

Castle Dene Respite Centre

Enter and View Report
June 2025

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Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Newcastle 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 carers and staff members and 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 have a legal power to visit 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 inspection.

The legislative framework for Healthwatch is split between what Healthwatch 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, 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

Castle Dene Respite Centre, from here on in the report referred to as Castle Dene, was selected to receive an Enter and View visit as it falls under the umbrella of Adult Social Care which is one of the priorities for Healthwatch Newcastle. Castle Dene offers short break care suitable for respite for adults with profound learning difficulties and complex needs. It is a purpose-built single storey accommodation for 8 people.

In addition, Castle Dene was selected as a suitable service to carry out an Enter and View visit as it has not had a Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection since 2019. During the last inspection the CQC rated the service as “good” for being safe, responsive, caring, and well led. However, the rating for the effectiveness of the service, changed from being “good” to “requires improvement”.

Healthwatch Newcastle believed the timing to be relevant and that a visit to the setting engaging with service users and carers would be beneficial, as it would give those who are using the service a chance to provide additional feedback.

Planning and Preparation

Prior to the visits, Healthwatch Newcastle's Enter and View Officer met online with Castle Dene management team and Head of Service to discuss the purpose of an Enter and View visit and explain what a visit entails. It was agreed that Castle Dene were to take part in an Enter and View visit. Publicly available information was then used to inform Healthwatch Newcastle on the facilities and services offered.

Following this, another two in-person meetings took place between Healthwatch Newcastle's Enter and View Officer and the management team to discuss provisional dates, identify who would be carrying out the visit and outline the agenda for the day of the visits. Due to the complex needs of the service users, it was agreed that visits must be carefully planned around the needs of the service users, cause minimum disruption with no more than two Authorised Representatives visiting at one time, and that an adaptive engagement approach was needed/to be used.

Healthwatch Newcastle's Enter and View Officer requested further information regarding the communication needs of the service users who would be present. This information was required so reasonable adjustments could be made. The management team provided this information by sharing the Communication Support Plan of each service user who would be available at the time of the announced Enter and View visits. The support plan included information on what care and support needs the service users currently have, how each person likes to be supported by staff, any risk factors to consider, positive support engagement strategies, and an "about me" section which shares the service users likes and dislikes.

This resource was extremely helpful as it allowed Authorised Representatives to make reasonable adjustments by tailoring engagement to each person, providing a person-centred approach.

Once the planning was finalised, a letter announcing the official date for the first Enter and View visit was sent to Castle Dene management team (Appendix A). Two versions of the survey were then designed, one for staff and another for carers, which was then shared with the Authorised Representatives (Appendix B). The survey questions were designed to be open and balanced to encourage transparent engagement.

Before the visit took place Castle Dene staff members were emailed the survey by the management team. The email also outlined a description of who Healthwatch Newcastle are, what Enter and View is, dates Authorised Representatives were visiting the setting, along with allocated time slots for engagement and a request for a private room to allow staff the opportunity to feedback in person. Additionally, the email contained Healthwatch Newcastle's Enter and View Officer's contact details to allow staff to email the survey directly and feedback anonymously. Surveys and freepost envelopes were also left at the main reception of the venue so additional responses could be collected. In total, 8 responses were collected from members of staff – 3 of which that were collected in person, and 5 of which that were provided via email.

Three Enter and View Authorised Representatives were involved in conducting announced visits over two separate dates.

On the morning of Monday 5th June 2025, an observational visit was carried out by two of the Authorised Representatives; the Healthwatch Newcastle Enter and View Officer and a Healthwatch Newcastle Committee Member. The purpose of this visit was to observe staff interaction with service users who had severely complex needs and were therefore unable to communicate their views and experiences. The communication plans also helped to inform the observations as it allowed Authorised Representatives to understand the responses of nonverbal service users.

The second announced visit took place on the morning of Monday 23rd June 2025. This visit was also conducted by the Healthwatch Newcastle Enter and View Officer and in addition, the Healthwatch Newcastle Research and Data Officer. The purpose of the second visit was to engage with a different group of service users and collect their views on the service, using an adapted engagement approach.

Healthwatch Newcastle identified prior the visit that the survey would not be suitable for service users due to the complexity of the questions. There were too many questions which were not appropriate for the level of need. Some of the questions were too open which did not adhere to the service user communication plans. Therefore, during engagement Authorised Representatives asked 5 closed questions, allowing plenty of time and space after each question, ensuring service users had the opportunity to share their views if they required. (Appendix B.1)

As Castle Dene is a respite service and the carers are not present in the centre, Authorised Representatives were unable to speak to them during a visit. The management team emailed out the survey and provided Healthwatch Newcastle's Enter and View officer's contact details so carers could feedback directly and independently.

The information included within the email also informed carers that they could choose to feedback in person, over the telephone, online, or via a postal survey.

Despite communication being emailed out, there was not much uptake regarding feedback. Healthwatch Newcastle and Castle Dene then put a Data Processing Agreement in place. The Data Processing Agreement meant that Castle Dene management could share personal contact details of carers with Healthwatch Newcastle direct, providing carers have consented to do so. As a result, seven sets of carer feedback was then collected by Healthwatch Newcastle directly over the telephone, and some via direct email.

Information Gathering

During the first visit, two Authorised Representatives were collectively given a tour of the facility by the management team. Due to the nature of the complex needs of the individuals at the setting at the time, it was decided that the first visit would be solely observational, with a focus on observing how the staff interact with the service users and provide care and support. During the first visit, 3 service users were receiving respite in the setting.

In addition, general observations of the internal and external space were also made. The Authorised Representatives split up and placed themselves in different communal areas throughout the building.

During the second visit, 5 service users were present. One (1) service user was asleep so was unable to participate, and the 4 who were awake all engaged with Authorised Representatives. The focus on this visit was to actively engage with service users, by communicating with them using the communication tools provided previously and gathering their insights. Additional observations were also recorded during this visit.

As the service users were all engaged in different activities, and required reasonable adjustments, the Authorised Representatives did not split up when gathering feedback. This allowed one Authorised Representative to focus on note taking and observations, while the other Authorised Representative focussed on engagement.

The management team confirmed that they had 21 staff members employed at the time of the visits, but this was subject to change due to vacant posts for new staff members being advertised.

Authorised Representatives observed eight (8) service users over the two visits and collected verbal feedback in total from four (4) service users, seven (7) carers, and eight (8) staff members.

What people told us

Service users: Authorised Representatives read the communication plans for the service users, prior to the visit. When adapting the engagement strategy for the service users, some of the things considered were:

- Observing facial expressions and listening to the vocal sounds of non-verbal service users to interpret their emotions as stated on the plans.
- Using special interests as a conversation starter to encourage engagement.
- Using visual aids such as pictures of emotions to gain more accurate responses, as some communication plans stated that service users may struggle to make choices when presented with multiple options. In addition, Authorised Representatives had to take into consideration that one of the service users tended to repeat the last word of a sentence. Visuals were used to ensure that a more accurate response was given.
- Lastly, working with the management team and staff was paramount to ensure that support was in place to communicate with service users correctly and to ensure that service users had familiarity.

Overall Experience:

At the time of the visit, Authorised Representatives presented to service users staying at Castle Dene with three visuals which indicated emotions (happy, neutral and sad emotions). Authorised Representatives presented the emotion visuals to ask service users whether they like staying at Castle Dene.

There were two service users who were non-verbal and were unable to communicate whether they enjoyed staying at the centre.

One service user (who was non-verbal) pointed to the 'happy' visual to indicate they like staying at Castle Dene. Another non-verbal service user was in the process of doing a drawing activity with a member of staff and pointed to the 'neutral' visual.

Two of the service users who were able to answer the question verbally, said they do like staying at the respite centre and one service user started naming several staff

members who they really liked, particularly the manager of the centre. Both service users were able to answer more questions during the visit.

Table 1 – Emotion visuals: Service users' responses towards if they like staying at Castle Dene. (4 responses were collected)

		
Three (3)	One (1)	Zero (0)

Change:

*For the rest of the visit Authorised Representatives were only able to collect feedback from two service users who were able to feedback verbally, which this section below will explore.

Authorised Representatives asked both service users what they thought could be done to improve Castle Dene. One service user said that there was nothing that could be improved. The other service user said that they would like more playing card games at the centre.

Communication:

Authorised Representatives asked both the service users if they like the staff at Castle Dene. One service user answered “yes” and held the hand of the manager while expressing humour with each other.

The other service user also said “yes” and started taking part in a cooking activity with a staff member.

Choice:

Service users were asked what they liked doing at Castle Dene. The activities mentioned were:

- Cooking/making pizza
- Dancing and singing
- Going outside

Staying at Castle Dene:

Authorised Representatives asked how they feel when they come to stay at Castle Dene. Both service users, pointed to the happy visual that was presented to them and said that they were 'very happy' at Castle Dene.

Carers:

As part of the Enter and View visit, Healthwatch Newcastle received feedback from seven (7) carers. Responses were collected through a combination of emails and telephone conversations to understand their views and experiences of having a loved one receiving respite care in Castle Dene.

Overall Experience:

All seven (7) carers provided positive experience of their loved one receiving care in Castle Dene. Some positive comments highlighted reassurance of a safe environment, lovely staff, going outside for trips, and being accommodating towards service users' interests.

"They are excellent and deserve to be recognised for all they do for service users. They are amazing and absolutely fantastic in all they do."

"It's a huge relief to know that they are so well looked after, and it allows me much needed time out"

"I feel staff are caring and the environment is safe for her."

We asked carers to share if they had any negative experiences of Castle Dene. No carers shared any negative experiences, although one carer shared an occurrence

they viewed as negative at first, but upon further understanding, they found it to be a positive. This entailed their loved one becoming unwell and being admitted into hospital. The carer was unaware that staff members were not permitted to remain at the hospital with the service user for long period of time. After raising their concerns to management, they were made aware of staff policies and procedures. They described their relationship with staff to be positive and were happy for their loved one to remain in the care of staff at Castle Dene.

Change:

Four (4) carers said that they would not change anything to improve Castle Dene to make it better.

"Nothing really. I just trust them so much to the point I would let them (service user) move in there tomorrow"

"Staff at Castle Dene are constantly improving the service as far as I know."

The remaining three (3) carers proposed minor changes to improve the service along with more significant suggestions in which they feel would be beneficial. These included:

- All staff members wearing name badges, so service users could remember names
- A bath reclined seat
- Castle Dene to have their own transport
- Independent Living Support (ILS) service, as there is a shortage

Communication:

Authorised Representatives asked carers to describe their relationship with the staff working at Castle Dene. There was a 100% positive response rate to this. Comments included staff having a positive attitude, being reliable and having effective communications through email and telephone.

"Very good, they are so attentive and caring and know my loved one."

"Good communication with staff by email or telephone"

"Brilliant, they are all dead positive"

In terms of concerns at the respite centre, all seven carers have said that there are no current concerns and would know who to contact if they did have a concern such as the manager or a key worker.

Choice:

Carers were asked how much involvement they have in making choices for their loved one in Castle Dene. One carer said they do not have any involvement. One said that they feel it wasn't necessary to be involved to make choices for their loved one. Five carers said that they are involved in making choices for their loved one with the assistance of staff at Castle Dene.

Table 2 – Carers comments regarding being involved in the choices made for their loved one at Castle Dene.

Comments regarding involvement in making choices for loved one at Castle Dene	Number of comments
Involved in make choice with assistance of staff	5
Don't have any involvement	1
Feel that it is not necessary to be involved	1

Food and Drink:

All seven carers commented positive things about the food and drink that is offered at Castle Dene. These included:

- Good portion sizes
- Adherence to individual feed plans such as peg feeding and blended diets
- Have a variety of food and drink on offer
- Having a themed dining during big event like Eurovision

Activities:

All carers fed back that their loved ones engage in activities at Castle Dene. There is no set activities programme as they are planned and based on the interests of the individuals who stay at the time.

"Yes, they get involved with lots and it really helps them become more independent"

"They cater towards their interests and give them the freedom to do what they are interested in."

Care:

There was 100% positive satisfaction rate across all carers when asked how satisfied they are with the care that their loved one is receiving at Castle Dene.

"Excellent... they come back well cared for, but most importantly, happy"

"We are more than happy with the care they receive. The staff respect their needs and take care of them in all aspects such as toiletry needs, showering, helping them dress and choosing their food."

"Extremely satisfied"

Authorised Representatives asked carers if they would like to provide any additional information regarding the care that their loved one receives at Castle Dene. In response to this, five carers provided additional positive comments, for example, Castle Dene staff providing care was their best decision; now carers have more time for themselves with no worries of their loved one, and the staff are doing their job brilliantly.

"It gives me and particular my wife the respite we need as we don't need to worry because we know she is well cared for and is happy, and looks forward to going"

"I am grateful for the staff who look after my daughter. I feel she is included and treated as their own."

Staff:

As part of the Enter and View visit, Healthwatch Newcastle received feedback from eight (8) members of staff working at Castle Dene of which three (3) gave feedback in person.

Overall experience:

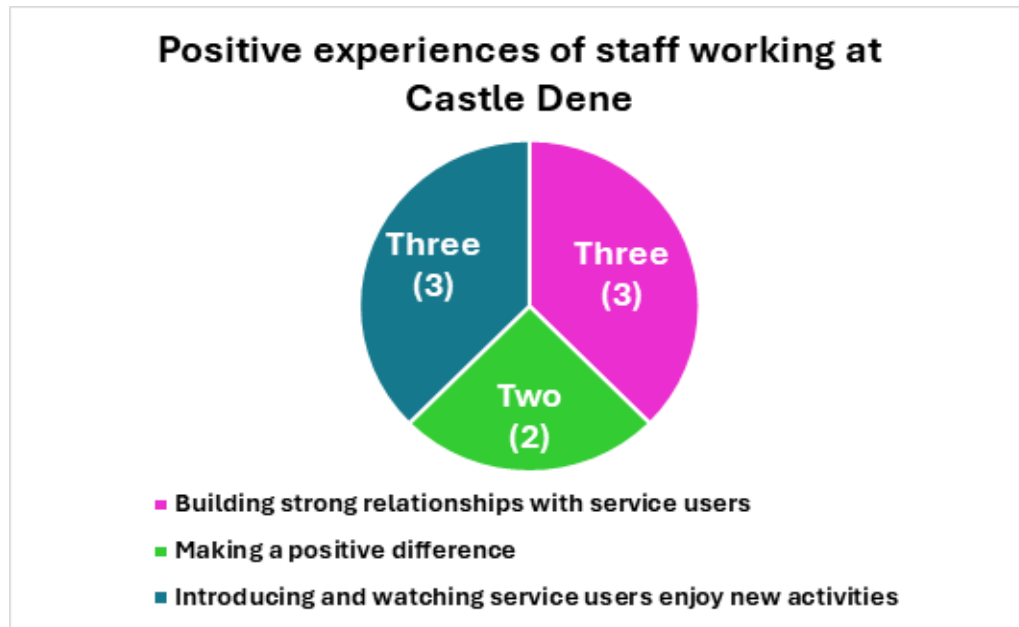
All eight (8) staff members who took part, shared positive experiences when working within the centre. Three (3) staff members positively highlighted building strong connections with service users. Two (2) staff members said that they like making a positive difference as part of their role with a further three (3) staff members who enjoy introducing and watching service users enjoy new activities.

"My last role was all attending to physical needs. In this role you can make a difference each day. You develop a relationship with each person and get more interaction the longer you know them."

"Supporting people with learning disabilities is very rewarding. Making a difference to people's lives makes the job worthwhile."

"Introducing activities such as gardening, sensory play using food stuff of different textures to model and mould. Social stories with props encouraging people to participate."

Figure 1 – Positive experiences that staff shared about working at Castle Dene.



One (1) out of eight staff members shared a negative experience at Castle Dene. This experience included having an absence of effective communication and feelings of not working well as a team.

Three (3) staff members highlighted circumstances that would impact their daily job such as low numbers of staff and unpredictable situations that may arise such as illness, although they shared that it is manageable when working at Castle Dene. They did not illustrate this as a negative view – rather it is something that may simply affect their job day to day. Overall, four (4) staff members had no negative comments to share.

"Only when there has been an unpredictable event. The general stress of an unpredicted situation. I have never had something out of control"

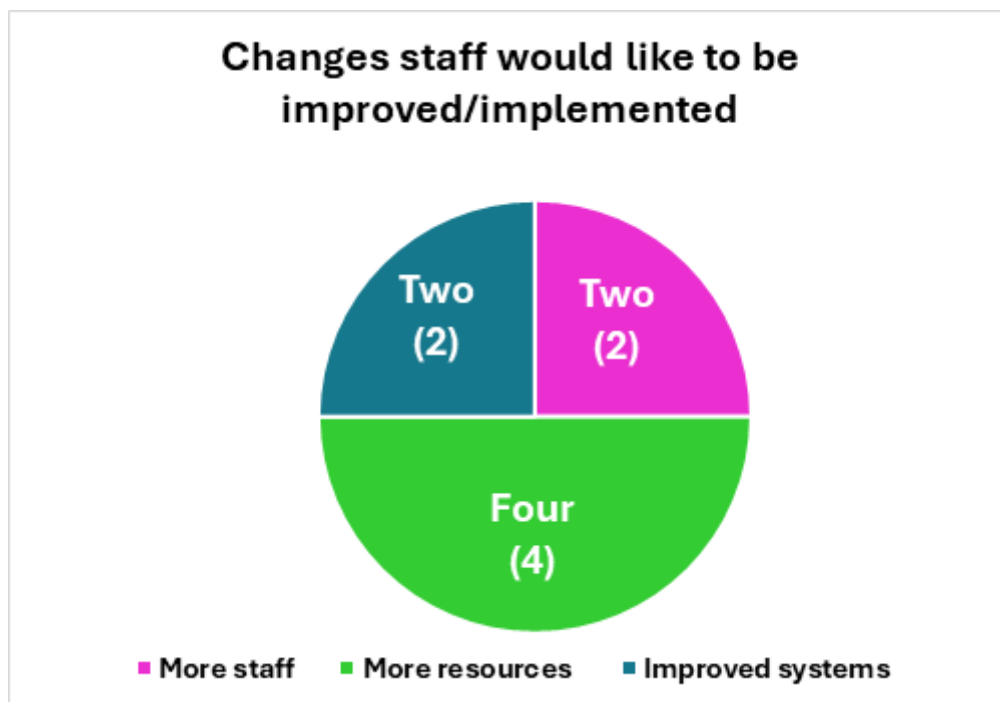
"A feeling of not working well as a team, an absence of effective communication. Often can't access emails as no time to go on a computer after a shift."

Change:

All staff members had stated a change that they would like to be implemented or improved within Castle Dene.

Two (2) shared that having more staff members would be beneficial. A further four (4) staff members stated that more resources would be useful such as transport, expansion of space and more equipment to have a more specialised approach and make a further difference. Finally, two (2) said that improving the system would be beneficial such as *“more time allocated so all staff can attend training team meetings together instead of having to sit out to care for people. More consistently programmed and delivered team meetings with catch up sessions for those who can’t attend, especially night shift.”*

Figure 2 – Changes staff members at Castle Dene shared that they would like to be implemented or improved.



Communication:

Seven (7) out of eight (8) staff members described having a positive relationship with other staff and service users at Castle Dene. However, one (1) commented: *“there is a bit of a day/nightshift split. Relationships with people (service users) are often good but maybe could be better if we knew how to support them better”*, outlining a neutral relationship between staff and service users.

“Staff at Castle Dene are very supportive. We have a diverse team and respect each other’s outlooks and beliefs, which makes it a better experience for people using the service.”

“I have a generally positive relationship with staff and service users. I think as a team we are generally positive. We all work together for the good outcomes for those who are staying here.”

Concerns:

Out of eight staff members, six (6) said that they had no concerns.

Concerns which two (2) staff members did mention were *“staffing needs”* which they have already raised to management and has been organised accordingly.

All eight (8) staff members were aware of what to do and who to contact if they had a concern such as their team leader and management team.

Choice:

All eight (8) staff members gave examples of a diverse range of choices that they promote within Castle Dene to encourage independence.

Examples of choice included:

- Communication boards
- Now and next picture boards (a visual support tool which helps those with special educational needs or communication difficulties, understand transitions and upcoming activities)

- Individual communication plan
- Sign language
- Working with carers and professionals to understand individual likes and dislikes
- Adapting to tone of voice

In terms of food and drink offered in Castle Dene, three (3) staff members shared positive views including that the food is fresh, homemade and accounts for needs of service users. Two (2) staff members made general statements such as to who prepares the food and how they decide the food which is offered on the day which is based on the preference of service users. A further three (3) staff members gave recommendations to improve the quality and variety of food and drinks such as having more healthier options and having more specialist food for an individuals' diet.

Staff accommodate individual needs and provide person centred care as some service users require a blended diet, and some require the use of a PEG tube which is used to feed a person straight into their stomach if they have a problem feeding by mouth. Overall, the feedback regarding the food and drink offered to service users was very positive. The responses emphasise that meals are catered to the individual.

"Food is prepared by the staff at Castle Dene and is all home cooked. It is fresh, diverse, and accounts for people's needs and requests"

Activities:

All staff members stated that activities are planned and decided on an individual basis in accordance with the needs and interests of the service users as well as their communication plans. They are also decided during staff handovers.

What we observed

Key areas of observation were:

Effectiveness of the physical space and layout

Externally Castle Dene had very clear signage at the front of the building leading into the car park. The car park was spacious and accessible. The external environment surrounding the building was very clean, with no litter on the grounds and lots of plants. The rear end of the building contained a large garden with fruits and vegetables, and accessible walkways throughout.



Figure 3 – Exterior Entrance

On arrival the doors were secured accordingly. The staff on reception were polite and interacted but were not distracted from their main task of caring. The signing in process was very straightforward. The reception area was warm, spacious and clean. The walls contained information posters regarding advocacy and safeguarding.

Authorised Representatives recognised the reception office door also had a picture of an office which was placed there as good practice for service users or visitors who

require visuals. The area also contained two comfortable chairs and a Pride themed tree which promoted inclusivity, along with a certificate showing that Castle Dene has received accreditation from the National Autistic Society.



Figure 4 – Pride Tree

The centre is a single floor adapted building which accommodates up to 8 service users. 6 bedrooms can be booked out at the same time, and an additional 2 are kept available for emergency placements.

During the tour of the setting the manager explained the booking in process and explained that although a system is in place, things still change daily as the setting may receive last minute referrals. The service also gets referrals from other local authorities. The management and staff adapt and accommodate to the changing needs of service users. The manager explained that the majority of service users are under a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) and do not communicate verbally. Knowledge of knowing how to communicate with the service user is built up over time, speaking with family members or carers, reading care plans and information gathered during the initial assessment. The manager also explained that before a service user comes in to

stay, they go through an assessment so staff can build up a profile of the service user and the service user can transition. They generally do between 3-5 tea visits (longer if required), followed by an overnight stay and then a two-night stay. This is based on an individual basis.

Internally the space was clean, tidy, and accessible. It contained a full hoist bathroom and mobile hoists. Visuals were on display on several doors throughout the building including the bedrooms and the kitchen. Alarms and sensors are fitted onto bedroom doors for safety, but the bedrooms are kept unlocked so service users can come and go and maintain independence.

The kitchen area was clean and appeared very organised. During the tour the staff member present explained that each person has a meal assistance plan. Authorised Representatives were presented with a file to look through and observed the meal plans which had notes attached to each service user such as, current likes, dislikes, foods to avoid, consistency of food, seating position and any specialist equipment used.



Figure 5 – Meal Plans

The staff member explained that service users join in with cleaning and cooking, shopping is ordered twice weekly and that they have themed nights during special events and occasions.

The bedrooms have a variety of resources to accommodate the individual needs of the service users. Some examples being listening devices and pressure mattresses. The corridors were spacious, modern, and contained artwork which was designed by service users. Storing cupboards were always locked and required codes to gain access and three lounges were available in the building to accommodate alone time. In addition, there was a multifunction room which was a dining room that is also used for entertainment. Overall, the internal and external space was accessible, clean, and staff were always present and very welcoming.



Figure 6 – Lounge

Service and Positive social interaction

During the first observational visit 3 service users were present. Another service user was staying at Castle Dene at the time the Enter and View visit took place, but they were attending college at the time of the visit. The service users present were non-verbal with more complex needs.

Various staff members were around to support all 3 service users who were each doing different activities. One Authorised Representative observed a service user walking about the corridors, entering and exiting communal spaces to see other service users and staff. A staff member was always close by to offer support but gave the service user appropriate space and freedom to wander.

The service user then made eye contact with a member of staff and pointed to the TV. The staff member instantly recognised what they wanted and were able to communicate with them positively and non-verbally by using hand gestures and responding to the service users sounds and body language. The staff member then explained the artist playing on the TV was a favourite of the service user and continued to tell the Authorised Representative about the service user's interests. It was very clear that the staff member knew the service user well and were able to respond to their needs effectively and with great care.

Another Authorised Representative observed one of the service user's watching the football on the TV with a staff member. The body language towards the staff member was very positive and it was clear to see how comfortable the service user was. The staff member always referred to the service user by name when they were talking to the Authorised Representative. The communication profile of the service user stated that to promote positive engagement staff must use their name frequently in conversations and include them in jokes and banter. The Authorised Representatives observed the staff member doing this throughout the time of the visit.

The third service user present spent time alone in the communal lounge watching TV. Authorised Representatives attempted to engage with the service user who put their hand out. Authorised Representatives recognised that this method of nonverbal communication was mentioned in their care plan and signified that they wished to be left alone and so left the room respectively. The communication profiles provided by Castle Dene management were very valuable during the visit. Following this the staff

member and service user spent time in the kitchen making pizza, which they were having for lunch. The staff member ensured the service user made the decisions such as what toppings to put on the pizza and choosing utensils. The staff member provided adequate support while also promoting independence.

Overall, the social interaction between service users and staff was excellent. It felt relaxed and comfortable and service users appeared to feel at home. Staff responded to the individual needs of service users, followed communication plans, and promoted independence. The overall impression was that there was a good balance of interaction and space.

Recommendations

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

- **To ensure all staff members are kept up to date after staff meetings:**
The majority of feedback from staff members was positive. The feedback mainly included the feeling of working well as a team, the passion for the role, and having effective communication. However, one staff member fed back that they did not always have time to catch up on emails and were unable to attend some staff meetings and therefore felt like communication could be improved.
Further to this, it is recommended that management continue to support existing and future staff and to ensure that any staff who are unable to attend meetings due to caring duties, have a system in place which allows them to stay informed and share their input pre or post meeting.
- **Ensure relevant policies and procedures are communicated to carers on arrival:**
It is evident that Castle Dene management team and staff have a good induction system which also reflects on how detailed and effective the care and support is in practice. All carers who fed back praised the management and staff team, and many commented that communication is brilliant. However, one carer mentioned that when their loved one was admitted into hospital, they were unaware of the policies and procedures (staff not being permitted to stay long term with the service user). It is therefore recommended that this information is reiterated to carers in a welcome pack or included in the existing induction process to manage expectations.
- **Castle Dene Respite Centre staff to continue to provide person centred care and expand on activities and personal interests of service users:**
The feedback received from carers, staff, service users and the observations carried out over both visits clearly highlighted that staff and management were extremely passionate about the quality of care and support that they provide to service users. Staff who fed back were very passionate and shared that they would love to expand the work that is being done by offering service users more resources such as Castle Dene having their own transport. All systems and processes from inducting a new service user into the facility, meal choices and methods, along with how service users like to spend their time in the setting, were

all specific and on an individual basis. The internal décor also contained artwork which was produced by service users. To promote a sense of achievement it is suggested that future displays contain the names of the service users. It is recommended that all staff continue to use a person-centred approach and continue consulting service users and carers.

Service Provider Response

Our Newcastle City Council response to Healthwatch Newcastle's 'Enter and View' report of Castle Dene is as follows:

Newcastle City Council wish to thank Healthwatch Newcastle for their Enter and View project and associated visits to Castle Dene respite service. The project has provided the Council with an invaluable opportunity to gain the thoughts of people and their family carers about their experience of Castle Dene, as well as providing an additional platform for Castle Dene employees to discuss the key aspects of their role.

The Council is very appreciative of the planning of Healthwatch's observational visits which were undertaken with sensitivity and met the needs of people using the centre, avoiding any unnecessary disruption. Furthermore, the use of short, closed questions within the survey for people who use Castle Dene proved effective, with the survey being tailored to the communicative abilities of each individual person.

With Castle Dene's primary aim to secure continual service improvement, the Enter and View project has enabled the service to both further assess its strengths and the relevant action that needs to be implemented to further enhance the quality of the service provision.

Appendices

Appendix A – Pilot Letter

Appendix B – Questions

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

Appendix C – Service Management Statements

Appendix A – Pilot Letter

Tell Us North CIC
Suite E11, Floor E
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 Newcastle will be conducting Enter and View visits to Castle Dene Respite Centre, Freeman Road, South Gosforth, Newcastle, NE31SZ.

The first visit will take place on Thursday 5th June 2025 between 10.30- 12:30, followed by a second visit on Monday 23rd June 2025 between 11.00am-13:00am.

Healthwatch Newcastle 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), Daniel Milburn (Healthwatch Newcastle Lead Officer), Alex Hoole (Healthwatch Newcastle 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- Castle Dene Respite Centre

We are here today on an Enter and View Visit on behalf of Healthwatch Newcastle. 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.

Note: The questions below were not presented as a survey to the service users. They were asked verbally in person with the assistance of visual aids.

1. Do you like staying at Castle Dene?
2. What could be done to improve Castle Dene and make it better?
3. Do you like the staff at Castle Dene?
4. What do you like doing at Castle Dene?
5. How do you feel when you come to stay at Castle Dene?

Appendix B.2. – Relative Questions

Enter and View relative questions- Castle Dene Respite Centre

We are here today on an Enter and View Visit on behalf of Healthwatch Newcastle. 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 Castle Dene Respite Centre?

- 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 Castle Dene Respite Centre 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? If you did have a concern, would you know what to do and who to speak to?

Choice

- 7 Do you have much involvement in helping your relative make choices at Castle Dene Respite Centre?

- 8 What are your views on the food/drink?

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

Care

- 10 How satisfied are you with the care your relative receives? Could you tell me why?

Any other comments

Appendix B.3. – Staff Questions

Enter and View Staff Questions- Castle Dene Respite Centre

We are here today on an Enter and View Visit on behalf of Healthwatch Newcastle. 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 Castle Dene Respite Centre, 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 Castle Dene Respite Centre 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

Appendix C – Service Management Statements

Below is a list of statements provided by the Castle Dene Respite Centre management team, in response to the recommendation of Healthwatch Newcastle (see page 24):

- **To ensure all staff members are kept up to date after staff meetings:**

“Non-attendance at team meetings is managed on a rotational basis, allowing each staff member to miss one out of approximately seven meetings. This approach ensures fairness while maintaining continuity of communication. Meeting minutes are recorded and made available for all staff to read, and it is expected that those who were absent review the notes to stay informed.”

“To enhance communication and streamline information sharing, the Handover Book and Communication Book have now been combined into a single resource. All relevant updates, notes, and instructions will be recorded in this unified book. Staff are required to read the entries and initial to confirm they have reviewed the information.”

“Health and Social Care Coordinators are expected to check and respond to emails during every shift, in line with the responsibilities of their role. Health and Social Care Officers are required to check their emails at least once per week, although if significant / critical practice issues are discussed and agreed upon within staff meetings or occur during everyday provision, each shift handover will be the immediate forum in which all employees on duty gain an instant understanding of the agreed mode of working.”

- **Ensure relevant policies and procedures are communicated to carers on arrival:**

“A new statement has been added to the *Initial Assessment*—a comprehensive document used to gather essential information during the initial home visit. This update is intended to inform families of the processes around hospital admissions.”

'If an individual requires medical intervention and needs to be accompanied to hospital, Castle Dene staff will remain with them until either a family member arrives or they are formally admitted.

Due to staffing ratios on each shift, it is not always possible for a team member to stay at the hospital once the person has been admitted.

We will continue to liaise with hospital staff and, where possible, arrange for team members to visit during designated visiting hours to offer additional support.'

"This will be discussed with families on initial contact."

- **Castle Dene Respite Centre staff to continue to provide person centred care and expand on activities and personal interests of service users:**

"Photographs were taken during the creative process to capture individuals as they worked on their artwork. The intention is to display each photograph alongside the corresponding piece, helping to foster a sense of pride and personal achievement in a way that is meaningful to each person."

"Looking ahead, we plan to host an art show that celebrates these accomplishments—showcasing not just the finished pieces, but the journey and creativity behind them."

Healthwatch Newcastle
c/o Tell Us North CIC
Milburn House, Suite E11 Floor E
19 Dean Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 1LE

Website: www.healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk

Phone: 0808 178 9282

Email: info@healthwatchnewcastle.co.uk