

**Life at Kensington Care
Home, Northallerton:
what people told us**

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Supporting information

Address	Finkills Way, Northallerton, DL7 8UB
Provider	Crown Care Group
Date of visit	3 rd March 2026
Care Quality Commission rating	Good (May 2022)
Care home manager	Debbie Daniels
Contact number	01609 801356

Healthwatch North Yorkshire Authorised Representatives:

- Jill Pouncey (team leader and volunteer)
- Linda Wolstenholme (volunteer)
- Lynn Warren (volunteer)
- Helen Littler (staff member)

Healthwatch North Yorkshire thank the care home manager and their team for their cooperation and support in facilitating the visit.

This report is not a full representation of the experiences of all the people living there, friends and family members, or care home staff. It reflects what was observed on the day of the visit, alongside feedback shared through surveys.

Some of the residents Healthwatch spoke with have cognit impairment, which may affect how they were able to respond to questions.

Background

Who is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch is an independent champion for people using local health and care services.

It listens to people's experiences to help improve care.

What is 'enter and view'?

An 'enter and view' visit allows Healthwatch to see the quality of a health or social care service in person.

These visits provide an opportunity to hear from people living in their home, their families and staff, while also observing the care environment.

Visits are conducted by trained Healthwatch staff and volunteers, known as authorised representatives. They have a legal right to enter health and social care premises.

During the visit, the team collects feedback and makes observations, These are then brought together into a report.

The report is shared with:

- The care home
- The Care Quality Commission
- North Yorkshire Council
- Healthwatch England.

The report is then shared with the care home, Care Quality Commission, North Yorkshire Council, Healthwatch England and is made available to the public via our website.

How care homes are selected

The process for selecting which places to visit includes two main things:

1. To make sure visits include a range of care homes across North Yorkshire, rather than focusing on one area or type of service.
2. To visit care homes that have not recently been visited by the Care Quality Commission (for over two years), and which were previously rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

Notification and location



In preparation for the visit, Healthwatch North Yorkshire let Kensington Care Home know that they were visiting sometime between Monday 23rd February and Monday 16th March 2026.

Questionnaires were sent to the care home in advance for staff and family members to complete. These were distributed by the care home.

Kensington Care Home offers a range of services, including residential care, dementia residential care and respite care.

At the time of the visit, there were 34 residents in the home out of a possible occupancy of 64.

Healthwatch heard from:

- 11 people who live there.
- 7 of their friends or family members (including 1 volunteer).
- 19 members of staff.

Kensington Care Home is a 64-bed private residential unit. The home also takes respite care and clients from the local authority (council).

The youngest person we spoke with was 52, and the oldest was 103.

Information was gathered from a range of individuals with different levels of cognitive function, ages and mobility. Many people had been living in the home between two and four years.

We spoke with 9 female residents and 2 male residents.

Further information was gathered from staff (including housekeeping and care staff) and relatives, ranging in age from 20 to 65.



Key findings

Positive feedback

First impressions

Kensington Care Home gave a very positive first impression. The home felt clean, welcoming and comfortable, with a bright, airy foyer and a fresh, modern feel on the ground floor. Information leaflets and staff identification boards were clearly displayed further down the corridor. The building appeared well maintained, with access to a roof terrace and a garden for residents.

Staff

Staff were observed to be kind, caring, considerate and attentive. They showed a strong understanding of individual residents and were open and willing to speak with us.

Care

Residents appeared well cared for, clean and comfortable. Rooms were spacious and personalised, and housekeeping maintained a high standard of cleanliness. Care was consistently rated four or five stars by residents.

Communication

The home keeps in touch with residents, friends and relatives through weekly coffee mornings, newsletters, email updates and quarterly meetings. Leaflets on health conditions were available, and albums of visitors' messages were displayed on a table.

Volunteers

Two volunteers, both with previous family connections to the home, supported activities during the visit. They showed a strong sense of involvement with the home and its community.

Recommended areas for improvement

Food and drink

Food could be reviewed to improve variety, quality and appeal. There is an opportunity to provide more balanced, imaginative and nutritious options that reflect residents' preferences.

Flexibility around mealtimes could also be improved, for example offering later breakfasts or lighter snacks. Consistency between chefs should be monitored to maintain standards.

Activities and social contact

Activities should be clearly displayed and easy to access. There is an opportunity to increase one to one and small group activities, particularly for residents with limited mobility or those who are bedbound. Activities should also be better tailored to residents' needs and preferences to encourage participation.

Meeting social and emotional needs

Some residents reported feeling lonely or experiencing periods of sadness. This suggests a need for more support with social interaction and emotional wellbeing, as well as more opportunities for connection between residents.

Dementia friendly environment

The home could benefit from clearer visual cues to support people living with dementia. This includes colour contrast signage and identifiable landmarks to help orientation. Dementia specific training for staff should also be routine and accessible.

Staffing

Staffing levels should be monitored to make sure they meet residents' needs. Staff should feel supported in their roles, able to raise concerns, and have access to regular, appropriate training.

Observations

Environment

Kensington Care Home is a newly built, modern, purpose designed residential care home arranged over three floors. It is located just off the main road into Northallerton.

Access to the building is through a clearly marked main entrance with an intercom system. This leads into a spacious, open plan reception area, which includes a bistro, bar, and hairdressing and beauty salon facilities.

Communal spaces are available on each floor, alongside a ground floor garden and a sun terrace on the top floor. This gives people living there a range of environments to use.



A staff identification board was displayed in the reception. The home was observed to be clean, well maintained and welcoming, with a fresh and pleasant atmosphere.

Staff were aware of the visit and were approachable and helpful throughout.

The internal layout appeared open and accessible. Corridors were generally wide enough for people using mobility aids, and seating areas were available at intervals for people who may need to rest.

On the Kipling unit, some areas of décor would benefit from further development to better support people living with dementia, such as clearer colour contrast and navigational landmarks. We were informed that this work was planned.

Bedrooms were of a good size, with a small number noted to be larger than standard.

Cleanliness

We asked people how they felt about cleanliness in the home.

Overall, feedback was positive. Eight residents said their room was **“as clean and comfortable as I want”**, while three described it as **“adequately clean and comfortable”**.

People spoke about having a **“nice room”** with their own belongings around them, and several described the home as **“lovely and clean”**.

From what we saw on the day, the home was well looked after, and this matched what people told us.

Cleanliness appears to be part of the day to day running of the home, rather than something addressed occasionally. This helps create an environment that feels comfortable and settled, which can make a real difference to how people feel living there.

Accommodation

People were generally positive about their rooms, with everyone rating them as adequate or better.

All rooms are en suite, and many residents said being able to bring personal belongings made a real difference, helping their space feel more familiar and their own.

At the same time, a few people spoke about the reality of moving into the home. For some, it had not been a choice, but something they needed as their circumstances changed.

That came through in how people described their rooms.

One person said it was a **“a place to hide”**. Another reflected that **“It’s not mine, so it would never be perfect”**.

These comments highlight that, while rooms are comfortable and well equipped, the experience of living in them is not just about the space itself, but about what it represents for each person.

This reflects a wider theme across the home. While the environment can be made comfortable, it can take time for it to feel like home, particularly when the move has not been by choice.

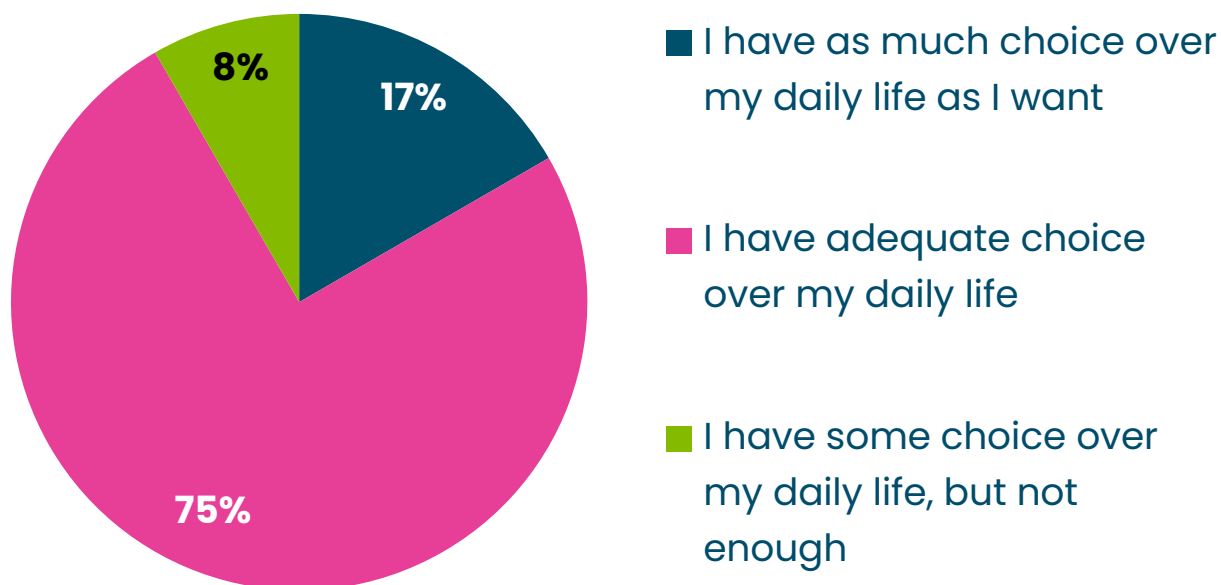


Quality of life

General happiness

We asked people how they felt about living in the home, and how much choice they felt they had in their day to day lives. This included things like when they get up or go to bed, where they spend their time, and what they wear.

How much choice you have over your daily life?



Most people we spoke to seemed broadly settled, given their circumstances. But it wasn't without its frustrations.

Some people living in the home talked about having to fit in around routines, especially mealtimes or when staff were available. Others said they missed family and friends, or felt that activities didn't always suit them, particularly if they needed extra support or spent more time in their rooms.

Even with that, people did point to parts of daily life that worked for them.

One person said:

“Given my circumstances I can generally do what I want.”

Another was more matter of fact about it:

“You can’t have everything you want if you are in a place like this, but we have our own hairdresser come in. It’s nice to have your own hairdresser. They know what you like doing.”

And one summed it up quite simply:

“I don’t see how I could have much more choice. It’s the way it is.”

There were also moments where things didn’t quite feel right for individuals. One person felt their needs weren’t fully being met, which may reflect their personal situation or that the home isn’t the right fit for them.

Overall, the home offers a stable and supportive environment. Many people have some level of independence, but for some, more tailored support would make a difference to how they experience daily life.



Food and drink

We asked people living in the home, along with friends and family, about the food. We also sat with residents during a mealtime to see how it worked in practice.

Most people described the food as acceptable, but not particularly interesting. It did the job, but there was a clear feeling it could be better.

From the feedback we gathered:

- 33% rated meals as good
- 66% rated them as adequate

So while people were generally getting what they needed, there was a sense that mealtimes could be more enjoyable.

Some people were relaxed about it:

“It’s not my choice, but it’s perfectly adequate.”

Others were more direct:

“The food isn’t very good. Some of it isn’t too bad, but it’s not like home cooking.”

One person pointed out this wasn’t a new issue:

“We had a meeting about the food last year, but it still isn’t very good.”

There were also more positive views:

“I am generally happy with the food.”

On the day of our visit, we ate lunch with the people living at Kensington Care Home. The menu relied quite heavily on pre prepared options, including pasties.

A few people mentioned that Sunday lunch stood out as the best meal of the week.

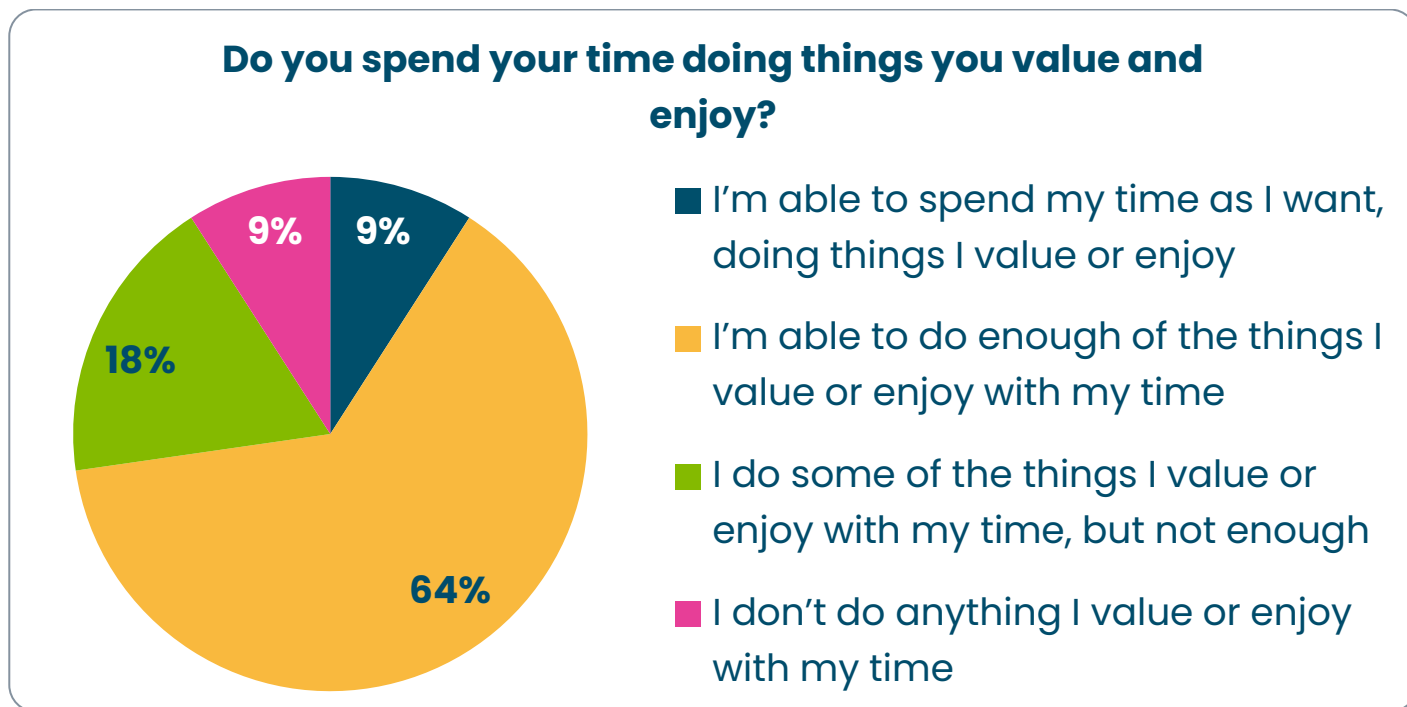
Overall, mealtimes were well organised and residents were supported appropriately. Staff knew people's preferences and were attentive during meals.

That said, there is room to improve variety and presentation, and to offer options that feel more personal. For many people, food is one of the main highlights of the day, so even small changes here could make a noticeable difference.



Activities and social contact

We asked residents, staff, friends and family about activities and social contact, and also spent time observing how this worked in practice.



Activities were available, but they didn't always seem to connect with everyone. Some people chose to stay in their rooms, either through preference or because the activities on offer didn't feel relevant to them.

From the feedback:

- 64% of people living in the home rated social contact as adequate
- 80% of relatives felt it was adequate

So while things were in place, they weren't always making a difference to how people spent their time.

During the visit, staff were mostly focused on practical care.

That's understandable, but it did mean there was less time for conversation or encouraging people to take part in activities or spend time together.

A few people spoke openly about feeling lonely at times.

One said that **"sometimes I feel a bit lonely"**.

Another described going through periods of sadness.

This was discussed with the manager. There may be an opportunity to support staff to see social interaction as a core part of care, not something separate from it.

Experiences of activities were mixed.

One person told us:

"There is little to do here. I don't want to spend time with most of the people here. One of the women who does the activities is great. I talk to her, but she is off at the moment. I don't want to do the activities that they do."



That sense came through more than once – activities were there, but they didn't always feel meaningful or appealing.

Some people also said that advertised activities don't always happen, or that there are limited chances to get out of the home, aside from church visits.

Several people mentioned they would like more opportunities to get outside, for example supported walks, or access to different puzzles and activities.

Overall, there is a foundation in place, but it doesn't always meet people where they are. More personalised and consistent activity, along with small moments of interaction throughout the day, could make a real difference to how connected people feel.



Quality of care

Resident care, health and well-being

We asked residents, and their friends and family, about the care they receive. We also observed how care was being delivered during the visit.

Overall, people spoke positively about the care. People living there looked comfortable and well cared for, and staff interactions felt warm and attentive.

We saw staff taking time with people living in the home, and there was a clear sense that they knew people as individuals. Health needs, including things like dental and hearing support, appeared to be picked up and responded to.

People were generally confident in the care they receive.

One told us:

“I am very well cared for, and I have had a wonderful life and the helpers are kind.”

Another said:

“I don’t really need much, but if I ask for help they are very kind.”

And a third added:

“I feel well looked after. I get the assistance that I need in practical terms.”

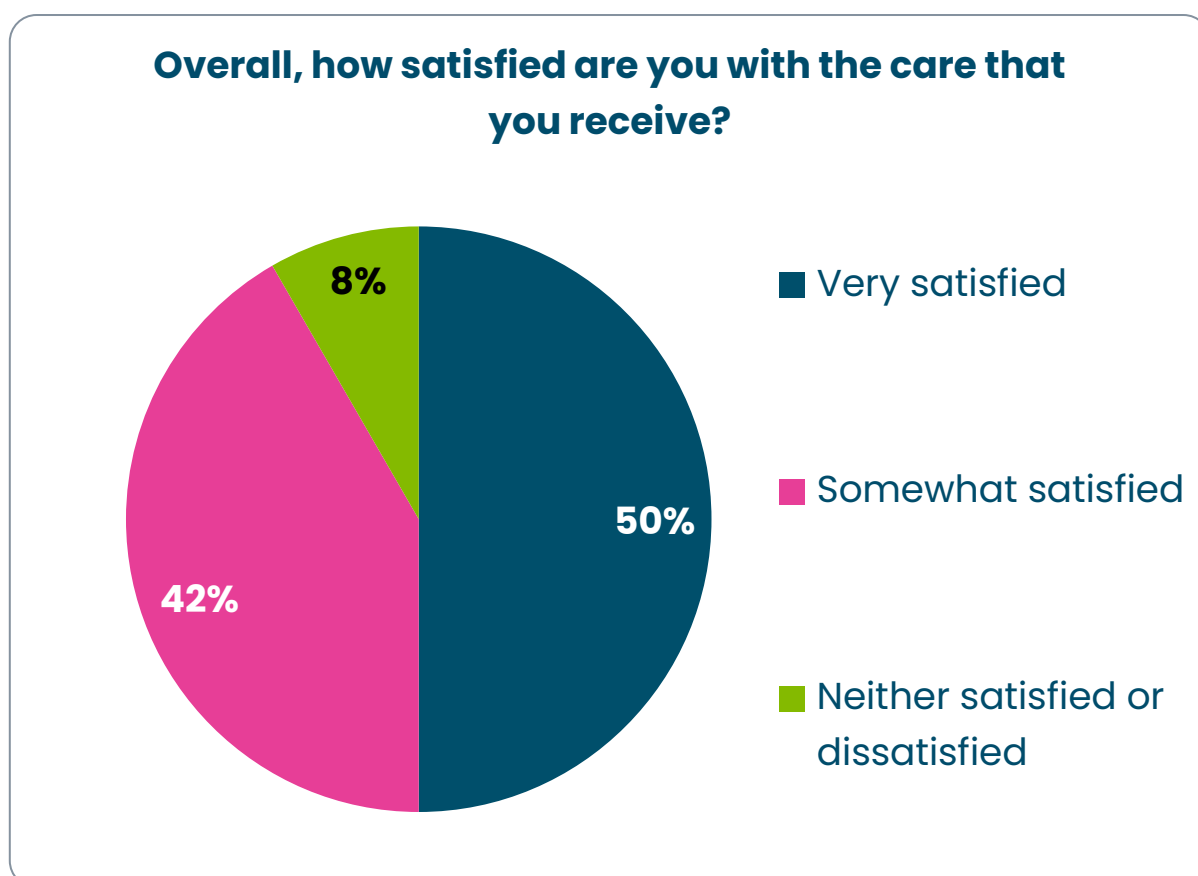
Survey responses reflected this. Five people said they were very satisfied with their care, five said they were somewhat satisfied, and one said they felt neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Family members and friends were also positive overall. Half said they were very satisfied, and half somewhat satisfied.

One relative did share frustration about the period before their family member moved into the home, particularly around getting the right equipment in place. This highlights the wider challenges people can face before entering care.

Others spoke very positively about their experience of the home. One relative described how their mother had been able to choose her room and later move when it became too hot in summer. They also said the staff **“couldn’t be faulted”** for their kindness and care.

Overall, the picture is one of consistent, compassionate care. While experiences before moving into the home can be more mixed, once people are in the home, most feel supported and well looked after.



Safety and staff levels

We asked residents, their friends and family, and staff whether they felt there were enough staff, and whether they felt safe in the home.

On the day of our visit, staffing levels met expected guidelines. There was at least one senior member of staff and two care staff on each floor.

However, what we heard from people gave a more mixed picture.

Some people living in the home and their relatives felt that, while staffing levels were technically sufficient, more support would make a difference, particularly in busier areas such as the Kipling unit.

Among residents, 45% said they were satisfied with staffing levels, while 55% raised some concerns. Among family and friends, 60% said they were satisfied.

A common theme was how busy staff seemed.

One person said:

“I’m not sure there is always enough help. Sometimes they have to wait a while.”

Another told us:

“Staff always busy and trying to do several jobs at the same time.”

And another reflected:

“Generally, I’m alright, but there isn’t enough staff. They are always very busy with the ones that need more help.”

That sense of staff being stretched came through clearly, even where people were otherwise positive about the home.

At the same time, many residents and relatives spoke warmly about the staff themselves.

One person said:

“The home always makes people feel welcome, and there is nothing to criticise. They have caring and kind staff. Kensington Care Home is at a different level compared to other homes in the area.”

Another noted that, although staffing numbers could feel tight, improvements were being made, including around dementia training.

Overall, people generally felt safe, and staff were seen as caring and committed. But there is a clear perception that staff are often under pressure, which can affect how quickly support is available at times.



Raising concerns and issues

Residents, family, and friends

We asked residents, and their friends and family, whether they had any concerns about the home, whether they knew how to raise them, and how well those concerns had been handled.

Most people said they knew what to do if something wasn't right. Quarterly meetings were mentioned as a useful and accessible way to raise concerns, and people were also aware of how to raise issues outside of these meetings if needed.

When concerns had been raised, they tended to focus on things like dementia training and the quality of food. These are covered elsewhere in the report.

One relative shared a positive example:

“We raised the issue of dementia training for staff, and the care home manager listened and organised some training and talks for both staff and relatives.”

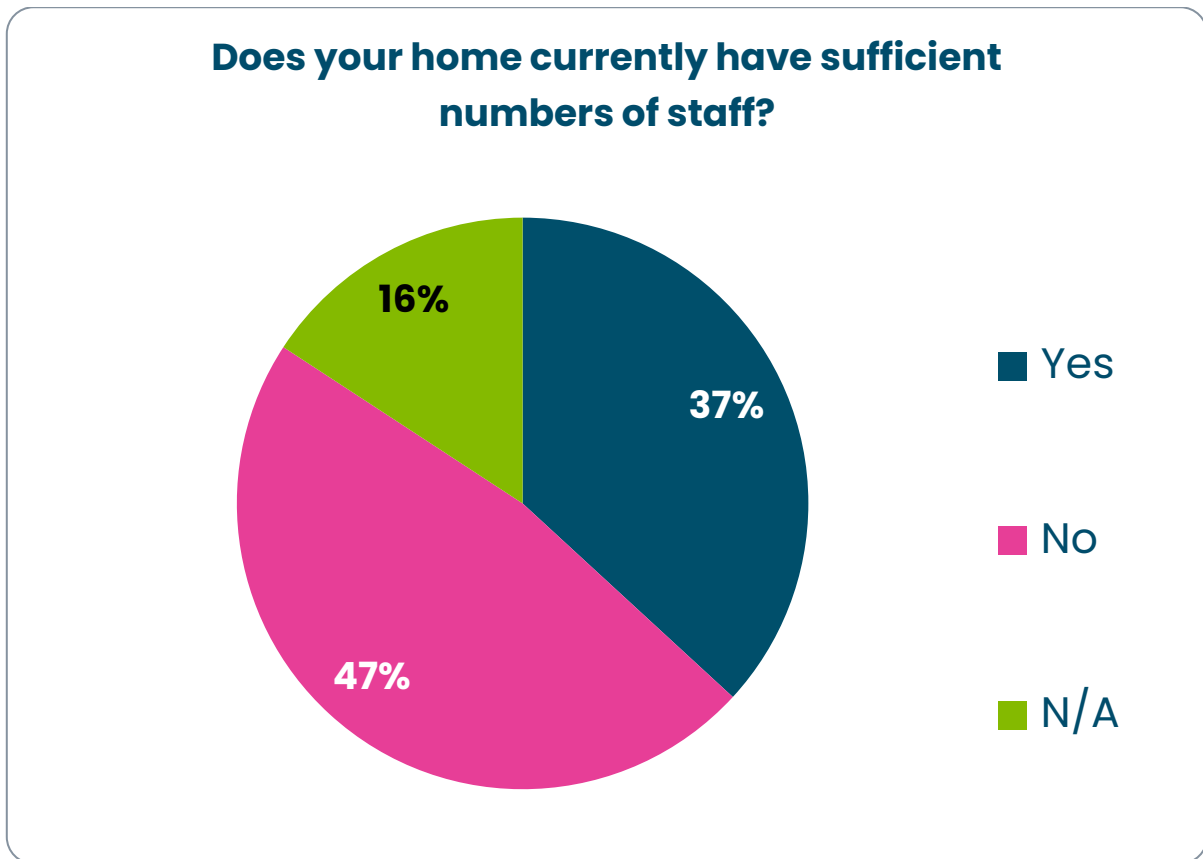
This reflects a wider sense that concerns are taken seriously and acted on.

Overall, residents and relatives felt their views were heard and responded to. However, it was noted that staff do not always feel the same way, and that their concerns are not always fully acknowledged.

The meetings themselves appear to work well, and there may be scope to build on this. Offering more opportunities for residents, relatives and staff to share feedback could help strengthen this further.

How do staff feel?

We asked staff about their experience of working in the home.



The people we spoke to had been working at Kensington Care Home for anything from a few weeks to five years, with many in post for over two years. Of the 19 who responded, 17 said they were happy in their roles.

There were clear positives. Some staff spoke about enjoying their work and feeling good about the care being provided. One told us:

“I’m very happy with the way the home is run.”

At the same time, experiences were not the same for everyone. Some staff described feeling less supported at times, and a few pointed to changes in shift patterns as something that could improve work life balance. Comments such as **“Staff team dependent”** and **“I enjoy the work but not how the staff are treated”** suggest that experiences can vary depending on the team or situation.

Practical issues also came up. Staff mentioned the need for appropriate moving and handling equipment, highlighting how important the right tools are for doing the job safely.

Work pressure was another theme. While recruitment is ongoing, there are times when staffing gaps occur, particularly when staff are off sick or during longer absences.

One staff member said that **“when some staff call in sick, it is affecting the staff who are on duty”**, while another described feeling **“physically and mentally tired”**.

Staffing levels were also raised. On some occasions, particularly on the ground floor, there could be around 14 residents to two staff. There were also concerns that unit managers could be too busy to provide direct support.

Staff said that when additional help is available from colleagues, it makes a difference. However, where there are gaps, this can affect both care and housekeeping, and how smoothly things run overall.

Overall, staff appear committed to people living in the home and take pride in their work. However, there are signs of pressure and some variation in how supported people feel. Strengthening support for staff, alongside consistent management and access to the right equipment, would help maintain morale and support the quality of care being delivered.

Overall rating

We asked people living at Kensington Care Home, their friends and family, and care home staff to rate the home out of five, with five being the highest (best).

Residents: (4.2/5)



Friends and family: (4.5/5)



Care home staff: (4/5)



These scores reflect the generally positive experiences shared throughout the visit, alongside some areas where improvements could make a difference.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the manager, staff, residents, and their friends and families for welcoming us into the home and taking the time to share their experiences.

We would also like to thank our volunteers for their support with this visit.

Their input has helped build a clearer picture of what is working well and where further improvements could be made.



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to quality**

Healthwatch North Yorkshire is committed to the quality of their information. Every three years, Healthwatch perform an in-depth audit so that they can be certain of this.

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