engage socially with residents, not just complete tasks.
- Continue developing communication approaches for residents with dementia or complex needs.
- Monitor communication plans for residents, detailing their preferred level of encouragement, triggers for distress, what “inspiration” or motivation strategies work and how this will be monitored and reviewed (e.g., monthly)

## Environment

- Improve how room temperatures are managed to better meet differing resident needs.
- Reduce avoidable disruptions (e.g., entering rooms, noise) and reinforce privacy.
- Support residents with limited mobility to access outdoor spaces more regularly.
- Continue enhancing the homely environment and personalisation of spaces, which is appreciated by staff and residents.

## Food & Dining

- Maintain improvements to food quality, particularly meat options.
- Ensure meals are consistently served at an appropriate temperature.
- Continue offering choice and flexibility in meals and dining preferences.

## Social & Wellbeing

- Provide additional support for residents at risk of loneliness or with limited visitors.
- Increase opportunities for outings, ensuring accessibility for all residents.
- Activities Requested –
  - Piano playing: invite volunteers, family members, or a weekly pianist.
  - Charity shop outings: plan monthly trips or create a “pop-up charity shop” in the home.
  - Pet interactions: schedule dog visits or partner with local animal therapy groups.
  - Swimming/pool access for the younger resident:
- Consider a “Comfort From Home” programme, including:
  - Regular pet therapy sessions
  - A memory corner with photos or objects from their home
  - Optional “home comfort boxes” with familiar scents, blankets, or small items

# Provider response

There are a few changes here at Beaconsfield Court. So, under the area of 'social and wellbeing', we have appointed a new wellbeing coordinator that will start here on the 20th of April. She has a lot of new ideas.

We are having a bit of a push on wellbeing and helping our residents live their best lives. The management team has had extensive training around wellbeing.

I have also spoken to our property team about extending the patio area to make the area bigger and more comfortable for residents to enjoy, ready for summer.

We are also building a community link with the Witham (Barnard Castles Community Arts Centre) to get discount for residents, so we can use this regularly for residents that are interested. Residents can choose shows from the brochures provided.

On 'Food and Dining', we asked residents to complete feedback forms based on the foods served, and the quality of the meat was raised. Concerns were raised with the butchers that are used, and the quality seems to have improved since then.

With regard to food temperature, plates are now being stored in a hot trolley so that food is going on to a warm plate, instead of a cold plate which helps maintain the correct temperature.

We have had serveries built off the lounges so that residents that are able, will be encouraged and supported to make their own cups of tea, breakfast, etc.

I would highly recommend an Enter & View visit to any home, as it is beneficial to have an external perspective and fresh insights to support continuous improvement. Taking the time to engage with both staff and residents enables us to further enhance the quality of care and ensure residents are supported to achieve the best possible experience within the home.

Lyndsey McMullen (Manager)

# healthwatch

## County Durham

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