



North Tyneside Council

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This matter is being dealt with by Susan Meins – Tel: 6437940

Mr P Kenrick
Chair, Healthwatch North Tyneside
Parkside House
Elton Street East
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Tyne & Wear
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20 June 2017

Dear Peter

Re: 'Making Mealtimes Matter in Care Homes'

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to comment and respond to the draft report on residents' experience of food in care homes in the Borough, which makes interesting reading.

As the report points out mealtimes can be the highlight of the day for many older people living in care homes and often defines the overall experience, therefore it is encouraging to hear that Healthwatch volunteers have identified many areas of good practice in North Tyneside.

I do however note the recommendations that have been made within the report for care providers and also the Council. I understand that providers have been given a copy of their individual report, the final report and also that the summary findings have been presented at the Older People's Provider Forum, therefore they will have the opportunity to reflect on the findings and take action as required within their individual care settings.

With regard to factual accuracy my only comment is on page 7 paragraph 1:

"North Tyneside Council representatives in conjunction with the North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) carry out monitoring activity on care homes and nursing homes using a Nutrition Outcome tool..."

There is no separate Nutrition Outcome tool; the Quality Monitoring Tool includes specific elements which are reviewed in relation to nutrition, and these are considered as part of the quality monitoring visit.

I have considered each of the recommendations made for commissioners, and following discussion with the Commissioning Team I can confirm that the Council has made several changes to both the draft specification for residential care homes and also the Quality Monitoring Tool.

I will respond to each recommendation in turn below.

Recommendation 6

Given the importance of choice and control to wellbeing, North Tyneside Council should consider how they can strengthen the care home contract specification and monitoring tool to ensure that homes have a structured, measurable approach to resident choice, engagement, feedback and planning.

NTC Response:

Section 9 of the specification currently includes the following: Providers shall ensure that Residents are enabled to participate meaningfully in consultation about the Service they receive by using a range of means appropriate to the Residents.

The additional point below has been added to this section:

Providers shall need to demonstrate that they are actively seeking the views of Residents (and their families where appropriate) in the delivery of the persons individual service and also the overall service. The outcomes of any surveys should be reported back to Individuals. This information shall be made available to the Authority upon request.

Recommendation 7

In addition North Tyneside Council should change the contract specification (section 7.21 in the specification) and monitoring tools to address the following areas:

7.1 At present the specification requires providers to undertake nutritional screening and requirements but does not specifically mention preferences. It is not clear that this should be recorded or used in decision making.

Likewise the monitoring tool does not accommodate preferences (likes and dislikes) clearly enough (7.1a/ 7.1b).

NTC Response:

Section 7.21 of the specification has now been amended to include:

Residents preferences, likes and dislikes in relation to food and mealtimes shall be recorded in their individual care plans

The updated Quality Monitoring Tool has been amended in the following sections to include quality measures which will support this recommendation:

2.3a. The service is aware of and can meet the dietary needs of all individuals including personal preference or needs associated with religion, cultural, vegetarian/vegan or medical conditions e.g. Diabetes etc.

3.3a. There is evidence that people are able to exercise flexibility around general daily routines (e.g. when to get up, when to have meals etc) which can be evidenced in support plans/ daily logs.

7.2 The specification does not clearly specify the need for providers to capture feedback about food and drink in 'real time'.

Likewise the monitoring tool does not focus on 'real-time' feedback about food, instead focusing on the involvement in planning before the menus are agreed (7.1f)

NTC Response:

Section 7.21 of specification has now been amended to include the following point:

Providers shall implement systems to capture feedback about food and drink in 'real time'.

Section 5.3d of the Quality Monitoring Tool has been amended as follows:

The Quality Assurance procedures include involvement and views from people living in the home. This could include 'real time' monitoring of aspects such as meal provision etc

7.3 The specification does require that providers enable residents to take their meals into their own rooms where appropriate. However without requiring providers to take measures to prevent social isolation, there is a risk that residents who are unable to leave their rooms are not supported with a social experience in day time. Therefore the monitoring tool (7.1e) should reflect that residents who are confined to their room or who choose to eat in their room should be regularly assessed for the risk of social isolation

NTC Response:

Section 7.21 of specification has now been amended to include the following point:

Residents shall have the option to take their meals in their own room, if appropriate, however Providers are required to take measures to ensure that these residents do not become socially isolated and that they are supported with an alternative social experience.

Section 2.3e of the monitoring tool has been amended to:

There are adequate resources to ensure that mealtimes are a positive experience. The home can demonstrate best practice with consideration given to music, environment, comfort, privacy, staggering meal times, quiet and calm setting, etc. People who use wheelchairs are encouraged to transfer to dining chairs if they are able.

Where residents have chosen to have their meal in their room, there should be a process in place to ensure the resident is able to access other social opportunities

- 7.4** The specification states that residents should have access to purchase drinks; however, it does not specifically require the provision of snacks outside of mealtimes. The monitoring tool (7.1g) does monitor if this is available, but does not monitor the right to purchase items. The specification and tool should be altered to ensure both are required and monitored.

NTC Response:

Section 7.21 of specification has now been amended to include the following point:

Additionally, Residents shall have access to facilities to purchase and consume any other drinks or snacks of their choice, e.g. wine and other alcoholic beverages and confectionary. Within all of this consideration must include capacity to decide whether access to wine, snacks and other alcoholic beverages will result in an unacceptable and identified risk to the Resident's health or impact negatively upon others.

Section 1.3h of the monitoring tool has been amended as follows:

Individuals are supported in spending their own money on items that they wish to purchase. No person has the right to influence this, so long as the person has capacity in this area. This includes a choice of shops and not simply buying from contractors agreed by management.

There should be the option to purchase drinks (including alcohol) and confectionary items.

Recommendation 8

North Tyneside Council should publish information for residents, family and friends about what they should expect from food and drink in care homes (including the mealtime experience). This information should focus on enabling residents to exercise choice and control.

NTC Response:

The delivery of residential and nursing care services is set out within the current contract and service specification documentation that all care homes are required to sign up to.

This includes detail on meals, food and nutrition and there is reference in this letter to this being updated following the publication of the findings in your report.

There is also a requirement from CQC for all registered care homes to have a statement of purpose and this sets out the delivery of services in specific care home settings. We are in the process of finalising the quality monitoring tool for the next round of visits and again this includes improved features relating to meals, food and nutrition. We do plan to publish the results and the reports for each home so this will provide information on quality of provision across all aspects of the care delivered, including this area.

Recommendation 9

North Tyneside Council should carry out an audit of spend per bed across care homes to ensure that adequate provision is being made for people. They should, where appropriate, investigate why some homes are spending well below the average for the region to ensure that this is not having a negative impact on wellbeing.

NTC Response:

We are currently looking at potential of working with the care home sector on a residential costing model with care homes and this will include a breakdown of all associated costs of delivery in North Tyneside. This will include an element for food as well as staffing costs associated with different elements of service delivery. If we are able to progress with this work, it will give a benchmark figure that can be shared back with care home providers.

I hope that my response serves to reassure you that we have considered each of the Healthwatch recommendations in detail and have responded appropriately.

Additionally, the Commissioning Team is also considering the Public Health England report published in February 2017, Healthier and More Sustainable Catering: A toolkit for serving food to older people in residential care, to ensure that these recommendations are incorporated into Quality Monitoring visits and the updated Service Specification.

Please pass on my thanks to the Enter and View Volunteers who have continued to support the Council with regard to Quality Monitoring of residential and nursing care homes in the Borough. Their insight is an extremely valuable addition to the formal monitoring visits undertaken by the Commissioning Officers and CCG and our aim of improving the quality of care for older people in North Tyneside.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JA Old'.

Jacqui Old
Head of Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding