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Age UK Lewisham and Southwark Lay Inspection Service

We have been funded by Southwark Council to undertake Lay Inspections for a number of years, and in recent years have undertaken inspections of 6 Care Homes in Southwark. Inspections involve several visits and engagement with as many people as possible to get a comprehensive and accurate picture of how the service users and their families/carers experience the Care Homes' services. Each Care Home is inspected annually (unless issues have been identified which necessitate more frequent visits). Comprehensive reports are then written and shared with the Council, Care Home managers and owners.

The Lay Inspectors are volunteers who are trained and DBS checked. Their visits are co-ordinated by the Age UK Lewisham and Southwark office staff.

They meet up every 2 months to: -

- Review recent visits and reports to identify any trends or concerns
- Review the team priorities & arrange a schedule of visits
- Liaise and discuss the service with a Council representative
- Identify any further training or support needs

There is a Code of Conduct for Lay Inspectors. Volunteers need to have completed the following training courses before they can go out on their own.

- Dementia awareness
- Professional Boundaries & Confidentiality
- Safeguarding
- Communication, engagement & observation skills & writing up your findings

The Lay Inspectors all have DBS checks before they can undertake Inspection visits and all Inspectors have Photo ID badges which they will wear throughout their inspections.

Much time and effort has been spent developing a positive and friendly relationship with Managers and staff. Inspections are carried out at various times, on different days of the week, including weekends, and at night time (from 9.00pm onwards). We also attend residents' meetings, relatives' meetings and open days.

An inspection report is completed after several visits over an extended period of time, and sometimes this may take up to 3 months. Visits are un-announced. We believe in the value of having several Lay Inspectors involved in each inspection to provide more than one viewpoint. This methodology provides different insights to those that can be gathered when a Care Home is inspected over 1 day or 2 consecutive days (which is the current CQC practice).

'Improving life for older people in Lewisham and Southwark'

Age UK Lewisham and Southwark is a registered charity (No. 296862) and company limited by guarantee.
Registered in England and Wales No. 2118525.
Registered Office: Stones End Centre, 11 Scovell Road, Southwark, SE1 1QQ



Lay Inspectors speak to staff at all levels and respondents are told that their feedback will be anonymised so that there will be any personal repercussions from their comments.

We have built up a good relationship with Managers and their staff at all the Care Homes. They understand why we're there, are no longer intimidated by or hostile to us and no longer view us with suspicion. They have become used to our presence and we feel welcomed into the Care Homes. We, as Lay Inspectors are not from the Council, nor are we from their own company's management teams. As a result, staff, residents and family members feel freer to share their views and experiences when speaking to us and we believe their responses to be honest ones.

Our inspections are carried out in addition to those of the Care Quality Commission and Southwark's Quality & Performance Management monitoring visits.

Relatives are an extremely important source of information, so we try and attend relatives' meetings and include findings from those in our inspection reports. We also approach family and friends that we may see during our visits, either chatting with them there and then or talking to them later at a time and place of their convenience. Relatives often tell us that they appreciate someone taking the time and trouble to ask their opinions – to talk to them, rather than just asking them to complete a questionnaire.

We also talk to residents but as so many of them have dementia, their viewpoints may sometimes be a bit contradictory or confusing. It is important that all Lay Inspectors have had dementia awareness training and know how to communicate with a person who has dementia (including using validation theory in how they communicate).

Lay Inspectors also include comments on their own observations of what goes on in the day to day running of the home and the interactions between the residents themselves and with staff, as well as reporting on the feedback they have gathered from others.

Following each visit, we provide informal feedback to the Home Manager (or other senior staff member) as a matter of courtesy. A Lay Inspection flyer is displayed in the care homes.

Inspection findings are recorded on an agreed inspection report template.

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