

The Oaks Care Home

Enter and View Report 2025

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Background

What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch York is the independent champion for people using local health and care services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share these views with the people who have the power to make a difference.

What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to undertake Enter and View visits. Our team of authorised representatives conduct Enter and View visits to local health and social care services to find out how services are being run and make recommendations for improvement. Healthwatch Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies.

The Oaks
Care
Home



Details of the visit to The Oaks care home

Service address	Hartrigg Oaks, New Earswick, York, YO32 4DY
Service provider	Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust
Date	30 June 2025
CQC rating	Good
Registered and General Manager	Diane Atkinson
Contact number	01904 750700

Summary

Purpose of the report

In this report, we summarise the findings from our visit of 30 June as well as the feedback shared through survey responses collected before and after the visit.

Purpose of the visit

- To visit and gather views of the residents, their relatives and friends and staff about the services and care provided.
- To observe the care being provided for the residents and their interaction with staff and their surroundings.

General information

The Oaks is part of the Hartrigg Oaks retirement village. The village comprises 152 bungalows for people aged 60+ with domiciliary care provided as needed. The Oaks and Hartrigg Oaks share some facilities including a coffee shop, restaurant, gym with spa pool, music room, arts and crafts room, hair salon and small shop. The Oaks offers residential and nursing care services for older people. The Oaks has two floors of accommodation with space for 43 residents, including three respite rooms.

Key findings

At the time of our visit, we found that The Oaks was operating to a good standard. These findings were based on our observations and reflect the general happiness of residents, family and friends of residents and staff

members. The home had previously experienced some staffing issues, but a recruitment drive has reduced necessary agency hours from 2,000 to 400 a month with a full complement of daytime staff and agency staff only needed for some night shifts.



Positive feedback

- Lots of activities for people in the care home and the community's bungalows, including concerts and recitals, a choir, art, gym, table tennis, swimming, library, games, jigsaws, trips out and much more.
- Friendly staff who interacted well with the residents.
- Good environment, including lovely enclosed rose garden, which residents helped look after.
- Good sized bedrooms, all ensuite and each one has a balcony overlooking the rose garden.
- Rooms all had a number on, name of the person and a Perspex box that the residents could personalise. Some people had photos, others personal objects and trinkets.
- There are weekly visits from the local GP practice nurse practitioner and GP as required. A hairdresser visits regularly as does a podiatrist.
- There are a number of options for residents to use for meals. They can eat in their rooms, the care home's dining rooms or can use the coffee shop or restaurant in the reception area which is also open to bungalow residents. This means the care home residents can easily meet their friends.
- There is very good resident involvement. There are monthly resident meetings, residents chose the paint colour, furniture and art for communal areas and selected the plants for the rose garden. Many of the artworks in the reception area were created by care home or bungalow residents.

- Each bedroom had a white board where messages and information could be written by staff. Where needed, bathrooms had information about which hoist to use and how to use it safely for that resident.



Recommended areas for improvement

- Ensure that information is provided in appropriate formats for all residents, and particularly those who experience sight loss and may need large print, or information reading to them in a timely way.
- Ensure that new residents, and particularly those on respite, understand how to ask for food and drink outside mealtimes.
- Ensure that residents' calls for support are responded to in a timely manner, particularly at night.
- For visitors, it can be difficult to differentiate between the floors you are on. However, we were told that residents had chosen paint colours.
- Improve the external signage to the care home so it is easier for people to find when approaching by car, bicycle or on foot.

About this visit

This was an announced Enter and View visit arranged in advance with the registered and general manager. The purpose of this visit was to capture the experience of life and care within a care home environment and to observe the standards of working practice. We did this by observing the interactions between staff and residents, observing their surroundings and speaking to residents to understand their experiences. We asked relatives and friends and staff members to provide their experience and views of the care home through a survey. Copies of the survey were available in the care home before and after our visit and posters with a link/QR code were put up by The Oaks staff.

On the day, three Healthwatch York authorised representatives conducted observations and talked to residents, their family and friends and staff members. We spoke to 11 residents, who shared their thoughts and experiences using a survey focused on quality of life and care in the home to guide the conversations.

In addition six family and friends of residents responded to our survey with their views. We also heard from 15 members of staff who work in the home either via the survey or conversations on the day.

Not all respondents provided answers to every question and some respondents preferred not to answer all questions.

Findings

Environment

On the initial observation of the care home, our authorised representatives found the building to be in a good state of repair. It has a shaded garden and seating area at the front, with a life-sized stag sculpture, and a well-tended rose garden at the centre of the home and accessed by care home residents only. The garden was not being used when we were there as it was one of the hottest days of the year. However, we understand that it is well used and had a variety of seating areas and raised beds that could be tended by wheelchair users. Many residents' rooms look out onto the garden.

The home was quite difficult to locate by car. There is a good-sized car park which had free spaces when we visited. Cycle parking was available and there are bus stops relatively close by, but these could be a reasonable walk for residents or their visitors, especially when the weather is not good.

The reception area is accessed by automatic doors which were open when we visited. The reception is for both The Oaks and for bungalow residents using the coffee shop, restaurant, gym, arts and crafts room etc. The reception staff member was extremely welcoming. There were lots of display boards with information about what was happening at Hartrigg Oaks and information about local attractions. All leaflets were in date, but some could have been printed with a larger font to make them easier to read for people with sight loss. (We recognise that posters and information is posted by and for people who live in the bungalows as well as the care home.)

From the reception area, there is a locked door to go into The Oaks. This needs a fob to operate it. Some residents are given a fob so they can come and go as appropriate. All residents can use the facilities in the reception area, but would need to be accompanied by a staff member if they do not have a fob.

The reception and reception staff gave a very good impression of the home.

Feedback from some family and friends mentioned that it can be difficult to get into the care home in the evenings or when the receptionist is not there.

Accommodation

Accommodation is provided on two floors which are similar in design. The first floor is dedicated for nursing care and is led by a nurse. However, staff try to ensure that residents retain 'their' room, no matter where it is, even if their care needs increase. This helps to reduce anyone become disorientated.

While the décor on both floors is similar and our representatives found it difficult to differentiate, the colour scheme, furniture and pictures were chosen by the residents (apart from some areas where the pictures were painted by the residents), so will mean something to them.

There is a lift between the floors which needs a fob to operate. There is no function for the lift to announce the floor someone is on.

Each floor has a range of seating areas, including a lounge. The dining room and activities room are on the ground floor and a quiet sitting room on the first floor. There is good signage for the toilets, but there was not any signage for the dining room or lounges.

Each floor has wide, clutter-free corridors, with colour contrasting bars along each wall. The floors and walls are also of good colour contrast and the doors for people's rooms and communal areas are a different colour. Residents' room doors are one colour, toilet doors, dining room and lounge doors are different colours which will help people to recognise where they are.

Residents' rooms are all single and ensuite. They are all a good size and all those we saw included people's furniture, photos and belongings as desired. Each room has a number on the door and the name of the resident to the side. Each room has a Perspex box which can be personalised by the resident or their family/friends. Some we saw contained photographs and others mementos that were meaningful to that person. Some residents mentioned that they felt their bathrooms could be improved, particularly for storage.

Cleanliness and hygiene

Our representatives noted that overall, the care home was clean, with no unpleasant smells. However, some of the feedback from family and friends noted that: "Cleaning not as good as it used to be. Bins not emptied regularly enough. Bed table where my mum has her meals often not clean." Another relative mentioned: "My relative's room has not always been as clean and comfortable as it could be. He has arthritis and drops things which he is unable to pick up as he is chair bound. I think that the staff are making an effort to clean and tidy his room."

Quality of life

General happiness

We asked residents what they liked about living at The Oaks. They said:

- "The care."
- "Plenty of attention and treatment"
- "The environment and the rose garden."
- "It's OK, but I would prefer to be at home."
- "Very pleasant, very nice staff".
- "Everybody treats you with respect and are friendly to approach."
- "Pleasant, nice staff, good place to be."
- "Someone does the laundry!"
- "It was a big move to come here, but there is lots of flexibility and no rules. My husband was here previously and was well cared for. "

We also asked residents if there was anything that they didn't like. One person said: "Sometimes there is a longer wait for help than I would like." This was reflected in comments from friends and family who said: "There is so much waiting and this can be embarrassing if they need help with toileting. At night there can be a risk of falling if the resident feels they cannot wait to be helped."

One resident also mentioned the thin toilet paper, which "just meant you use twice as much".



Food and drink

Residents and relatives were asked to share their views on food and drink at The Oaks. One representative observed a mealtime in the home.

We saw a menu which had two meat and one vegetarian choice. We were also told by residents that if someone does not like the menu choices, they can have something different. There is also the option for residents to go to the coffee shop or restaurant which, while it has a similar menu, usually has one or two different choices. All meals are prepared on site using fresh ingredients.

Residents choose where they eat on the day, with some going to the dining room in the care home (this was mostly those with mobility issues), some eating in their rooms and the more mobile going to the coffee shop to meet friends (the restaurant was closed for a meeting when we were visiting). Most of the residents we talked to said the food was good. Snacks and drinks are provided in the morning and afternoon and we were told that they are available from the staff.

Residents said:

- “Mostly OK.”
- “It’s OK. It used to be wonderful.”
- “I would like a bit more imagination and a few herbs.”
- “Very good and well prepared.”
- “There’s always something I like on the menu.”
- “Good choices – very happy with the food. Having enough food is not the problem – it is very easy to overeat.”

One resident who was at The Oaks for respite and has sight loss found they did not get enough food. They said: “Staff forgot to bring breakfast three or four times. After an operation, my appetite was reduced so I would have preferred small, more frequent meals. I learned that it was good to save something from last meal at 5 pm in view of the time I had to wait for breakfast 9am. Maybe if I had known where to ask.”

The person added: "There was water [to drink] but I could not reach it sometimes, and I didn't ring just for a glass of water. When I was more mobile I could reach the water."

These reflections may indicate an issue for people who are new to The Oaks or on respite, or it may be that more care is needed to ensure that there is a thorough explanation of how things work for people with sight loss.

The comments from family and friends reflect general happiness with the food and that people get as much food and drink as they need. One person said: "The food is very good. My relative enjoys it and has as much as he needs and wants." Another commented: "Staff know what my mum likes and give her appropriate and nutritious food and snacks."

One of our representatives observed lunch in the dining room and noted that staff were available to help people who needed assistance with eating. There was an issue with people getting different meals to those they had ordered but that was quickly addressed. The representative was pleased that there was no music on in the dining room. This encouraged easy conversation between residents and residents and staff.

Activities

Residents were asked if they spend their time doing things they value and enjoy. Relatives and staff were asked if residents have regular access to activities in the home.

We saw lots of facilities for activities around the home and reception area and heard about activities for residents of the bungalows and the care home. The care home has two activities coordinators and one York College student placement was supporting the activities coordinator. There was a wide range of daily activities in the home and fortnightly trips out. There are also a library and a number of jigsaw rooms in the care home that residents can use at any time. While we were there, bingo was happening in the downstairs lounge.

An activities list is circulated weekly to residents. However, two of the residents mentioned to us that if they cannot read the activities sheet, they do not always know what is happening. One person mentioned that someone did read the activities sheet to them, but this was on Thursday and the sheet was circulated on Monday.

There is a children's nursery in the building next to The Oaks and interaction between the residents and children. One resident goes to read to the children and the children go into the care home. The care home also has links with The Joseph Rowntree School and students visit the care home.

The home has church services and a Quaker meeting. It also takes part in a range of diversity activities, including pride.

The friends and family who responded to our survey reflected that often those people who live in The Oaks need more care and support and may not be able to take part in activities. However, the residents we spoke to were very happy with what was available.

They said:

- "I don't get out, that's what's missing in my life."
- "I go to the gym."
- "I went on a trip to the designer outlet to go to the body shop."
- "I have coffee with friends three times a week, and there is a good range of gym activities."
- "There are plenty of activities, I don't get bored. You can tell staff what activities you want to do."
- "There is plenty going on, it depends on what interests you."
- "I go to the Health Activities Centre (HAC) and have one to one support in the gym."
- "On a Monday night I play dominoes. I go to the HAC and have physio twice a week."
- "I went on the trip to Burnby Hall."
- "I went to a Quaker meeting in the building. Staff from the HAC come to go through some exercises and then I could do them myself. I took part in a quiz and a Gilbert and Sullivan event."

Staff also mentioned that residents can go on walks locally and many do and that there are regular games, baking opportunities and more.

Contact with friends and family

Residents and their relatives were asked about their contact.

Of the four family and friend respondents, two said they could visit at any time and two said there were some restrictions. As mentioned above, some visitors

can find it difficult to get into the care home in the evening and at weekends when the receptionist is not there.

Residents said:

- "By phone."
- "My wife visits."
- "I do not use the café or restaurant but I use my mobile phone and iPad to keep in touch with family and my friends visit."
- "My friends and relatives come to visit, and they can stay in touch via phone."
- "My family visits and I have made friends here."
- "People can visit – it has a different feel to a lot of places because of the bungalows – lots of people can come in to visit."



A number of people we spoke to meet their friends from the bungalows in the café and restaurant. Those with a fob can go to visit friends in the bungalows or on trips with them.

Quality of care

Residents and relatives

Family and friends were asked whether they felt they/their relative was well cared for. We also observed whether residents looked well cared for during our visit.

Throughout our visit, all the residents we saw and met looked very well cared for. The residents we spoke to said they could have a shower when they wanted and there is a separate room with a bath if they wanted one. No one we spoke to had wanted a bath.

Everyone chooses the clothes they wear and their clothes are clean.

All the family members and friends who responded said the resident is being well looked after.



"I was initially concerned at the level of care he was receiving. But I do believe that his care has improved since my intervention. He is autistic and I wonder if there has been staff training on dealing with autistic people. He can be stubborn

and belligerent and requires a lot of patience. I have noticed a vast improvement in his personal and general hygiene since I have been working with the staff.



We also wanted to know whether residents feel like they need additional help with anything, such as help to eat or drink, and if they receive enough help.

All the residents we spoke to said that they have a pendant or wrist alarm and can press it to get the attention of staff. All said that staff will come but how quickly depends on how busy the staff are.

Relatives and friends were asked if they contribute to individual care plans.

Of the two people who responded, one said they had contributed, and one said it was not applicable for them to contribute.



"No but I have contributed and my requests have been respected."



Staff said that all residents have care plans which record their needs and preferences. These are reviewed monthly and updated when anything changes.

Staff

We also wanted to know what residents and family/friends think of staff as well as how well informed the staff are about the residents they look after.

All the interactions we saw between staff and residents were very positive. Staff all wore name badges and called the residents by their name. Most of the residents we spoke to were very complimentary about the staff as were the relatives and friends.

- "Some are angels, but you always get the odd one."

- “I wouldn’t object to any of the permanent staff, most of the agency staff are good.”
- “Friendly, chatty and respectful staff.”
- “Very friendly and efficient – they make sure to see what you need.”
- “Staff are good.”
- “All lovely, all on first name terms – suits me.”

A family member added: “Overall this is a great care home with lovely dedicated caring staff – but nowhere’s perfect!”

Safety and staffing levels

Residents, relatives, and staff were asked whether they feel there are enough staff, and we asked the residents if they felt safe in the home.

All the residents we spoke to said they feel safe. All four family and friends who responded also said they felt their relative or friend was safe at The Oaks.

We asked residents and family and friends about staffing levels. Most of the residents we spoke to felt there could be more staff and staff are sometimes very busy. Family and friends echoed this:



“There is a lot of gossip about shortage of staff though I am not aware of any real problems.”

“The staff appear to be fully stretched. I think that the permanent staff generally do their best.”



In responses to the staff survey, six staff members said there are enough staff at the moment and four that there are not. Feedback from staff members recognised that staffing levels have improved and there are fewer agency staff now. Staff mentioned that there used to be four staff members on the ground floor but there are now only three and that this is particularly a problem in the afternoons and early evenings. However, they also said that there is a very good staff team who have a good rapport together and with residents.

Staff said:

- “The tool used to determine the dependency levels [for staffing] is inaccurate and therefore there are times when the work can be extremely demanding. This can also affect how long we can spend with each resident and sometimes this

can be detrimental. For example, we have several residents with dementia. These people often need reassurance, patience and simply your time. These sound simple asks and should be, however, staffing levels can mean that we struggle to provide these adequately. We as a team are often very pressured and told to work 'smartly', which I find quite insulting. The home is lacking the presence of a manager at present and this would make a difference. Staff need to be reminded that they are valued, respected and appreciated as it creates a positive environment for staff and residents."

- "There are days where even wanting to offer a short walk to a resident or to sit and share a quick coffee and chat is impossible."
- "Gaps in terms of meeting residents' needs. If we have three doubles [residents who need two people to support them] ringing to go to the toilet at the same time with three staff it causes immense pressure and means that we cannot meet resident needs as quickly as we would like to."
- "Frequent cover by agency staff which affects morale of staff and the residents."

When we spoke to the management staff, they recognised that there had been issues previously. But after a recruitment drive they have a full complement of day time staff and use some agency staff in the evenings. They recognised that staff can feel pressured, but mentioned that the staffing levels are 20% above those of other care homes.

Health Checks

We asked residents and friends/family if they had been able to access relevant health checks during the pandemic.

GP visits

A nurse practitioner from the local GP surgery visits weekly. A GP will visit when needed. The care home manager mentioned they have a very good relationship with the GP surgery.

Other healthcare visits

A chiropodist, optician and hearing services do visit the care home. These visits are for care home and bungalow residents. Some people may need to pay depending on their care package.

Residents have to go out to see a dentist. Mostly residents are supported by family or friends for these or hospital appointments. But if needed care home staff can accompany them.

Raising concerns and issues

Residents, family, and friends

We wanted to know if they had any concerns about the service, would they know what to do.

All the residents said they would talk to staff members if there were any issues and were confident that they would deal with anything quickly. They also mentioned monthly residents' meetings where they can raise any issues. Family members/friends added:



"I speak to the duty nurse or duty manager. If they cannot resolve the issue, I go to the general manager or even chief executive occasionally."



"Yes and they [managers] have responded constructively."

Other comments

We gave residents and family/friends the opportunity to add any other comments.

Residents said:

- "Has attractive environment."
- "Everyone is happy to be working there, nobody sighs when you ask them something."
- "Very satisfied and I like how happy everyone is to be working there – they think of the things you haven't thought of to help with."
- "Good relationship between the staff and residents – no hierarchy."
- "Can't think of anywhere else I would rather be."

Family and friends said:

- "It was extremely difficult to contact the staff and there can still be difficulties in communication. But it has greatly improved between the staff and myself and with {name of person} since I suggested to them that, due to his lack of hearing, they need to write things down for him to see and respond. ... JRHT would do well

to invest in some form of digital and visual communication. I am not a techy but I know that it exists.”

- “This is a great home in that it is part of a larger community. My mother has lots of friends visiting from the community which hugely enriches her life. Management have reduced fob access to the care home, which makes it harder for people to visit my mother. This is deeply regrettable. There are better solutions to possible security concerns.”
- “It has the potential to be excellent.”

The care home assessors also summarised their impression of The Oaks:

- “It is very impressive. The staff are engaged and the residents we spoke to seem happy. There is lots for people to do and there are very good connections between the residents and the surrounding Hartrigg Oaks community.”
- “Very impressed with the staff. Two said ‘it’s their home, we just work in it’ reflecting a very positive view that the staff are there to support the residents.
- “I loved the facilities available – gardens, gym, art room, etc. People seemed content and staff were busy and respectful.”

Staff feedback

How do they feel?

We asked staff about working in the care home.

Ten staff members completed the survey and we spoke to five members of staff who were working when we visited The Oaks. Ten staff members said they were very happy working there. Two survey respondents said they do not enjoy working there.

- “I generally like working at Hartrigg Oaks. I have great relationships with residents and staff. However, sometimes it is difficult due to poor management and reduced staff.”
- “A good team of carers, general assistants, kitchen staff. Managers generally listen to concerns and adapt around us.”
- “I take great pride in being a part of this care home and its extensive facilities. The dedication of staff and the quality of care they provide to residents are things I deeply value.”
- “Great team of people, get all the support you need from across the work place.”

- “The Oaks, in my opinion, provides a very high quality of care and the team of staff I work alongside now are some of the most caring people I have had the privilege of working with in 45 years of caring.”
- “It would help if there was regular staff cover at all times as it improves the outcomes for our residents and it boosts staff morale. Increase incentives for working nights and weekends as this would encourage staff to cover shifts.”
- “It’s awful most of the time, really stressful and we work too hard.”
- “Overall it’s a good place to work and a good organisation that takes its mission statement to heart.”
- “I could only commend the efforts of the home to make our working environment a healthy, productive, safe and happy place to be in.”

One staff member mentioned that they don’t feel The Oaks is as prepared as it could be to support people with more advanced dementia. They have raised their concern and mentioned that JRHT is looking at possible changes for the future.

We asked staff about training they receive.

All staff who commented said that they feel they are offered all the training to enable them to their job. One person commented that it is thorough, another: “The staff training is very good and you get time to do it.” One person suggested that further dementia awareness and training would be welcome.

We asked staff about any changes at The Oaks and what happens if they provide feedback.

Of the nine people who responded to this survey question, six said they are always aware of changes at the home and three said they are sometimes aware. Staff said their feedback is always welcome and the managers operate an open door policy.

- “The managers are approachable and do listen.”
- “The managers are good.”
- “Management always ask for staff input before changes are made and ask your opinion.”
- “Our seniors and managers are very open to feedback and suggestions. They think things through and find ways to resolve any issues, give suggestions on how to do things or how to approach different situations. They ask us about our thoughts on things and how we can improve the home and its services.”
- “We always get feedback after meetings.”

We asked staff if they would recommend The Oaks to their family and friends.

In the survey, of the ten staff that answered the question, nine said they would recommend The Oaks and one person said they would not. Staff said:

- “Yes I would, although sometimes there are not enough staff and residents have to wait after pressing their call bell. I would recommend working here.”
- “I would generally recommend the care home. My only concerns are regarding the wait times some residents may face due to not having enough staff on a floor. I would also not be entirely comfortable with some of the staff looking after my friends or family with the tone they use with residents and impatience they sometimes present.”
- “The standard of care is high, and the residents have good access to the services on offer i.e. the HAC team, hairdresser, film shows, concerts, library, good dining experience, the rose garden.”

Overall rating

We asked residents and family and friends of residents how they would rate the home out of 5 (with 5 being the best).

Residents: (4.5/5)



Friends and family: (4/5)



Staff: (4.5/5)



Acknowledgements

The Healthwatch York Enter and View team would like to thank the manager, staff, friends and families of residents, and residents for letting us access the care home, and for sharing their views with us. Thanks also to our dedicated volunteers who helped support this Enter and View visit. Particular thanks to Lara Mukherjee, a student from Manor CE Academy. She took part in the visit and helped to write this report.



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