

Health and Social Care Committee

HSC(4)-15-12 paper 8

Inquiry into Residential Care for older people – Feedback of engagement work to date – Note of visit to Bethel House

Health and Social Care Committee – Visit to Bethel House, Dinas Powys (28 March 2012)

Background

1. As part of the inquiry into residential care for older people, members of the Health and Social Care Committee visited Bethel House in Dinas Powys on 28 March 2012.
2. During the visit Committee members met staff and residents from Bethel House. The purpose of the visit was to:
 - Visit an established more traditional residential care home and discuss with staff about the challenges of delivering residential care.
3. The Committee were invited to visit Bethel House by Brian West, who is the Chair of the Vale of Glamorgan Care Home Association.
4. This paper summarises the key points raised during the Committee's visit.

About Bethel House

5. Bethel House is run along a Christian ethos, and was set up as part of the Hebron Hall centre. It can sleep 39 residents, and has provision for 7 EMI beds. It is a not for profit home.
6. People enter the home from a variety of routes – for example some people choose to go because of religion, while others move in because of the location.
7. The average age of their residents has increased over recent years; most are now in their nineties. As home owners they have noticed a trend to encourage people to stay at home for as long as possible, as opposed to entering care.
8. Members were told how Bethel House tries to address the fear factor around moving into residential care by trying to make it clear that it is the resident's home and that this the move should be seen as a change of address. While they find that few people look forward to moving into the home, but they find once the person is settled in the home they tend to be much happier and healthier for a number of reasons such as they are more likely to take their medication regularly and they have more regular contact with a range of people and social activities.

9. Bethel House has just appointed an activities co-ordinator who will build on the existing range of activities they have in the home which includes thought of the day, a Sunday service, and craft activities. There is also a local shop which sets up in the home on a regular basis.

Staffing and training

10. There are 40 people employed in the home, who work a series of shifts. Bethel House owners told the Committee that they have not had substantial issues with regards to recruitment and retention, which they believe is down in part to the rate of pay they offer and the current employment situation.
11. There has been a lot of development around the level of staff training, which has changed expectations. It was suggested that the provision of NVQs were good, but that not everybody who worked in the care setting wanted to do this.
12. As part of the visit, Members spoke to Kay who had worked in the home for 18 years. She decided to move into the caring profession after her experiences of caring for her mother and wanting to undertake a similar role for other people. She thought it was a great place to work, and that this was down largely to the management of the home. She thought the positive atmosphere was also because of the residents all cared about each other, and considered themselves to be part of a large family- for example they were planning to throw a street party for the diamond jubilee celebrations.

Joint Registration of Residential Care and Nursing Care

13. Members were told that at Bethel House the aim is to try and maintain the focus on people, even as dementia develops. In order to do this they try to assess and accommodate the care needs of residents, and would only move them to an alternative facility as a last resort.
14. The owners of Bethel House said they would encourage the joint registration of residential and nursing care to help address the issues of moving people from where they are settled. They said that it can be really tough with couples who may end up being separated; they try to keep them together even if one person is diagnosed with an illness which requires nursing care.

Funding and Regulation

15. Members were told that the Local Authority will try to buy care at the cheapest possible rate, which tends to result in a battle every year to minimise the price differential between actual cost and what the Local Authority will pay. The differential this year is only £7 which is manageable, but has previously been as much as £30 a week.
16. Representatives from the house talked about how there should be some flexibility in the regulations and a greater focus on care -for example they have

to have 5 bathrooms as there are 40 residents, but they do not have the staff levels to use all the bathrooms at once.