

Appletree Grange Care Home

Enter and View Report
October 2025

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Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Gateshead Enter and View team, also referred to as Authorised Representatives, would like to thank the management team, service users, carers, and staff for their cooperation, and for sharing their views and experiences of the service with us. This report highlights the views and experiences of unpaid caregivers (carers) and staff members captures the experiences of service users who were staying at the setting at the time that the Enter and View visits took place. Please note that it is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users, staff, and carers.

Healthwatch Gateshead have a legal power to visit publicly funded health and social care services and to see them in action. This power to Enter and View services offers a way for Healthwatch to meet some of our statutory functions and allows us to identify what works well and where things can be improved. Please note that Enter and View is not an informal inspection.

The legislative framework for Healthwatch Gateshead is split between what Healthwatch Gateshead must do (duties) and what they may do (powers). Healthwatch have a power under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Part 4 of the Local Authorities Regulations 2013 to carry out Enter and View visits.

The legislation allows Healthwatch Authorised Representatives to visit publicly funded health and social care settings and speak to the people who are using and working within the service. This direct feedback allows us to identify areas of improvement, recognise good practice, and to champion the voices of the people using health and social care services.

Enter and View visits can be carried out in a range of publicly funded services such as, Doctors surgeries, Hospitals and Clinics, Day centres, Care homes, Dentists, Opticians and Pharmacies. Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if they arise, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies.

Purpose of the visit

The last Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection at Appletree Grange took place in 2022. The service was rated “Good” overall but received a “Requires Improvement” rating for being well led. The report noted that the leadership and culture did not always support high-quality, person-centred care.

For this reason, Healthwatch Gateshead chose Appletree Grange for an Enter and View visit. The timing was considered appropriate to give current residents and carers, some of whom were not present during the 2022 inspection, an opportunity to share their experiences of health and social care.

It is important to note that the CQC carried out a further assessment in July 2025, after Healthwatch Gateshead had started its Enter and View process. Our findings therefore relate only to the situation prior to the publication of the 2025 CQC report and do not refer to its outcomes.

In addition, Healthwatch Gateshead believed the timing to be relevant to carry out an Enter and View visit to the setting to ensure current service users and carers would have the opportunity to feedback regarding their health and social care experiences, as some of the current service users were not present during the time of the CQC inspection in 2022.

Planning and Preparation

Prior to the Enter and View visit, Healthwatch Gateshead's Enter and View Officer had an in-person meeting with the management team at Appletree Grange in January 2025 to introduce Enter and View and explain the processes involved. The manager was then notified via email that we were planning to carry out a visit.

Following this, another in-person meeting was held in May 2025 between Healthwatch Gateshead's Enter and View Officer, and the manager of Appletree Grange, to discuss provisional dates to identify who would be carrying out the visit and outline the agenda for the day. During this meeting further information was collected to inform us, the Enter and View team, on the facilities and services offered.

Service users have a range of medical conditions, dementia diagnosis being the most apparent. It was agreed that on the day of the visit, the Authorised Representatives would be provided with a desk register of the service users. This desk register included names, room numbers, any medical condition that may impact communication or cognitive ability, and whether the person had mental capacity. This was to ensure that the wellbeing of the service user was prioritised with sensitivity and respect during the engagement visit. This information was also useful in ensuring that the planned visit would cause minimum disruption on the day of the visit. Once the planning was finalised, a letter announcing the official date for the Enter and View visit was sent to Appletree Grange management team. (Appendix A).

The planned date for a visit was initially set to be the 3rd of July 2025. However, the Appletree Grange manager informed us that there had been a sickness outbreak at the home, and all service users were on a 7-day course of antibiotics. We were informed that visits were not restricted, however they were not recommended as advised by the UK Health Security Agency (a government agency responsible for protecting the public from infectious diseases and other external health threats). Therefore it was decided and agreed by Authorised Representatives and Appletree Grange Management, that the Enter and View visit would be postponed, and a new amended letter was sent out to the setting with details of a revised date of later in July 2025.

Three versions of the survey were then designed, one for service users, one for staff and another for carers, which were then taken with the Authorised Representatives. (Appendix B). The survey questions were designed to be open and balanced to encourage transparent engagement.

Prior to the visit, Healthwatch Gateshead's Enter and View Officer left staff surveys at reception along with freepost envelopes. In addition, Appletree Grange management emailed the survey to all staff notifying them that paper surveys were also available at reception. The email also outlined a description of who Healthwatch Gateshead are, what Enter and View is, dates Authorised Representatives were visiting the setting, along with allocated time slots for engagement and the location of the private room to allow staff the opportunity to feedback privately in person.

On the morning of Wednesday 23rd July 2025, an announced Enter and View visit was carried out by two of the Authorised Representatives; one of which was the Healthwatch Gateshead Enter and View Officer and the other Authorised Representative was a Healthwatch Gateshead Committee Member.

Following the visit Healthwatch Gateshead and Appletree Grange put a Data Processing Agreement in place. The Data Processing Agreement meant that Appletree Grange management could share personal contact details of carers with Healthwatch Gateshead, providing carers have consented to do so. As a result, additional carer feedback was then collected by Healthwatch Gateshead directly over the telephone.

Information gathering

Authorised Representatives were welcomed and given a tour of the setting by the manager on arrival, along with copies of the desk register. Appletree Grange has two floors and capacity to accommodate up to 32 residents. The home provides residential care for those living with dementia.

During the tour Authorised Representatives made internal observations, monitored staff interaction, and identified which communal areas were available and suitable to proceed with engagement.

On the day of the visit Authorised Representatives met with 5 staff members in person in the conservatory to collect feedback. The conservatory was reserved so staff members were able to feedback in a private space. Following this Authorised Representatives split off to collect direct feedback from service users.

As most of the service users were living with dementia, it was paramount that a suitable quiet private space was offered to provide feedback. This was to ensure that distraction was minimised and if service users wished to feed back in a less busy environment, they would have the opportunity to do so. Some chose to feed back in the communal lounge area close to other service users, who were having cups of tea and chatting, while others requested to talk privately in a quiet space.

The management team confirmed that on the day of the visit they had 29 service users residing at the setting and 34 staff members employed at the time of the visit.

In total, Healthwatch Gateshead collected feedback from 14 members of staff – 5 of which that were collected in person and 9 of which that were left sealed in an envelope at Appletree Grange reception for pick up. Feedback was also collected from 11 service users, and 12 carers, 2 of which were collected on the day of the visit and the rest via telephone.

What people told us

Service users:

We spoke to 11 service users who have been receiving care at Appletree Grange who had a length of stay at the care home from one month to six years.

Overall Experience:

We asked service users to tell us their experiences so far at Appletree Grange. Three service users shared positive comments of their stay at Appletree Grange such as feeling comfortable at the care home. Four service users were neutral and didn't share an experience but commented on how long they have stayed at Appletree Grange. Three service users were unable to share their experiences due to memory loss. One service user didn't answer the question.

"Wouldn't like to be anywhere else. It's comfortable"

"Been here 6 months, it's ok"

"I am getting on, I can't remember"

We then asked service users to share any positive experiences about Appletree Grange. All 11 service users answered the question with a majority (seven) who praised the work that staff do in the care home. Four service users shared neutral comments of the care home.

"The staff are great, they also do your laundry and hang it in your wardrobe"

"It's ok, I make an effort to just present myself as one"

"They look after you, the place is kept very nice, cleanliness is kept"

To further explore experiences of services users, we asked them to share any negative experiences of the care that they have received at Appletree Grange. The majority of service users (eight) said that they have no negative experiences that they would like to share. Three service users did share negative experiences which were all very different. These included not liking the attitude of other service users, and the food quality.

Change:

Three out of the eleven (27%) service users stated change(s) that they would like to improve Appletree Grange. They were to:

- Go outside when the weather is warm

- Improve quality of food
- More TV channels
- Someone to come in and do physical exercises with them
- More space in the dining area
- More staff

Communication:

We asked service users how they describe their relationship with staff. Nine of the eleven service users described positive relationships with staff members working at Appletree Grange. These comments included that staff are friendly, approachable, give their time to explain things and are very caring. One service user directed a negative comment towards one staff member however this is not reflective of the whole staff team. On further discussions with the management team this view was discounted. One service user did not answer the question.

"The staff are caring; they are their own individuals. Tony with the hat there is great, [names staff member] cares and always gives out cuddles"

"Staff good as gold; open; very approachable"

"Always somebody ready to listen, give you time and explain things"

In terms of having and raising concerns, eight service users said that they have no concerns. One service user said that they were concerned about the behaviour of one staff member towards them. And on further discussions with the management team this view was discounted. One service user didn't specify if they have concerns. And one service user did not answer the question.

When asked if they would know who to speak to address a concern, Nine service users said that they know who they would speak to if they did have a concern and gave examples by specifying that they would speak to the manager. One said that they would not know who to speak to if they did have a concern. One did not answer if they would know who to speak to if they have a concern.

Table 1 - Answers to if service users have any current concern regarding care that they receive at Appletree Grange and if they know who to speak to in order to raise their concern.

Answers to if service users have any concerns and who they would speak to			
Have no concern(s)	Eight (8)	Know who to speak to if have a concern	Nine (9)
Do have concern(s)	One (1)	Don't know who speak to if have a concern	One (1)
Didn't specify/answer	Two (2)	Didn't answer	One (1)

Choice:

We asked service users how much choice they have at Appletree Grange. Six service users said that they have choice. One service user gave examples of choices that they have at Appletree Grange, such as reading books and watching TV which is offered to them in the care setting.

Two service users were not sure how much choice they have, with a further two who did not specify the choice they receive at Appletree Grange. One service user did not answer the question.

Views on food/drink:

There was a mixture of opinions on the food and drink offered at Appletree Grange by the service users. Six service users described the food and drink as 'okay' or 'alright' with a further three service users who said that they like the food offered as there is plenty and offer anything that they like. One service user didn't like the food as they described the food to be like ready-made meals and that it comes in small portions.

One respondent didn't answer the question.

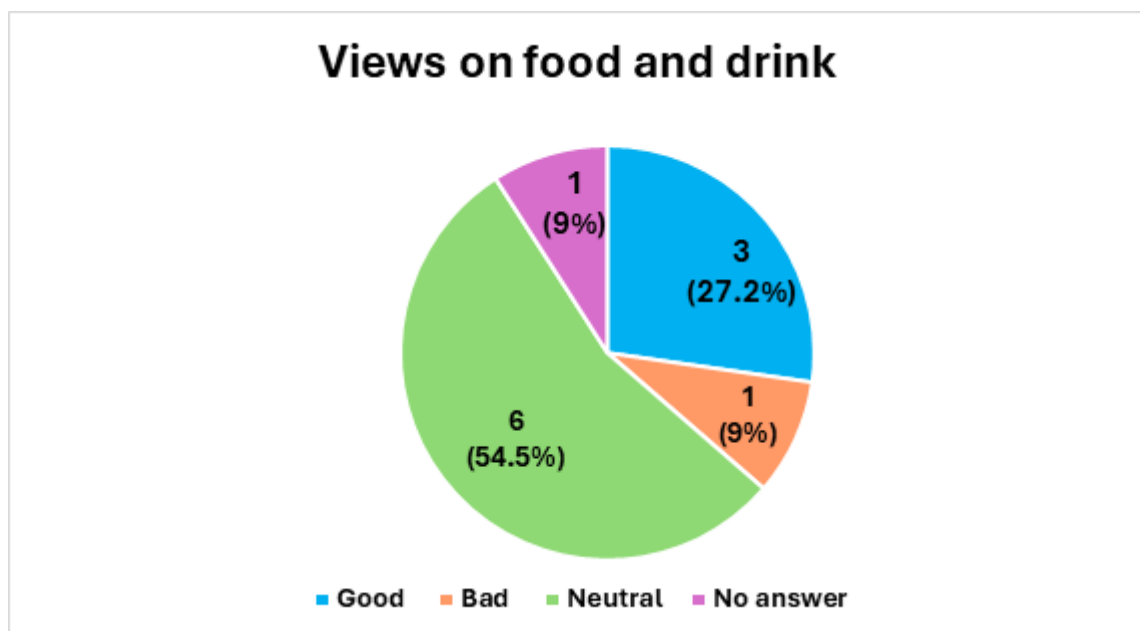
"Fine, the staff spot if you like things and you get offered extra and if what you've said you like comes up on the menu a couple of weeks later."

"Food is ok"

"Food is terrible like ready-made meals and small portions"

"Food is lovely, they make you something you like"

Figure 1 - The views of services users on food and drink offered at Appletree Grange.



Activities:

We asked service users if they take part in activities at Appletree Grange. Eight service users said that they do take part. The majority of the service users liked to play bingo and go outside for

trips. The remaining three service users stated that they do not take part in activities due to personal choice.

"Don't take part, don't want to"

"I love to get out, occasionally bingo"

Care:

Finally, we asked service users how satisfied they are with the quality of care that they receive at Appletree Grange and why. Majority of service users (six) said that they were very satisfied with the care that they receive with a further four who said that they were satisfied. Various reasons were given for these positive ratings which include:

- Feeling well-looked after
- Staff fulfil their responsibilities
- Having pictures taken when outside for trips

One service user said that they were dissatisfied with the care that they receive. The reason for this was that they felt as though they are enclosed within the care home and described themselves as a "prisoner".

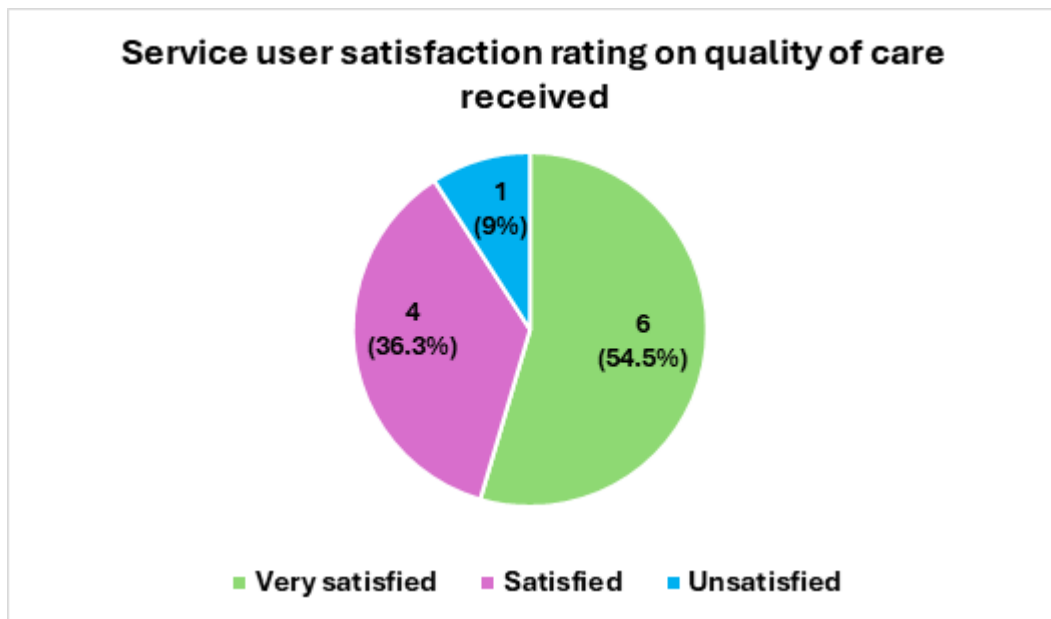
"I rated satisfied but would change to very satisfied if the food was better"

"Feel like a prisoner"

"I appreciate people here put the effort in and do their job properly"

"Everybody approachable, if you were worried about something you can ask, but no definite worries."

Figure 2 - Service user responses to how satisfied they are with the quality of care they receive at Appletree Grange.



Carers:

As part of the Enter and View visit, we spoke to 12 carers who have a loved one receiving care at Appletree Grange.

Overall experience:

We asked about any positive experiences of Appletree Grange that they would like to share. All 12 carers mentioned that the staff provide good care and are kind. In addition to this, three carers stated that the atmosphere and environment of the care home is positive and relaxing. Three carers shared that the communication is excellent as employees keep them updated as to how their loved one is doing in the care home.

"The staff are incredibly friendly and professional and the whole environment is positive"

"The staff keep us informed and up to date, and they are always praising my mam saying how well she is doing which we appreciate lots"

We then asked carers if there were any negative experiences they would like to share about Appletree Grange. Ten of the twelve (83.3%) carers said that they have no negative experiences to share of the care home. The remaining two carers didn't have negative experiences as such but would appreciate more communication to avoid any confusion such as changes in staff or activities.

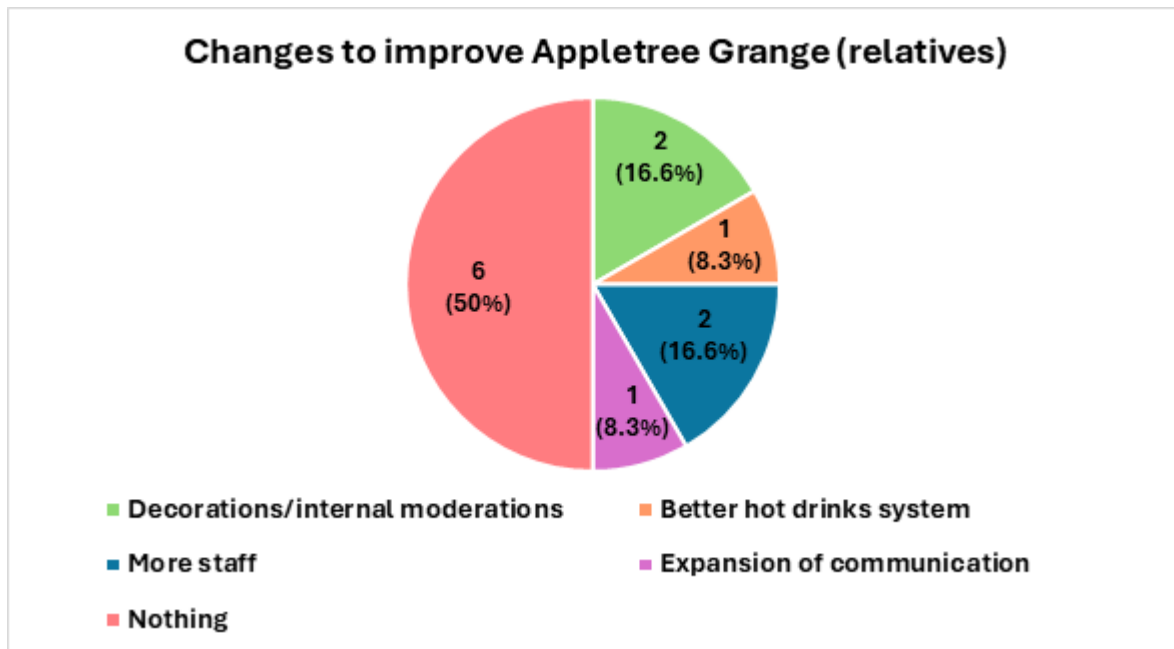
Change:

Six (50%) carers stated no changes to improve Appletree Grange.

Two carers shared that they wanted more internal decorations and moderations of Appletree Grange such as fitting blinds into rooms rather than curtains to reduce temperature change when the sun shines. One carer raised that they would prefer an expansion on communication by having newsletters to keep carers updated on what is discussed in resident meetings for those that are not always able to attend.

One carer suggested that there should be a better hot drinks system, as hot drinks are only given at set times and it would be best to have hot drinks when service users would like to. Finally, two carers suggested that there should be more staff members in order to allow current shift staff to have adequate breaks to ensure that there is still enough staff around to care for residents when needed.

Figure 3 - Pie chart showing relatives responses to what could be changed to improve Appletree Grange.



"One thing is maybe looking at staff breaks as sometimes residents need the toilet and may have to wait for staff to return. Some residents can also be demanding and not understand that staff need breaks, which they do. So, I would say always more staff is great but if not then look at when people have breaks and make sure enough people are around."

"Regarding staff and practices no changes. Regards to fittings, my father has a front facing room which can become hot when the sun shines, therefore blinds may be considered instead of closing the curtains."

"They should have better system for cuppas. You get cuppas with meals and at a set time. My mam is a massive tea drinker and it would be good for her to have cuppas as and when."

"Residents meetings do take place but are not always well attended. [staff member] talked about a potential newsletter for those who can't make meetings, that would be good so we are in the loop."

"I can't think of anything, I can't fault them."

Communication:

All carers described their relationship with staff members at Appletree Grange as positive. Carers described staff as kind, approachable and friendly. Some also said that staff communicate and keep them informed of any issues.

"We communicate with all staff members when we visit who are always very friendly and keep us informed of any issues regarding my father. Staff are very approachable."

"Very good. They are helpful. Every time they come in the room there is a smile on their face. That really sets the tone."

"Very good, they are very approachable and always knock on mams door and not just walk in, which I appreciate"

"I mainly go in to just see my mam but I can say that they are all friendly"

We asked carers if they have any concerns about the care that their loved one receives at Appletree Grange and if they would know who to speak to, to raise their concerns. All carers (100%) said that they have no concerns and would know who speak to if they did have a concern. A couple of carers gave examples of who they would speak to such as management or staff members.

Choice:

We asked carers if they have any involvement in helping their relatives in making choices at Appletree Grange. Five carers said that they do get involved by liaising with staff and being involved in the care plan of their loved one. A further five said that they are not involved within the care of their loved one, however, they all said that this is not a concern for them as their loved one has the capacity to make their own decisions and have the support of staff to keep them informed of any decisions. Two carers didn't specify how much involvement they have in helping their loved one to make choices at Appletree Grange.

"Not really as my father has capacity to make his own decisions"

"Not a lot, I don't really need to. She is 96 but has capacity, even though her memory is fading. The staff ask for first then sometimes come to me or my sister"

"I am involved in the care plan and staff tell me about my mams health and keep me informed"

"The staff and my daughter work together to help my wife make choices."

Food/drink

Two carers stated that there is a variety of food to choose from. Six carers stated that the food is good with two mentioning that their loved one is gaining weight in which they were pleased about. Four carers were neutral about the food and drink offered at Appletree Grange, stating that *"it is okay"*.

"The daily menu is always posted in the lobby which offers choice and variety"

"Good from what dad says. He is eating well and has actually put weight on"

"Seems fine, it is ok"

"Food is very good. The chef is at hand and made some lovely homemade biscuits the other day when we were in."

Activities:

Seven carers said that their loved ones take part in activities at Appletree Grange. Some activities mentioned were gardening, bingo, trips out and bingo. Four carers said that their loved ones sometimes take part in activities. One carer said that their loved one does not take part in activities but that is due to personal preference, however, staff members do try to get them involved.

"Yes bingo, baking, trips out now and then also enjoy entertainment when they are there"

"She doesn't like to take part but that is down to her personal preference, they do try"

"Yes, the staff know he likes gardening and have got him doing lots of planting which is great to see. I also like looking at the Facebook page to see what he has been up too as I live far from him. I really like that they have a mobile library too as he likes to read"

"She doesn't get involved due to her condition. Every now and then she will, and I see a post on Facebook"

Care:

Finally, we asked carers, how satisfied are you with the care that their loved one receives and why. Ten carers said that they are "very satisfied" with a further two who said that they are "satisfied".

"Very satisfied, we feel it was a very positive move putting our mam in this home"

"Satisfied"

"Very satisfied, there is real care here. Not just people doing a job"

"Very satisfied, the room looks out to where my dad played football as a kid. We wanted him in here, we just knew when we came it was the right one, they are brilliant"

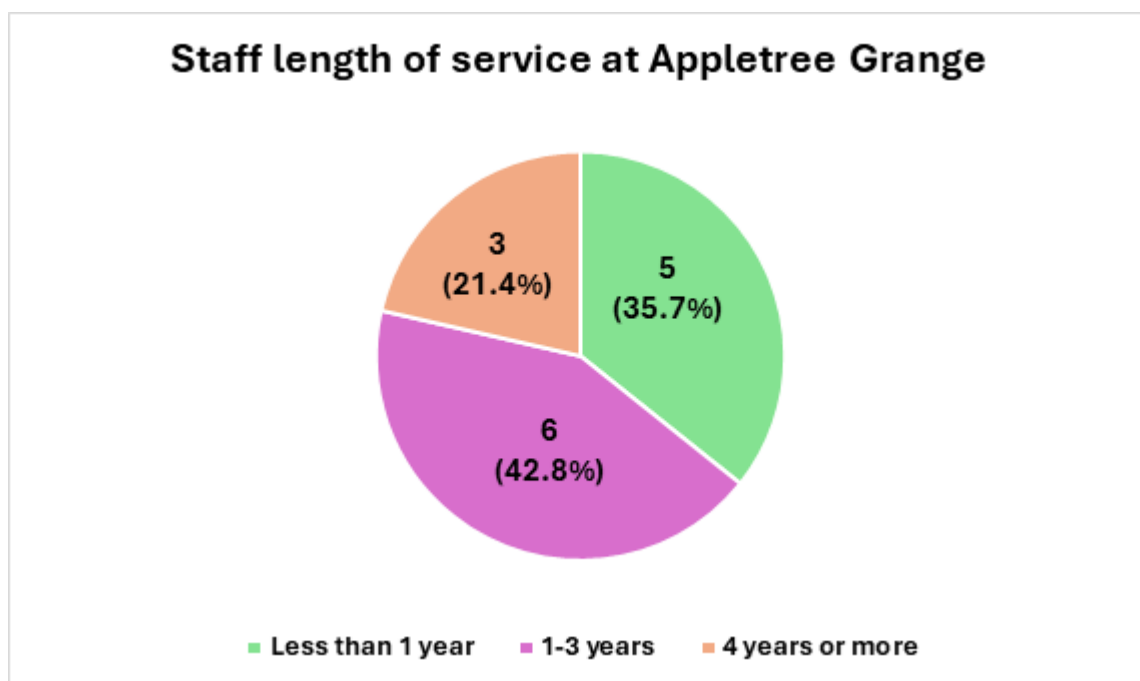
Staff:

We received feedback from 14 staff members who work at Appletree Grange with various roles and durations of time working at the care home.

Overall experience:

We asked staff, what their job title is and how long they have worked at Appletree Grange. They varied in their roles of working, with some at a managerial level such as general manager, head cook and others with various other roles to look after the setting and its service users such as caseworkers, care assistants, housekeepers and laundry assistants. All staff stated how long they have been working at Appletree Grange, with five staff have worked less than a year at the setting, six have been working between one and three years, and three staff members who have been working at Appletree Grange for four or more years.

Figure 4 - Pie chart depicting staff responses to how long they have been working at Appletree Grange



We asked staff to share any positive experiences they have had while working at Appletree Grange, which all staff members were able to do. Six staff members shared that the staff team and management is great and is very supportive. Six shared that they enjoy their caring role and the positive difference they make to residents staying at Appletree Grange. Finally, two staff members shared positive comments towards homely and friendly environment of Appletree Grange.

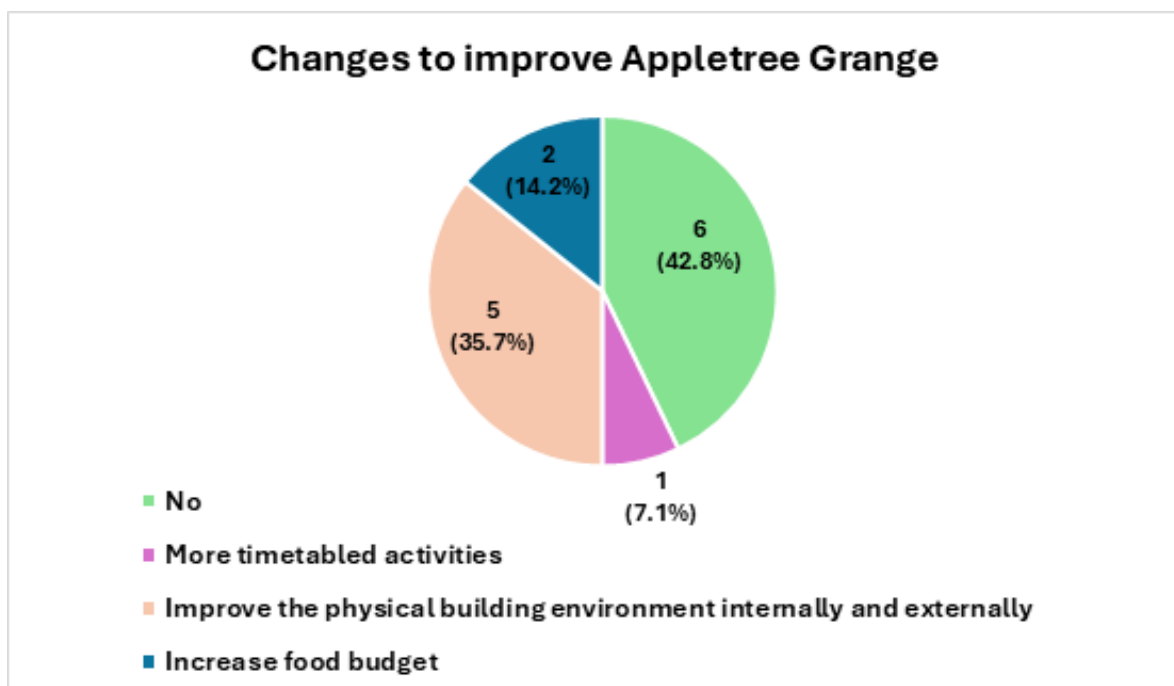
We then asked for staff members to share any negative experiences that they have at Appletree Grange. Nine staff members that they have no negative experiences to share. Three didn't specify

if they had a negative experience at Appletree Grange. Two staff members raised negative experiences. One said that the layout of the building could be improved. One staff member raised that the dining room is too small to comfortably accommodate everyone.

Change:

Six members of staff stated there are no changes that they think of to implement to improve Appletree Grange. One staff member suggested having timetabled activities for each day. Two stated to increase the food budget. Finally, five staff members said to improve the physical building both externally and internally such as the garden, modernising the kitchen area and develop more space to be able to improve the environment for residents.

Figure 5 - Pie chart depicting changes that staff would like implemented to improve Appletree Grange



"Nothing. Everyone is helpful and supportive. Everyone seems to communicate with each other."

"Increase the food budget and modernise the kitchen"

"I think the exterior of the home could perhaps do with some attention, the garden outside looks a bit neglected"

"More activities during the day, maybe have a set timetable for activities with extra day trips"

Communication:

Six members of staff described their relationship with other staff and service users as good but did not explain what makes their relationship good. A further five also described having a positive relationship with other staff members and service users, and gave reasons such as having good communication with others, a supportive team and the friendly environment at Appletree Grange. Two staff members described having neutral relationships with other staff and service users. One staff member didn't specify how their relationship is with others, as they have been working at Appletree Grange for a short period of time and are still establishing their relationship with both staff and service users.

"Having only being at Appletree Grange Care Home for a short time, I am still establishing my relationship with both staff and residents."

"My relationship with other staff members are cordial. They make working together okey which makes my job easier my relationship with service users is cordial."

"I get on well with all staff due to good communication and have a good relationship with the service users due to understanding their needs and rights."

In terms of concerns, only one out of the fourteen staff members had a concern which was which a maintenance issue in some of the rooms that has since been seen to. However, all staff members said that they would know who to speak to and gave the example of their manager to raise their concerns.

Choice:

We asked staff to describe how they promote choice to service users. All staff gave examples of how they do so. This included:

- Asking what they would like to eat
- Asking residents what they would like to do
- Empowering service users to make decision of their daily tasks
- Giving service users options to choose from such as activities and clothing

Food/drink:

Nine staff members said that the food and drink offered at Appletree Grange was good and well-presented as well having regular drinks offered alongside refreshments. Four staff members made neutral comments about the food and drink offered. One staff member said that more variety of choice should be made as currently there are two options a day.

"Could do with a more variety of choice instead of two options a day, lunch and tea"

"I think all the food is tasty and presented well to the residents. Drinks are always refilled regular and tea and coffee always offered alongside refreshments"

Activities:

Finally, we asked staff, how activities are decided and planned at Appletree Grange. Staff were all able to describe that they work with the activity coordinator to help plan trips and activities based on the wishes of service users and are then approved by management.

What we observed

Key areas of observation were:

Effectiveness of the physical space and layout

Appletree Grange displayed good signage at the front of the building identifying the care home, however the main parking area was located at the rear of the building. The front and rear of the building overall showed clear signage. Parking was limited and full on the day of the visit, but it was possible for visitors to use on street parking. Externally there was a garden area which was fenced around the home. The garden contained sheds and some seating, although it was limited. Overall, the external space was clean, tidy, and accessible.

On arrival the signing in procedure was secure and straightforward. When signing in there was a display above with staff photos identifying some roles and "champions" with specialist skills; However, only some names were given, and additionally giving first names could be more friendly. Staff were present and welcoming at the reception area.



Figure 1 & 7 – Appletree Grange Staff Displays

A hair salon was located at the entrance along with an admin office and the General Managers office. Doors to the offices appeared to be kept open. Music was playing in the background, and the entrance was clean and spacious. The entrance contained a stand with a food menu on display showing what meals were being served on the day. On entry visitors can find a suggestion box on

display, and an information rack with leaflets and brochures. In addition, the reception area contained a you said we did board, alongside sponsor forms which were laid out on a table from a family member who was fundraising to raise money for those with dementia.



Figure 8 – Appletree Grange Reception Area

The home contained two floors. The décor on the ground floor corridor was plain while the first floor had a more varied colour scheme and contained pictures of both local scenes and things of interest, which gave a much warmer feel. The ground floor rooms were used for service users with early-stage dementia, while the first floor was used for service users with more advanced dementia.



Figure 9 & 10 – First Floor Corridor & Second Floor Corridor (comparison)

The dining rooms were rather small, each floor had its own dining room. The communal areas were very well kept and had enough space for people to sit and engage in activities individually. The weekly activities board was on display on both floors and print outs were available to give to service users. There was also a lift on the ground floor which led up to the first-floor dining room. Overall, both floors were clean, spacious, and well kept.

Service and Positive social interaction

During the visit staff were present in all areas of the setting. The atmosphere was generally quiet and calm throughout the corridors and bedrooms where some service users were present. One Authorised Representative observed a service user calling for a staff member to come and fix their bed, they instantly attended to them. Following that the same service user required assistance with the TV, a different staff member attended instantly. Staff were always on hand if required and appeared to be cheerful.

Various staff members were also on hand in the communal areas making tea and engaging with service users who appeared to be happy in each other's company. Both Authorised Representatives observed the staff to be very attentive. After gaining feedback from one of the service users in the communal area they went on to go into their bedroom before returning to the communal area. One of the staff members sat alongside them and participated in a colouring activity. Staff were very upbeat and in both communal areas, and in rooms, service users were addressed by name respectfully, and they knew staff names in turn, all interactions that were observed seemed to be friendly.

Overall, the impression of the staff was that they were all engaged with service users, spoke and addressed service users appropriately and with respect. This included the general manager who also knew everyone's name and chatted with people throughout the duration of the Enter and View visit.

Recommendations

The recommendations listed below are based on our observations carried out over one Enter and View visit, feedback from service users, staff, and carers.

To ensure that all service users are provided with appropriate individual activities

Overall Appletree Grange offer a wide variety of activities to service users daily ranging from bingo, celebrating themed events, monthly guest singers, and trips out which are showcased on a social media site, and appreciated by families. Scheduled activities are displayed on the board internally and are printed off and given to service users.

Staff appeared to be upbeat, engaging, and encouraging service users to get involved. Service users fed back that they valued the library service which meant that books were on hand and often rotated. Some service users fed back that although they have televisions in their bedroom, a number of the channels were very limiting.

Although, some service users expressed a preference for spending time alone in their bedroom and stated that they did not wish to take part in activities.

One Authorised Representative collected feedback from a service user who began to get visibly upset when discussing their interests. They explained that before they had a stroke and other health conditions which has had a significant impact on their vision and abilities, they were able to write and read and often enjoyed writing poetry, something they can no longer do.

It is recommended that Appletree Grange expand activity resources to further meet the needs of the service users by offering more individual and mentally stimulating activities. Suggestions include offering audio books to service users who are no longer able to read, audio devices for music or podcasts, and upgrading to cable television to offer more variety to all service users who raised the TV channels on offer to be limiting.

Improved utilisation of external and internal space

Internally the setting is clean, tidy, and well kept. Many service users, staff, and carers were generally happy with the space and felt comfortable. However, the dining room being too small was flagged as something that some staff and service users would like to see improved. In addition, carers mentioned that they would make internal moderations if they could change something to improve the setting. Furthermore, a service user fed back that they would like to be able to get outside more to relax when it is warm.

On our visit we observed the difference between the two floors, the ground floor décor being plain and the first floor a lot more vibrant. The rationale was explained during our visit, i.e. the first floor is for service users with more advanced dementia. However, it is recommended that Appletree Grange improve the ground floor décor to ensure that it is more homely for service users residing on that floor.

It is also recommended that improving the garden area is considered. We observed a lot of redundant space which was not being utilised. In addition, it is recommended that the dining room space is rearranged to make it more accessible and available for service users to enjoy during meal times.



Figure 11 & 12 – Outdoor Garden

To continue developing and maintaining a good standard of communication and person-centred care

Appletree Grange have a dedicated staff team and management team who are committed to their roles. This was apparent from the positive feedback from staff, service users and carers. Carers fed back that they really valued the communication and the person-centred care that staff provide.

Alongside the day-to-day care and activities, staff provide reminisce sessions where service users look through old rummage boxes containing old photos. In addition, Appletree Grange has a daily resident of the day celebration. This is rotated and the service user gets a pamper day and extra deep cleaning in their room. Resident meetings are held monthly, and family meetings are held every 3 months. The observations and feedback clearly highlight an good standard of communication and care.

It is therefore recommended that this standard of care and communication is upheld and further developed by continuing to chat to service users to ensure they feel comfortable, safe, and at home. It is recommended that staff and/or management continue inform carers on the next steps when a service user is due to leave, or any staff changes. One carer suggested a newsletter would also be beneficial.

Service provider response

The following statement has been provided by Appletree Grange Care Home management. This is intended to address, acknowledge, and engage with the research findings that have been presented by Healthwatch Gateshead:

The management team and Appletree Grange would like to thank Healthwatch Gateshead for their time during the visit and are happy with the recommendations made by the team. We had received a CQC inspection a short while after the Enter and View visit and had received good in 4 domains and outstanding in 1 domain. The recommendations by Healthwatch Gateshead will be considered and an action plan will be created to further improve the service. I am very pleased with the positive comments made by residents, families and staff alike about what life is like at Appletree Grange.

Service provider response

Appendix A – Pilot Letter

Appendix B – Questions

- B.1. Service User Questions
- B.2. Relative Questions
- B.3. Staff Questions

Appendix A – Pilot Letter

Tell Us North CIC
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Milburn House
19 Dean Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 1LE

0191 338 5722
www.tellusnorth.org.uk



To whom it may concern

This letter is to advise that Healthwatch Gateshead will be conducting an Enter and View visit to Appletree Grange Care Home, Birtley, Durham Road, Chester-Le-Street, DH3 2BH.

The visit will take place on Wednesday 23rd July 2025 between 09:30- 13:00

Healthwatch Gateshead is the statutory, independent consumer champion for health and social care. It makes sure the views of patients and service users are heard by those who run, plan and regulate health and social care services. As a part of our work, we carry out Enter and View visits.

Enter and View is not an inspection. The purpose of an Enter and View visit is to understand how health and social care services are provided through finding out people's views, making observations, gathering evidence, reporting findings, and making recommendations.

The visit will be conducted by our Authorised Representatives: Nooshin Shabani (Enter and View Officer), and Peter Wilson (Healthwatch Gateshead Committee Member). All of our Authorised Representatives carry identification on them at all times throughout a visit and will present this on arrival. They have also gone through robust training and are fully DBS checked. Please note, a follow up visit maybe required may we wish to gather further evidence to support our findings.

Once we have finished gathering all our findings, we will then send you a draft report for your comments within 30 days. The report will then be changed to include your comments and any recommendations that are agreed. The final report will then be shared within 10 working days of receiving your comments and will be published on our website.

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of our Enter and View work.

With kind regards

Nooshin Shabani (She/her)

Enter and View Officer

Direct 0772 7345148

I work P/T over Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri

Appendix B.1. – Service User Questions

Enter and View Service User Questions - Appletree Grange Care Home

Overall experience

We are here today on an Enter and View Visit on behalf of Healthwatch Gateshead. The purpose of an Enter and View visit is to understand how health and social care services are provided through finding out people's views, making observations, gathering evidence, reporting findings, and making recommendations. We aim to put this information into a report which is sent back to the service before being published publicly on our website. We would like to talk to you today to gather your views and experiences of the service. All your feedback will be anonymised.

1. Could you tell me about your experiences so far staying at Appletree Grange Care Home, and how long you have stayed here?

2. Are there any positive experiences you would like to share?

3. Are there any negative experiences you would like to share?

Change

4. What would you change about Appletree Grange Care Home to make it better?

Communication

5. How would you describe your relationship with staff members? What makes it good/bad?

6. Do you have any concerns? And if you do, have you raised them? And with who? And if you haven't raised them why not?

7. If you did have a concern, would you know what to do and who to speak to?

Choice

8. How much choice do you have in your daily life here?

9. What are your views on the food/drink?

10. Do you take part in the activities? If yes, what activities do you enjoy? If not, then why?

Care

11. How satisfied are you with the quality of care you receive? Could you tell me why? (circle relevant option)

Very Satisfied/Satisfied/Unsatisfied

Any other comments

Observations

External environment (Prompts- is signage clear? is it easy to park? what does the building look like?)

On arrival (Prompts- how are you welcomed? how does the place feel? Is it calm or busy? Is signing in straightforward, what is displayed on the walls? What can you hear around you?)

Internal environment (what is the corridor layout like, narrow or wide? what can you smell? What is displayed on the walls? Are there any other special features? How does it feel? What is in the communal areas?)

Social interaction (how are staff interacting with service users? what can you hear and see?)

Appendix B.2. – Relative Questions

Enter and View Relative Questions - Appletree Grange Care Home

We are here today on an Enter and View Visit on behalf of Healthwatch Gateshead. The purpose of an Enter and View visit is to understand how health and social care services are provided through finding out people's views, making observations, gathering evidence, reporting findings, and making recommendations. We aim to put this information into a report which is sent back to the service before being published publicly on our website. We would like to talk to you today to gather your views and experiences of the service. All your feedback will be anonymised.

Overall experience

1. Could you share your experiences of having a relative stay at Appletree Grange Care Home?

2. Are there any positive experiences you would like to share?

3. Are there any negative experiences you would like to share?

Change

4. What would you change about Appletree Grange Care Home to make it better?

Communication

5. How would you describe your relationship with staff members? What makes it good/bad?

6. Do you have any concerns? And if you do, have you raised them? And with who? And if you haven't raised them why not?

7. If you did have a concern, would you know what to do and who to speak to?

Choice

8. Do you have much involvement in helping your relative make choices at Appletree Grange Care Home?

9. What are your views on the food/drink?

10. Does your relative take part in the activities? If yes, what activities do they enjoy? If not, then why?

Care

11. How satisfied are you with the care your relative receives? Could you tell me why? (circle relevant option)

Very Satisfied/ Satisfied/ Unsatisfied

Any other comments

Enter and View Staff Questions - Appletree Grange Care Home

We are here today on an Enter and View Visit on behalf of Healthwatch Gateshead. The purpose of an Enter and View visit is to understand how health and social care services are provided through finding out people's views, making observations, gathering evidence, reporting findings, and making recommendations. We aim to put this information into a report which is sent back to the service before being published publicly on our website. We would like to talk to you today to gather your views and experiences of the service. All your feedback will be anonymised.

Overall experience

1. Could you tell me your job title and your experiences so far working at Appletree Grange Care Home, and how long you have worked here?

2. Are there any positive experiences you would like to share?

3. Are there any negative experiences you would like to share?

Change

4. What would you change about Appletree Grange Care Home to make it better?

Communication

5. How would you describe your relationship with other staff members and service users? What makes it good/bad?

6. Do you have any concerns? And if you do, have you raised them? And with who? And if you haven't raised them why not?

7. If you did have a concern, would you know what to do and who to speak to?

Choice

8. Could you tell me in your own words how you promote choice to the service users?

9. What are your views on the food/drink?

10. Could you tell me how the activities are decided and planned?

Any other comments

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