

## **Age Concern Lay Inspector Visit to Tower Bridge Adult Care Home 29<sup>th</sup> June 2011 10.35-12.50**

This visit was undertaken by Les Alden and Irene Payne and was unannounced. We were shown around by the Head of Hotel Services and were free to talk to residents and staff. We spoke to residents in communal areas and in their own rooms. We met with the head of home and the activities co-ordinator.

### **Overview**

Tower Bridge is a modern care home run by Southern Cross. It was originally built as a hotel and then converted for use as a care home so is large, with long corridors. It is very well decorated with a high standard of furnishing and is coming to the end of a major refurbishment programme. The home has capacity for 128 residents and currently provides a home for 87. This under occupation has been well managed physically so that the ground floor is not in use and residents are now all together on 3 floors rather than being scattered. There are unlikely to be further admissions until the business position of Southern Cross is resolved. There are discussions with Southwark council about the potential use of the ground floor to house an innovative rehabilitation project. Neither staff nor residents seemed worried about the current issues about Southern Cross. The head of home attends the regional meetings and keeps everyone informed. There was a briefing note on the latest position on the notice board in the entrance.

### **Ambience**

The home was clean and tidy, with no areas of bad odour. There was a feeling of a relaxed and happy home and all staff and residents we spoke to were positive about being there.

### **Activities**

We observed the activity co-ordinator with a group of residents outside on a sunny day, playing a musical game, which was encouraging participation. She was involving some residents in running the game. Attitudes to activities were very positive and there was a strong sense that activities are key to providing a good home. There was a varied programme of activities on the notice board on each floor and this includes regular sessions for carers. We were impressed by the way in which activities were being mainstreamed, with care staff doing singing sessions in the lounge at the same time as the co-ordinator was running the game outside. Resident's s we spoke to said there was a lot available and there was choice about whether to participate. Some lounges appeared to be lively places, although those at the end on each floor were empty and we were told that they were generally not used. There was a "living history" room with objects and furniture from people's past. This is in the early stages of development and could be enhanced by inclusion of residents own memorabilia and the tuning for use of the piano. It's a resource which could be improved. There has been a project with the British Museum on life histories and we were told that there is information on each resident in the files. More will be done to put more information on doors now that the rooms have been re-furbished. There is an attractive cinema room which has posters from old films on the walls and regular sessions are offered as part of the activity programme. There are outings and the home is trying to develop more flexible transport contracts to enable more outings for more residents.

## **Residents 'views**

All residents we spoke to appeared happy and well cared for and spoke positively about the home. Residents we spoke to in their own rooms sang the praises of the home and said they would recommend it. A couple of relatives and friends visiting were similarly positive. There are meetings with residents and one resident mentioned meetings without being asked.

## **Food and drink**

We saw the end of breakfast and it was clear that residents were not hurried. There is a menu choice and residents can ask for simple alternatives e.g. egg and chips if they do not like what is on offer. A resident mentioned this unprompted. There is choice which includes a cooked breakfast every day and residents who are active during the night are able to eat light meals cooked by care staff. We saw the morning break which offered fruit as well as biscuits in the lounges and to individual residents in their rooms. The lunch menu we saw on the dining room table did not include a vegetarian option. We were told that menus are currently being improved and updated.

## **Other services for residents**

We saw the hairdresser visiting and this seemed to be used to create conversation and be a social occasion. This is a weekly event and at £8 was felt to be reasonably priced by women residents we spoke to. We observed that a number of women residents had their nails varnished and the activity co-ordinator spoke about individual 'beauty' sessions for those in their rooms, which included hand massage. And manicure as well as hair. Chiropody is regularly available at a reasonable rate of £10. Residents said that they had access to doctors when needed and also to a dentist and optician.

Laundry is organised by floor and clothes are marked in "the least noticeable place". We asked about individual laundry but this was seen to be uneconomical.

Televisions were in good working order and there were alternatives to sitting watching TV. We were told that there is a good signal and that free view boxes are organised so there should be no problems with digital switch over.

Telephones – cordless phones are available on each floor for residents to use and many residents also have personal phones.

Electoral registration visited the home before the last election and residents were supported by the administrative staff to register and to do postal votes. There is a smoking room which was used and the policy on alcohol is that residents who wish to are free to drink.

## **Hospital and end of life care**

The home is going for the Gold Standard and the head of home is very clear about the right to die at home and has extensive experience of managing this in line with peoples expressed wishes. Residents return to the home after hospital discharge. Residents in hospital are visited once a week by staff and would be visited more frequently if they have no family or friends to visit but this has to be within the constraints of staff availability.

**Other issues**

There seemed to be plenty of staff available to meet residents' needs. The ratio of staff to residents was reported to be at least 1 to 5. The number of staff on duty varies according to the time of day and night and the level of need, but no problems were identified.

Staff morale seemed good especially given the current uncertainties. No resident expressed any worries about the Southern Cross situation. The media had been kept away so as not to upset residents and staff and communications seemed to be well managed within the home. The annual garden party has been postponed so that there is no chance of media trying to gain access to residents, staff or carers, which could create misinformation and cause unnecessary upset.

**Conclusions**

We were very happy with this home and do not wish to raise any specific concerns.

Les Alden and Irene Payne