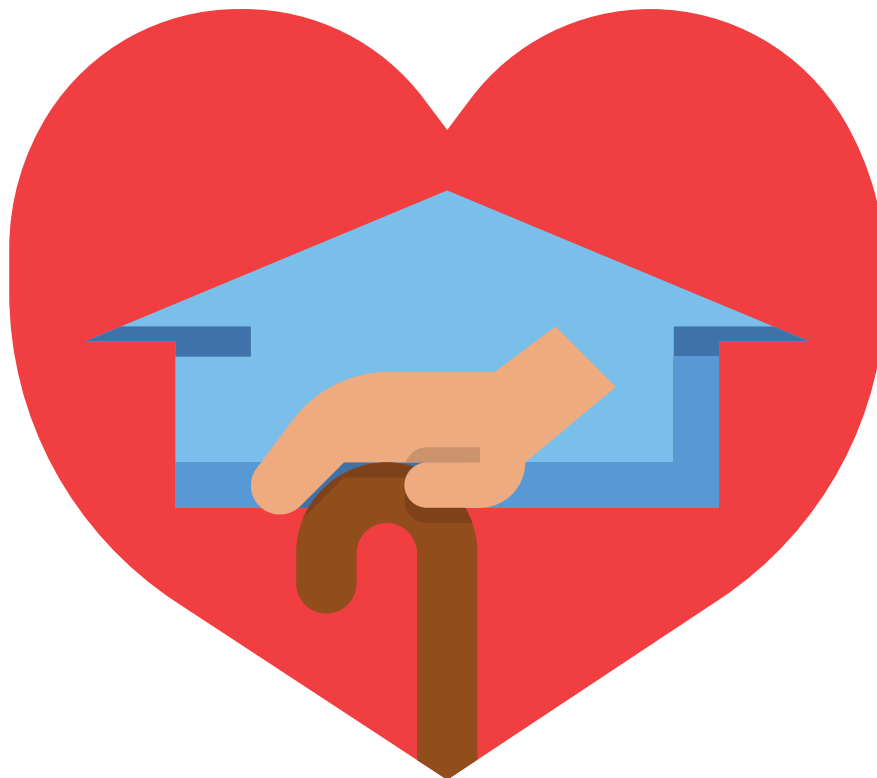


**Spotlight on Care Homes in  
Medway  
Aquarius Residential Care  
Home, Chatham**



**September 2020**

## FOREWORD

### **In Medway we have 74 Care Homes offering a variety of services and different levels of support to residents and their families.**

In June 2018, a new system was created to enable every nursing and residential home in Medway to form a partnership with a local GP. The partnership was designed to ensure residents would have a dedicated GP who could visit them in the home and help avoid unnecessary hospital admissions.

That means that every care home in Medway should now have a dedicated GP who visits the care home regularly, getting to know residents and their needs, giving continuity and more timely medication reviews. Patients still have the option to opt out of this service if they wish and register with an alternative GP.

This new way of working has been in place since 2018, and we wanted to talk to people to see what difference it has made to their experience.

We committed to visiting 24 Care Homes across Medway to talk to the residents, their friends and family and staff to hear about how the new enhanced GP service has changed the services offered at the homes. We also wanted to find out whether the residents were supported with other health and social services such as dental treatment and social activities.

Coupled with this desire, we knew that Medway Council were planning to recommission residential and nursing care services for older people and working aged adults in Medway. We wanted to ensure decision makers heard about peoples' experience of living in a Care Home in Medway to help inform their decisions.

Everything we found is detailed in this report and we have shared our findings directly with each Care Home, Medway Council and the Medway Clinical Commissioning Group.

We would love to hear your story about a Care Home in Medway. Was it good? Could it have been improved?

Get in touch with us anytime on: [www.healthwatchmedway.com](http://www.healthwatchmedway.com)

We look forward to hearing from you

Maggie Cane  
Healthwatch Medway

## What were we trying to achieve from our visits?

We wanted to talk to people who were currently residents at Aquarius Residential Care Home, in Chatham about their experiences of the health and social care offered at this home. We also wanted to speak to staff to see if the new enhanced GP service had made a positive impact on how they work and support their residents.

We wanted to hear about some key areas of the resident's lives at Aquarius Residential Care Home:

- Were residents given a choice about which Care Home to move into when they were choosing where to go?
- Were residents given the choice to keep their own GP or join the homes dedicated GP Practice when they moved to Aquarius Residential Care Home:
- For residents who have lived at the home since 2018, did they feel the new system of a dedicated GP visiting the home had benefited them?
- Are the social care needs of the residents supported at the home with a programme of activities?
- Are residents offered support with other health services, such as a dental services, eye sight checks, etc.

## How did we go about it?



Our trained Healthwatch staff and volunteers visited Aquarius Residential Care Home on 23rd January 2020. These visits are known as Enter & View visits.

Prior to our visit, we provided printed questionnaires designed specifically for family and friends and we asked each home if they would kindly hand these out to family and friends as they visited their residents. These questionnaires were anonymous and had a freepost envelope included so that people could complete at their leisure and return to Healthwatch Medway directly.

During our visits, we spoke to residents and staff and asked them a series of set questions and we listened to their thoughts and experiences.

The following quotes in “italics” are direct quotes from residents (and family members who were there on the day we visited), taken down by our Trained Volunteers and staff during our visit.

We spoke to 3 residents and one member of staff during our visit and we heard from 2 families.

## What did people tell us?

### In Summary

- 2 residents that we spoke to said they had chosen Aquarius Residential Care Home, one making the decision along-side family members.
- All 3 residents who spoke to us were living at Aquarius Residential Care Home when the new enhanced GP service came into place.
- 2 of the residents said that they thought the service they were offered had got worse.
- One family told us that they were not given the choice when their loved one moved into a Care Home.
- Staff we spoke to said there had been an improvement in the service since the new GP service started telling us that there is a reduced need for non-essential visits and that communication has improved.

### What have we recommended?

Based on the feedback from residents and what we saw during our visit, we have made the following recommendations.

- Ensure the home always has a full schedule of staff with the capacity to ensure all residents needs are taken care of.
- A Befriending service for residents should be explored to support residents.

We will be following up with all the homes we have visited to check that they have implemented our recommendations.



## What did people tell us?

\*Please note some residents did not answer all questions

## What did residents tell us?

We asked residents whether they had a choice of Home when moving to a Care Home, this is what we heard:

Two of the residents that we spoke to told us they had chosen Aquarius Residential Care Home, One of those made the decision alongside family.

“I saw the home advertised and it stood out from the others”.

One resident said that her son chose Aquarius Residential Care Home for her, he had applied to other homes but this home was the only one with a vacancy.

We heard what was important to residents when choosing Aquarius Residential Care Home:

Residents told us it was important that it had a home from home feeling, that the staff were caring and somewhere they could be happy.

We asked how long each resident had been living at Aquarius Residential Care Home and had they notice any changes in services during that time:

All three residents we spoke to had been at Aquarius Residential Care Home for over 3 years

Two residents told us that they thought the services offered at the home had got worse since they moved in commenting:

“Too many people and not enough staff. The home seems unable to retain staff, they leave once trained. I feel that shifts for staff are very long and staff do not stay. Staff should be encouraged to stay for at least a year after training”.

One resident told us that they were not as happy now as when they first moved into the home.

We asked residents whether they had a care plan:

None of the residents we spoke to knew about their care plan however they all commented on understanding that notes were always being taken regarding their care.

We wanted to know when residents had last seen a GP or practice nurse, and are appointments well co-ordinated and convenient:

Staff told us that their GP makes regular visits. According to NHS England’s plan, GPs should carry out a weekly round in the care homes that they cover.

All three residents told us that they had seen the GP recently.

“My care is well co-ordinated and changes are explained by GP and carers”.

## **Our Findings in Detail cont.**

### **We asked residents whether they made decisions around their medical needs?**

Residents told us they have discussions with staff around their medical care.

“Carers discuss care with you and explain changes in medication. Currently supported by carers to apply cream”.

“I don’t feel fully involved in my medical care”.

### **We asked residents whether they had been offered support by staff to access other health services e.g. dentist, chiropodist?**

The CQC published a report in 2019 on oral care in Care Homes. Their findings show us that people in care homes do not always get the support they need with oral care with one third of care homes saying they found it difficult to access routine NHS dentistry services - domiciliary dental services should be in place in every town to support the needs of residents in care and nursing homes, whether this is through visits from dentists or the training of staff to support them in offering general oral care and hygiene to their residents.

### **Does a Dentist visit Aquarius Residential Care Home to examine residents:**

Residents told us that the dentist does visit.

Two residents recalled seeing a dentist recently. One resident couldn’t remember when they last saw a dentist.

### **Does an Optometrist visit Aquarius Residential Care Home to examine residents:**

Residents told us that the optician does visit the home.

One resident told us that she wasn’t very happy with the optician she last saw.

All 3 residents we spoke to said they had been offered access to other health services such as chiropody, mental health support.

### **Social Activities at Aquarius Residential Care Home:**

Staff informed us that there is a schedule of activities and the list is always on display. The home has links to local schools and is involved with local charities.

One resident told us that she would like to have the opportunity to go shopping for personal items that are not available at the home.

Another resident told us she enjoys knitting and that her family takes her shopping. The resident is blind and has visits from the RNIB. This resident has special glasses to watch TV and a memory stick to listen to books.

Two of the residents we spoke to said they enjoy watching television in their rooms. One of these residents was rather nervous to answer and lowered her voice. She told us:

“I like to watch television in my room however I don’t because I have to have it turned up and this causes complaints about the volume”.

## What did family and friends tell us?

Family and friends of the residents of Aquarius Residential Care Home kindly answered a questionnaire for Healthwatch, here is what they said:

Please note: The word 'resident' is used to identify the resident in the home that family and friends are commenting on behalf of)

We asked whether there was a choice when choosing a home for the resident and if so, what was important to them:

One family told us that they chose two homes, after visiting affordable homes. One had a vacancy, one didn't. The Council took the decision to move resident from the Stroke Recovery to Aquarius Residential Care Home. The family told us that they were only told this the day before she was moved.

This family commented:

"Aquarius has turned out to be a lovely care home. The carers are kind, helpful, enthusiastic. Food is good, there is easy access via the bus service. The Home is clean and tidy. Mum realises she is in the best place, given her disabilities and limited capabilities".

The other family who answered our questionnaire told us:

"As family we choose this home. It was small and appeared friendly".

Health and GP service at Aquarius Residential Care Home:

To gain an insight into the impact the new enhanced GP service was making on the resident's lives at Amherst Court Care Home we asked family and friends whether they had noticed any changes in service. Do their loved ones have regular visits from the GP, has there been more support with their medical needs and therefore, has there been less visits to hospital and less outside medical intervention?

When choosing Aquarius Residential Care Home, was the new enhanced GP service discussed with you?

One family responded to this question saying yes, the service was discussed with them when their loved one moved in and were aware that there was a choice to stay with their own GP or move over to the Care Homes dedicated GP.

## **Our Findings in Detail cont.**

We asked whether residents had encountered any problems in seeing a GP when the need arises:

No one had encountered any problems with the Care Homes GP.

If the resident is using the care home's GP, have you noticed any changes or differences to the medical support over the past six months, for example, regularity of visits by the GP; less need for hospital visits/outside medical intervention?

One family told us:

"The resident didn't get regular visits from their old' GP. So far, no need for hospital visits or outside intervention".

The other family said that the GP visits seem to be regular.

On the day that the GP is due to visit, are residents asked whether they would like to be seen during this visit?

One family answered this question and said told us no, residents weren't asked if they would like to see the GP.

We asked whether it was easy to access the GP outside of regular scheduled visiting times:

Both families said they were not aware of any problems for the resident accessing the GP outside regular scheduled visits.

When we asked how satisfied family and friends were with the GP service at Aquarius Residential Care Home:

Both families who responded said they were satisfied with the GP service at Aquarius Residential Care Home.

Are family members involved in the Medical Care of the resident?:

One family confirmed that they were involved in the medical care of their family member.

When asked whether they knew of a Care Plan in place for their family member:

One family said they were aware of the Care Plan for the resident, the other family said they were not aware there was a Care Plan in place.

We asked, was the resident able to go outdoors unaided? If so, do you think they would like to be taken out by staff?

Both of the families who responded told us that their loved ones were unable to go outdoors unaided

How often is the resident taken outdoors?

One family told us that their loved one had been taken out into the garden a couple of times however has expressed a dislike for going outdoors.



## What did the Staff at Aquarius Residential Care Home tell us?

We asked staff whether they had noticed any improvement since the enhanced GP service commenced, this is what they told us:

The member of staff who spoke to us on the day of our visit told us that they have seen an improvement in communication, support staff and a new confidence in decision making.

How often does the dedicated Homes GP visit?

“GP makes regular visits and other visits as required”.

What proportion of residents are seen on those occasions and does the GP have enough time to see all the residents who wish to be seen?

Residents are seen according to need. The GP service is good and there is now a reduced need for non-essential visits.

Does the GP refer residents to other healthcare specialists such as physiotherapists, dieticians and Parkinson disease nurses as frequently as you think they should?

The GP does refer residents if it is necessary. Staff also make referrals to services such as dietician, dementia service and the District Nurse.

Do you have an Infection Prevention Lead at this residence?

There is a lead for infection control within the home and the last training was in 2019.

How do you ensure residents are hydrated and are eating well?

Do you have a schedule which includes checking on each resident at regular intervals?

Staff told us that there are drinks in every room and regular tea and refreshments is offered. There are always juices available at meal-times.

Staff encourage fluid intake for residents, and this is recorded each day.

Everybody’s food intake is recorded. There are special measures for residents who may be at risk such as food charts and if necessary residents are referred to a dietician.

Are refreshments offered to residents through the night? Is this logged?

Staff told us there are always drinks available at bedside. Late tea/coffee is offered and logged in the multi care systems on the computer.



## What did the Staff at Aquarius Residential Care Home tell us cont.

Pressure Sores/Pressure Ulcers - What is the procedure for checking residents and are all staff trained to identify early symptoms?

Staff told us that all changes noted are reported and referred to the District Nurse for advice. Staff are trained in recognising Pressure Sores. Air mattresses are supplied by the District Nurse team.

We were told that there is one resident who currently has Pressure Sores and that a turning regime is in place for bed bound residents.

Activity's for the residents: Do you have a weekly schedule of activities for the residents to take part in if they wish to?

There is a weekly schedule of activities including knitting, exercise and music for health.

The home has a 'Daily Sparkle' where every day there is something like a daily newspaper with info regarding this date' in the past for residents to reminisce.

Each resident has a 'special day' when they are made a fuss of on that day. The resident will get to choose what they would like to eat and have an outing.

Are residents offered time outdoors and if so, how often do staff take residents outdoors (whether into the home's grounds or further afield):

The staff member who spoke to us told us that they use the garden in the summer for BBQs and afternoon tea. Residents go on shopping trips with relatives and two residents go to day centres.

Befriending Service - we asked both Staff and family and friends whether they thought a befriending service would benefit the residents:

Befrienders would be a group of Volunteers who would be appropriately vetted and trained and residents and their families would be approached and could sign up to the service.

One person said it would be nice to have a befriending service in place for when family/friends can't visit.



## General observations made by Healthwatch staff and volunteers during the visit:

Healthwatch were welcomed on arrival. On the day Healthwatch visited it was noted that there were only two members of staff working for 20 residents.

Unfortunately, one resident was ill and an ambulance had to attend.

The Home has in-house chefs and laundry services. Aquarius offers residents access to other health services including a Podiatrist, who visits regularly.

### CQC rating:

Current CQC Rating of Aquarius Residential Care Home - Good. Visited on 3rd January 2018.

### Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Medway would like to thank the residents, family, friends and staff along with our volunteers for taking the time to contribute to this piece of work.

### Disclaimer

Please note this report relates to what we saw and heard on the day of our visit. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all patients, family, friends and staff, only an account of what was contributed and observed during our visit on those days noted.



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