

Enter and View Report

Alexander Care Home, September 2024



A report by Healthwatch Lewisham

“We ensure that the care is person-centred by developing care plans with the family and residents, if they have the capacity.

Residents are given choices, treated with dignity and respect as well as respecting people’s cultures and beliefs.”

Alexander Care Home Manager

Contents

	Page
1. Visit Background	5
2. About this Visit	6
3. Summary of Findings	7
4. Relative and Resident Feedback	13
5. Staff and Management Interviews	15
6. Recommendations	19
7. Glossary of Terms	21
8. Distribution and Comment	21

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Visit Details	
Service Visited	Alexander Care Home 21 Rushey Mead, London, SE4 1JJ
Manager	Anthony Warner
Date of Visit	5 September 2024
Status of Visit	Announced
Authorised Representatives	Gaby Alfieri, Jack Burnett
Lead Representative	Gaby Alfieri

1. Visit Background

1.1. What is Enter & View?

Part of the local Healthwatch program is to undertake 'Enter & View' (E&V) visits.

Mandated by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the visits enable trained Authorised Representatives (ARs) to visit health and care services – such as hospitals, care homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, and pharmacies.

E&V visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but can also be made when services have a good reputation.

During the visits we observe service delivery and talk with people who live in the home, their families, and their carers. We also speak with management and staff. The aim is to gain an impartial view of how the service is operated and being experienced.

Following the visits, our official 'Enter & View Report', shared with the service provider, local commissioners and regulators, outlines what has worked well and makes recommendations on what could work better. All reports are available to view on our website.

1.1.2 Safeguarding

E&V visits are not specifically intended to identify safeguarding issues. If safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with safeguarding policies. If at any time an AR observes anything they feel uncomfortable about they will inform their lead who will inform the service manager, ending the visit.

If any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

1.2 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on this specific visit. It is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed on this date.

1.3 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Lewisham would like to thank the service provider, service users and staff for their contribution and hospitality in enabling this E&V project to take place. We would also like to thank our ARs, who assisted us in conducting the visit and putting together this report.

2. About the Visit

2.1 Alexander Care Home

On 5 September 2024 we visited Alexander Care Home, a residential care home in Ladywell.

Operated by HC-One Ltd., the home specialises in residential care for older people with dementia. It also provides specialist care for long-term health conditions, including diabetes and heart disease.

The home may accommodate up to 78 residents, and the home was at full capacity at the time of our visit. There are three units: residential dementia (31 residents), nursing dementia (26 residents), and nursing frail (21 residents).

The home has 89 permanent staff members. At all times, the residential dementia unit has 6 day and 4 night staff; the nursing dementia unit has 5 day and 3 night staff; and the nursing frail unit has 5 day and 3 night staff.

2.2 CQC Rating

The CQC is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. They make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care and encourage care services to improve.

Alexander was last inspected by the CQC in July 2021. The inspection [report](#) gave a rating of 'Good' overall, with individual ratings of 'Good' for being Safe, Effective, Caring, and Responsive and with individual ratings of 'Requires improvement' for Well-led.

2.3 Online Feedback

The [reviews](#) posted on carehome.co.uk give an average rating of 9.4 (out of 10).

2.4 Purpose of the Visit

Enter and View visits enable Healthwatch Lewisham to form an impartial view of how the home is operated and how it is experienced by residents, and to produce a report.

3. Summary of Findings

During the visit we engaged with the home managers, 9 staff members, 3 residents, and 2 family members.

15 people were engaged with in total.

This report is based on their collective feedback, plus notes and observations made at the visit.

Outside and Entrance

Notes

- The building's exterior is pleasant and well-maintained.
- The home is off a quiet street, and traffic is very limited.

What has worked well?

- External signage is clear, and visitors have easy access.
- The building is very well-secured, with two doors that both have passcode locks. The external doors are kept locked.
- The entryway to the building has useful information displayed about the care home, including an equality and diversity statement, fire and other safety procedures, and their CQC rating. They also have a board with photos and names of staff members, as well as a clearly labelled feedback box.
- The reception area is spacious and colourful, with plenty of seating for residents and visitors.
- There are numerous hand sanitising stations in the entrance and reception area.

What could be improved?

- One staff member noted that parking spaces are sometimes used by neighbours or people unaffiliated to the care home, but he noted that there were still always enough spaces.
- The activities timetable was not prominently displayed, but a staff member handed it out to us—a larger and more prominent timetable would be useful.

General Environment

Notes

- The staff were all very welcoming, and all our interactions were warm and positive.
- The home is very large, but it still felt homely, clean, organised, and peaceful.
- Much of the home had been recently refurbished or repainted.

What has worked well?

- Staff all seemed to know each resident and their personal and medical information well, and one resident was even welcomed to join us on our tour.
- There was very little noticeable noise in the facility beyond some everyday chatter in common areas.
- Common areas such as the lounge and dining room were well-lit and had abundant natural lighting. Common areas were arranged to allow for easy socialising among residents, visitors, and/or staff.

- The home was pleasantly decorated and furnished, with no clutter or disorganisation.
- There was a large and easily accessible back garden, which we were informed had been recently re-done. A staff member informed us that residents often help with some gardening activities, and one resident noted that gardening was one of her favourite things to do at the home.

What could be improved?

- We were informed that some areas still needed repainting or refurbishing, but these processes were already underway.

Accessibility

Notes

- The home design and decor reflected the needs and accessibility concerns of people living with dementia.
- Bedrooms were personalised with the help of family members but also according to medical need.

What has worked well?

- To improve visibility for residents living with dementia, floors, walls, doors, and door handles all had varying colours and contrasts. There were also clearly visible clocks and calendars. Signage was overall clear, consistent, and at eye level.
- For those residents who need them, hospital-style beds are available.
- The home has several lifts, and rooms are easy to enter as all corridors and entryways are wide enough for wheelchair and walking frame accessibility.
- Bathrooms and toilets are similarly wide enough to accommodate walking frames and wheelchairs. Toilets and washing areas are also all adapted with support rails and other aids.

What could be improved?

- Internal signage mostly uses both pictures and words, but certain signs needed both, and some could have been made clearer or more descriptive.
- Toilet signs could also have been made more consistently visible in certain sections of the home.

Safety

Notes

- The home is equipped with an intercom system, ensuring quick responses from the staff to any emergency or support requests.

What has worked well?

- Fire safety procedures are prominently displayed, and there are functional fire alarms and smoke sensors throughout the building. Fire extinguishers are in easily accessible spots, which are made clearly visible. Fire exits are also clearly marked and easily accessible.
- External doors are kept, with controlled access, and security cameras monitor the premises.
- Hand sanitising stations are present throughout the home as an infection prevention measure.

What could be improved?

- We noted some potential safety hazards in the garden, particularly water-collecting areas and cracks in the walkways that could increase the risk of falls.

Common Areas

Notes

- There were several commons areas, and each of the three units had commons spaces.

What has worked well?

- Chairs and tables were arranged in small groups, which encouraged social interaction among residents.
- Commons areas catered to different types of activities and noise levels.
- Rooms were well-lit and had abundant natural light.
- There are televisions, radios, and other entertainment options available for residents and their visitors, and the televisions and radios are kept at a comfortable level.
- Ceiling heaters are installed in key areas, and this set-up prevents any disturbances to residents walking around.
- The garden is large and easily accessible, with ample seating options with arm/back rests.

What could be improved?

- Aspects of the garden needed some renovation as some areas were not well maintained and some of the furniture was rusted, but we were informed that the garden is in the process of undergoing key renovations.

Meals

Notes

- Residents had mixed opinions of the food, with two of them noting they did not enjoy the food offered at the home.

What has worked well?

- Meal schedules and information, including dietary and allergen information, is clearly displayed in eating areas.
- Staff note that residents can make special requests and that dietary preferences are included in each resident's care plan.
- We found staff to be available and sensitive in instances when residents needed assistance eating foods.
- Residents and visitors are able to prepare their own drinks and snacks if they desire, and appropriate facilities are available to them.

What could be improved?

- Some residents said they did not enjoy the food.
- Meals did not appear varied in terms of type of cuisine, which might pose a problem due to the diversity of ethnic backgrounds among residents.

Staffing and Management

Notes

- Staff members and management informed us that trainings take place regularly and provide them with the information and confidence they need to provide quality care. Trainings include, but are not limited to, basic life support, data privacy, emergency procedures fall awareness and prevention, fire evacuation and fire safety, food safety, infection prevention and control, nutrition and hydration, and safeguarding.
- Staff members expressed confidence in their ability to identify and report safeguarding concerns.

What has worked well?

- Staff consistently spoke to residents in a respectful and kind manner, addressing them by their names.

- Staff were observed wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) in high-risk areas like the kitchen and during personal care activities.
- Staff were ready to assist residents with personal care, such as using the toilet or bathroom.
- All of the staff we spoke to had worked at the home for at least a couple of years and spoke highly of the work environment and support they receive.
- There is adequate and consistent staff coverage of all areas of the home.
- Family members we spoke to felt that feedback was both welcomed and listened to by the staff they interacted with.

What could be improved?

- IT systems seemed limited, especially for a care home of this size, as most systems were not electronic at the time of our visit. We were informed patient record systems would be made fully electronic from November 2024.

Residents

Notes

- Residents had mixed opinions on the activities offered at the home, but the staff and family members we spoke to felt that residents and visitors were encouraged to take part in activities.

What has worked well?

- Residents all said they enjoy living at Alexander, with one resident noting her fondness of the people who live and work at the home.
- The residents we saw were well-groomed, clean, and appropriately dressed, reflecting good standards of personal care in the home.
- We observed that residents with higher levels of dependency received appropriate support from the staff, including assistance with mobility, meals, and personal care.
- Residents appeared engaged and alert, and some residents were chatting with each other and staff.
- Residents we spoke to expressed that they could easily communicate with their loved ones.

What could be improved?

- A couple of the residents we spoke to expressed a desire for more variety of activities, particularly those related to art.

4. Resident and Relative Feedback

During the visit, we spoke with 3 residents and 2 family members.

Among family members—who included one resident's daughter-in-law and another resident's daughter—length of residency of loved ones was 3 months and 3 years respectively. All of the residents we spoke to directly are living with dementia.

4.1 Personal Care and Involvement

Every resident we spoke to said that they enjoy living at Alexander and that they feel cared for and safe at the home. Similarly, both family members we spoke to expressed very positive opinions about their and their loved ones' experiences at the home. All the residents and family members we spoke to also noted the "dignity and respect" with which they are treated by staff members.

Selected Comments

"Fantastic, in a word. Staff are really attentive."

"Freedom is given to residents."

"The care home is very clean. I get the feeling [my father] is well looked after. Clean, fed, and cared for."

4.2 Medical Care and Involvement

We received exclusively positive accounts of the medical care and involvement from the residents and loved ones we spoke to. All residents said that they felt safe at the home and that they felt that the staff adequately cared for them. The two family members both noted excellent communication from the home, with the daughter-in-law emphasising that she has been kept up to date about any medical incidents her father-in-law has had. Both family members also expressed confidence in the staff's ability to handle any emergencies that might arise.

Selected Comments

"I am quite confident that in a case of emergency, it will be carried out professionally."

"The care plan was all done from the onset even before she was admitted. [My father sees] the same doctor regularly."

4.3 Activities

Residents and family members expressed mixed levels of satisfaction with the kind of activities that Alexander provides, and one resident noted that there were "not a lot of activities to do." All three residents we spoke to said there were activities that they would like to do that were not provided at the home, including life drawing and other art forms and yoga.

Among the activities that residents did take part in, the individuals we spoke to spoke fondly of being in the garden and caring for the plants. Family members noted attending some events and activities at the home too, including shows and Easter egg hunts.

4.4 Staff

All the residents and family members we spoke to reviewed their experiences with staff positively. Residents reported feeling cared for by staff. One resident emphasised her carer treats her nicely, and another expressed that she liked the home's manager and that staff respond well to him. The two family members we spoke to spoke very highly of the staff's attitude and attentiveness, with one saying she felt "very reassured" about the way her father-in-law will be treated. Both family members also told us that they feel welcomed by the Alexander staff, with one explaining that she feels she is always "treated fantastically and respectfully."

Selected Comments

"[The staff] have to be good because they have a good manager."

"The carer is very nice."

"I feel very welcome whenever I visit the home. Staff always acknowledge you with a smile."

"I feel my father-in-law is treated with dignity and respect."

4.5 Opportunities for Feedback

The majority of residents and family members we spoke to said they felt listened to by staff when they provided feedback or had a complaint, with only one resident expressing she was “not sure” if she felt listened to by staff members. Family members also assured us that they felt they could express their opinions on the service and would be listened to by staff. Family members are also invited to certain care home meetings, sometimes through Zoom.

Selected Comments

“When we have a concern, the manager has met with us and listened to my father-in-law to resolve any problem he has.”

“We feel confident that if we would like to share opinions of how the care home is run, we would be listened to.”

“All works well here, feedback is consistent.”

4.6 Other Comments

Other comments underscore resident and family member satisfaction with the care home.

Selected Comments

“I enjoy the people around me. I enjoy the garden.”

“My son comes in [to visit] every fortnight. He can come in any time he wants.”

5. Staff and Management Interviews

During the visit we interviewed the care home manager and 9 members of staff, with roles including care assistants and senior carers, health assistants, and a wellbeing coordinator. Length of service ranges from a couple of years to 19 years.

5.1 Working Environment

Staff members we met consistently spoke highly of the work environment, with all nine staff members and the manager expressing that they feel supported at work and get along well with their colleagues. Some staff we spoke to even explained that they felt that Alexander provided them the opportunities to grow and develop their careers. Furthermore, all staff members expressed that they liked their work, with some expressing that they feel they could have positive impact on others' lives and some expressing that they enjoy the people they work with.

Staff say they undertake trainings regularly through both in-person and e-learning programmes. One staff member explained that the home manager often provides information about additional training opportunities and encourages everyone to take part. Trainings undertaken include basic life support, data privacy, emergency procedures fall awareness and prevention, fire evacuation and fire safety, food safety, infection prevention and control, nutrition and hydration, and safeguarding.

All staff members we spoke with expressed confidence in their ability to appropriately handle safeguarding concerns.

Selected Comments

"I enjoy my work. Helping people with their needs allows me to make a significant impact on the lives of residents and their families. Also, I have the opportunity to lead a team of healthcare professionals, ensuring that our residents receive high quality care, which I enjoy doing every day."

"I love working here. We have created a team that has been able to change the home. The home feels more now like a family, and everyone works well to provide care for the residents."

"I do enjoy my work at Alexander Care Centre. The team is nice, and we always work together and support each other."

"Our home manager is very supported, and if we have any concerns, he is always ready to support. Also, if I need for any training to progress there is a lot of opportunity to study or do training."

"I feel supported. I can call any colleague for help if there's an issue, and they'll gladly help."

"Staff are trained with different courses online and open to anyone who needs career development in any field preferred."

"There is both in-person and online training given to staff on a regular basis. It is comprehensive and covers a wide range of subjects."

5.2 Management and Service Operation

Overall, staff we spoke to felt that the service is well run. Most staff expressed that the home runs smoothly and reliably; one staff member explained that the service is run to best cater to each resident, and another staff member noted that the service had recently expanded the activities offered to account for resident preferences and prevent loneliness. One staff member, however, felt the service could do more to provide activities for residents.

Staff members consistently spoke highly of the home manager, and the home manager explained that he felt the company overseeing Alexander provided adequate support.

Selected Comments

"I am well supported by my team and the company in general."

"The service is running well. However, at times, it become challenging due to various unavoidable reasons like colleagues cancelling a shift at last minute due to an emergency."

"So far so good. The service runs smoothly and seamlessly."

"Good care is delivered to the residents; however, I would provide more activities for the residents."

"The management team are always supportive and encourage me to progress and help when needed."

5.3 Residents and Relatives

Staff and management noted the various ways that they ensure that their residents' individual needs are met, with several staff members emphasising the person-centred nature of their work. The home develops personalised care plans for every individual living in the home, with effort to incorporate the preferences and input of each resident and their loved ones. Staff all seemed very familiar with each resident, with some expressing that they take the time to get to know every resident and their

individual preferences. The people we spoke to also demonstrated knowledge of the diversity of resident backgrounds and respect for the cultural and religious differences among the service users.

We also heard that medical care is highly personalised, with a GP who visits the home every week and the appropriate medical professionals involved in individuals' cases as needed. Most of the staff we spoke to felt that access to medical services and support was good, but a few people spoke to felt that it remained a challenge at times. Most issues that staff outlined had to do with the time it took to get responses from external health professionals who residents had been referred to.

Staff also say that they regularly encourage residents and relatives to provide feedback on their care and service experiences. Staff noted several ways that residents and relatives can provide feedback, including through the home's Have Your Say board and suggestion box, via email or telephone, and with face-to-face meetings.

Most of the staff expressed that the home offers numerous activities and that residents are always given a choice in activity and encouraged to take part. A couple of staff members, however, felt more activities could still be offered.

Selected Comments

"We prioritise resident-centred care, meaning the needs, preferences, and dignity of each resident are at the forefront. By updating care plans with input from residents and their families, we ensure that our staff are trained to recognise and respect individual preferences."

"Person-centred care for each resident. We have to take the time to get to know the preferences of each resident."

"When we refer residents to external health professionals, like a dietician or physiotherapy, at times it takes a while to get a reply back, which affects residents' wellbeing."

"The home has activities scheduled. Also, we have weekly wellbeing meetings with the activity coordinator. We review and discuss any wellbeing plans for the week."

"We encourage feedback from residents by explaining them that feedback help in to improve our care."

"Complaints are appreciated since they help the management to identify gaps missing as far as service delivery is concerned. Management use their complaints to fill those gaps and improve on service delivery."

5.4 Any Other Comments

When asking about potential improvements, staff suggestions mostly revolved around more varied or regular activities for residents.

Other comments to us indicate that staff feel confident in the home's ability to provide a reliable and personalised service to its residents.

Selected Comments

"More funding for activities would be nice."

"I feel fortunate to work at Alexander, where the dedication to providing exceptional care is evident every day."

6. Recommendations

Healthwatch Lewisham would like to thank the service for the support in arranging our E&V visit.

Based on the analysis of all feedback obtained, we would like to make the following recommendations.

Recommendations

6.1 Ongoing refurbishments and renovations

The staff seem aware of the need for certain refurbishments inside and outside of the home. Much of this process is already underway, and we encourage the home to continue these changes.

Some of the interior rooms need repainting, which is already underway. We recommend continuing this repainting process.

Some of the outdoor furniture was rundown or rusted. We recommend replacing these pieces of furniture.

We noted a couple of safety hazards in the garden, particularly areas where large pools of water can collect and cracks in sidewalks that can increase the risk of fall. Effort should be put into repairs in the garden to reduce fall risk.

6.2 Internal signage and information displays

While, overall, the home displayed information in a clear and dementia-friendly manner, some signs were inconsistent.

While most signage throughout the home included both pictures and words, we encourage staff to ensure all signs have this feature and that signs are consistently clear and descriptive.

Toilet signs should be made consistently visible throughout all areas of the home.

6.3 IT systems

At the time of our visit, IT systems in the home were limited, and staff largely relied on physical records. We were informed the patient records system would move more fully online from November 2024.

The move to online systems should be carried out in full. Once online, systems should be monitored consistently for any issues that might arise.

6.4 Meals

While meals accounted for the dietary needs of residents, some residents expressed dissatisfaction with the meals they received.

Staff should ask residents for feedback on the meals that they receive to ensure preferences are met (e.g. one resident suggested that hot plates would be a good addition to meals.)

Meals should better reflect the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds of residents living in the home, beyond just traditional British cuisine.

6.5 Activities

Staff noted efforts to expand the activities programme, but, based on some of our feedback, we encourage the home to provide more options to residents.

An activities timetable should be displayed prominently in the home, particularly in commons areas and reception.

Resident should be asked for their input, which should be incorporated into the activity offerings (e.g. some residents we spoke to want more arts activities than were offered at the time of our visit.)

7. Glossary of Terms

AR	Authorised Representative
CQC	Care Quality Commission
E&V	Enter & View

8. Distribution and Comment

This report is available to the public and is shared with our statutory and community partners. Accessible formats are available.

If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences, please contact us.

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“We, the family, are happy with this care home but should an issue arise, then we would know we would be listened to.”

Family member