



# **Councillor Visits to Care Homes**

## **Guidance for Elected Members**

**TBC 2023**

Policy, Performance and Customer Care Team  
Adult Social Care | Adults Directorate

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## Policy Summary

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<b>Author</b>	Natalie Johnson, Service Development Officer, Halton Borough Council (HBC)
<b>Contributors</b>	Helen Moir, Divisional Manager – Care Homes, HBC Jane English, Divisional Manager – Independent Living Services, HBC
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## 1.0 Introduction

*A councillor's primary role is to represent their ward or division and the people who live in it. Councillors provide a bridge between the community and the council. As well as being an advocate for local residents and signposting them to the right people at the council, you will need to keep them informed about the issues that affect them.*

*In order to understand and represent local views and priorities, you need to build strong relationships and encourage local people to make their views known and engage with you and the council. Good communication and engagement are central to being an effective councillor.*

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### **'The role of a councillor', Local Government Association**

With the above in mind, this guidance document is presented to assist Halton Borough Council Elected Members to undertake regular visits to local care homes. People residing in care homes are residents of the borough and Councillors will wish to engage with them as they do with all constituents.

Councillors are not expected to 'inspect' the home when they visit; there are existing processes in place to ensure the homes are meeting their regulatory obligations and providing safe, high-quality care.

Instead, Councillors play an essential role in developing relationships with local residents and advocating their point of view and this document sets out some principles, areas to consider and dos and don'ts that will help Councillors in the course of their visits to care homes.

## 2.0 Visiting principles

### 2.1 Before the visit

Visits need to be pre-arranged to ensure that the Manager of the Care Home is available to meet and greet Councillors on arrival. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to accommodate unannounced visits.

Councillors should first contact the Council's Adult Social Care Quality Assurance (QA) Team via email on [contracts@halton.gov.uk](mailto:contracts@halton.gov.uk) indicating when they would like to visit a particular home. The QA Team can then advise whether the visit can be accommodated. In most cases, Councillors will generally be welcome to visit upon request but the QA Team will be able to advise if it is not a suitable time due to a Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection, for example. Councillors will then be advised as to a more appropriate time for their visit to take place.

Councillors should give as much notice of their visit as possible but it is recognised that sometimes Councillors may wish to visit the same day or the following day and this will be accommodated whenever possible.

Following confirmation from the QA Team that there is no reason a visit cannot go ahead at the requested time, the Councillor will need to contact the Care Home Manager to let them know that they are intending to visit and to make arrangements. Appendix 1 provides a list of all care homes by ward with contact details. If plans change and Councillors can no longer attend an arranged visit, they should ensure that they notify the Manager of the home as well as the QA Team.

It is recommended that Councillors undertake some research of the service or the client group prior to their care home visit, in order to achieve an informed perspective. Information can be found on the Care Quality Commission website ([www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)) or the care home's own website.

Councillors may also wish to undertake some e-learning to help prepare for the visit – for example, it may be useful to access the dementia training in preparation for visiting a home with a dementia unit. Please see Section 5.0 for more information.

## 2.2 During the visit

When visiting a care home, the most important point to remember is that the building is home to all the residents that live there. Although the residents often have additional care and support needs, care homes are not hospitals. Large groups of visitors should be discouraged if we are to promote a culture of respect and dignity and to promote the human rights of individuals at all times.

Conflict of interest needs to be considered and Councillors should be aware of this when visiting a care home where their family members/friends/loved ones are resident or employed as a member of staff.

People living in care homes are often there because they can no longer be supported in their own home. This can be for a variety of reasons but may be because they have considerable physical needs or that their cognition or communication is impaired and they need high levels of care and support from trained staff. Residents may have multiple and complex needs and Councillors have a key role to play in ensuring that those receiving dementia/nursing care can have their voice heard without feeling anxious or confused.

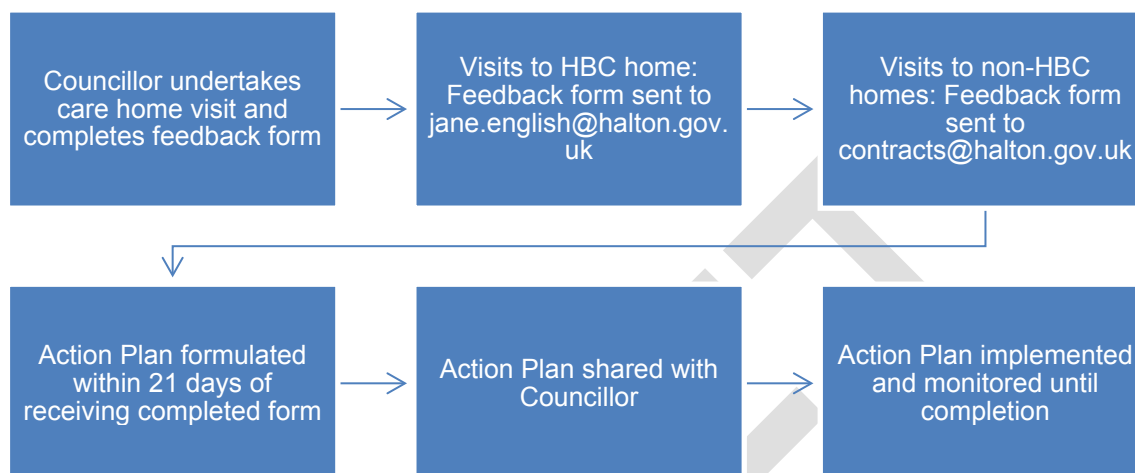
Councillors need to be mindful that because of their physical condition, limited ability to communicate or lack of mental capacity, some individuals may have unpredictable behaviour and they may swear or hit out.

**Please also see Section 3.0 for some areas to consider on the visit and Section 4.0 for some dos and don'ts.**

## 2.3 After the visit

Councillors are asked to produce a written record of their visit to share with the Manager of the home. A Feedback Form is provided at Appendix 2 for Councillors to complete.

All feedback received will be acted upon as per the following process:



## 3.0 Areas for consideration during the visit

Questions	Rationale
What are the general surroundings like? Are the gardens (if any) well maintained?	Having access to pleasant surroundings can greatly enhance quality of life. Many people enjoy the restful atmosphere that gardens offer. Those who are capable may wish to have a role looking after the garden.
Would it be possible for residents to sit outside in suitable weather? Are the surroundings such that it would be safe to do so?	Garden/outside space should be accessible for both those who are mobile and immobile. There should be no hazards such as uneven surfaces.
Is the atmosphere homely and welcoming?	The care home should feel as though residents are living there as if it were their own home. It should not feel like an institution, hotel or hospital with undecorated corridors and a clinical atmosphere. Visitors should not feel like they are imposing.
Is the home clean and pleasantly furnished?	This is especially important in common areas, where residents can socialise as they would in their own home.

Questions	Rationale
	<p>There should be pictures, flowers, areas for residents to sit together etc.</p> <p>Residents should be able to see out of the windows.</p> <p>Common areas should be free from dust and carpets/floors should be free from spillages.</p>
<p>Do residents seem happy and well cared for?</p> <p>Ask them how they feel.</p>	<p>Residents should be comfortable in their surroundings.</p> <p>Whether they are receiving long-term, intermediate or respite care, residents should be relaxed as if in their own home.</p>
<p>Do residents enjoy their mealtimes?</p>	<p>Residents should be able to express their personal food preferences and have these catered for.</p> <p>They should also be able to eat at times that suit them as much as possible. Similarly, there may be occasions when a resident would prefer to eat their meal in private or with family in their bedroom.</p> <p>Residents requiring support with eating should have this provided sensitively and without rushing the resident.</p>
<p>Are doors to resident's bedrooms left open such that you can see residents in bed as you walk past?</p>	<p>A resident's room is their own private domain and other people should only be able to see inside by invitation.</p> <p>If doors are left open always ask staff to explain why this is. It may of course be that residents prefer it that way.</p>
<p>Are the members of staff engaged, caring and friendly?</p> <p>Do they seem comfortable in their role?</p> <p>Do they give residents enough time to respond to their questions?</p>	<p>Caring for the elderly and the vulnerable can be stressful, difficult and demanding, but also very rewarding.</p> <p>It is important for the wellbeing of residents that members of staff are gentle and professional.</p>
<p>What is a typical day like from the perspective of a resident and how would you describe their quality of life?</p>	<p>It is important that the care home clearly demonstrates to you that its central purpose of balancing independence with care is being maintained.</p> <p>Careful and sensitive questioning of both staff and residents combined with observations should give you a snapshot of how effectively the care home is providing a high quality of life for its residents.</p>

## 4.0 Dos and Don'ts

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### ✓ Do...

Talk to the Manager before you visit.

Plan your visit at a time that is most suitable for the individuals you are visiting.

Establish whether there are any sensitive issues that may need to be considered; e.g. someone who is near the end of life, someone who is unwell or has had distressing news.

Explain to residents/families/staff who you are and why you are visiting.

Explain what you will do with the information that you are told.

Ensure that the person fully understands the discussions you are having.

Listen to information without expressing a personal opinion and clarify information that is unclear.

End your visit/conversation if the person becomes distressed or asks you to stop.

Always give general feedback to the Manager / most senior member of staff in the building – include the positives as well as any improvements required and also advise that you are leaving the building.

Always tell the Manager / most senior member of staff if you have any concerns regarding what you have heard or seen whilst with someone / in the building.

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### ✗ Don't...

Meet with a person in their room with the door closed; you need to be able to protect yourself against any accusation.

Use jargon or complex words or phrases or oversimplify in a way that is demeaning to the person.

Talk about a person to another person, in front of them.

If you have concerns regarding a person's health/safety, NEVER walk away without discussing this with the Manager / most senior member of staff.

Talk to someone without explaining to them why you are there and what you will do with the information that you are given.

Make interpretations from the information you are given or ask additional unnecessary or leading questions.

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Accept information at face value; clarify with the Manager or a member of staff – e.g. a statement made that “they haven’t given me any food today” needs to be explored, as it may be a historical situation or relate to a blood test or screening, for example.

Investigate an issue that may be a safeguarding issue; instead write down the information you are given and speak to the Manager and/or follow the formal safeguarding procedures.

Delay on reporting information of concern to the appropriate person (e.g. the Manager) – if someone says something like “when my husband visits me, he takes my money” or “my carers are great, but Dawn on nights is always cross with me” – the concern may need to be acted upon straight away and the Manager must be informed.

Promise that you will keep information confidential as you may need to tell others on a ‘need to know basis’ if it affects the health and safety of the person or other vulnerable people.

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## 5.0 E-learning opportunities

Councillors are able to access a range of training courses that may be of benefit in the course of undertaking visits to care homes and engaging in discussions with care home residents and their families.

The Council’s e-learning system – ‘**e-nable**’ – offers courses such as:

- Safeguarding Adults
- Dementia
- Dignity
- Health & Safety

The e-learning system can be accessed at the link below and there are instructions on how to create an account:

<https://enable.learningpool.com/login/index.php>

Should you experience any difficulties creating an account or logging in, please contact HBC Learning & Development by calling 0151 511 7111 or emailing [training.reception@halton.gov.uk](mailto:training.reception@halton.gov.uk).

## 6.0 Safeguarding

If you have concerns about someone during a visit to a care home, the first step is to speak to the Manager of the home. If the Manager is not available, you should speak to the most senior member of staff at the home. You should do this during your visit before leaving the home. If your concern relates to the Manager or most senior member of staff available during your visit, you should contact the Council's Quality Assurance Team via [contracts@halton.gov.uk](mailto:contracts@halton.gov.uk). If you are still unhappy or feel the issues requires immediate attention, you can escalate via the safeguarding procedures outlined below.

Adult Safeguarding means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. Safeguarding is everyone's business we must work together to protect adults at risk of harm or those experiencing abuse or neglect.

Absolutely **ANYONE** can report a concern about abuse or neglect – whether you are a relative, member of the public or work in service setting. If you are worried about an adult who may be at risk of harm or neglect, please call:

**0151 907 8306 (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm)**

**0345 050 0148 (evening/weekend/bank holiday team)**

[Adult Safeguarding | Adult Safeguarding \(haltonsafeguarding.co.uk\)](http://haltonsafeguarding.co.uk)

## Appendix 1: Care Homes by Council Ward

There is a total of 25 care homes in Halton and 18 council wards. The 25 homes are situated across 10 of the wards with 8 wards having no care homes. Each ward has three ward councillors (54 in total). Of the 25 homes, 5 are owned and operated by Halton Borough Council (\*denotes in-house care homes in the table below).

Council Ward	Ward Councillors	Care home(s) situated in this ward	Number/type of beds	Address and telephone number of care home	Name and email address of Manager
Appleton	Councillor Eddie Jones Councillor Ged Philbin Councillor Angela Teeling	Halton View	64 beds 36 dementia 28 residential	1 Sadler Street Widnes WA8 6LN 0151 422 0001	Beryl Spruce <a href="mailto:haltonviewmanager@hillcare.net">haltonviewmanager@hillcare.net</a>
		Millbrow*	44 beds 21 nursing 23 EMI nursing	Millbrow Widnes WA8 6QT 0151 420 4859	Jayne Adamson <a href="mailto:jayne.adamson@halton.gov.uk">jayne.adamson@halton.gov.uk</a>
		Oak Meadow*	29 intermediate short stay beds	Peelhouse Lane Widnes WA8 6JT 0151 511 6050	Laura Mullineaux <a href="mailto:laura.mullineaux@halton.gov.uk">laura.mullineaux@halton.gov.uk</a>

Council Ward	Ward Councillors	Care home(s) situated in this ward	Number/type of beds	Address and telephone number of care home	Name and email address of Manager
<b>Bankfield</b>	Councillor Laura Bevan Councillor Louise Goodall Councillor Tony McDermott	Bankfield	6 ALD residential beds	2A Bankfield Road Widnes WA8 7UN 0151 420 5395	Karen Hayes <a href="mailto:karen.hayes@c-i-c.co.uk">karen.hayes@c-i-c.co.uk</a>
		Trewan House	44 residential / residential dementia beds	335 Ditchfield Road Widnes WA8 8XR 0151 423 6795	Carole Davies <a href="mailto:carol@careconcepts.co.uk">carol@careconcepts.co.uk</a>
		Widnes Hall	68 beds dual registered for residential / dementia Residential unit – 32 beds Dementia unit – 36 beds	Coronation Drive Ditton Widnes WA8 8AF 0151 420 8500	Amanda Ashton <a href="mailto:amanda.ashton@anchor.org.uk">amanda.ashton@anchor.org.uk</a>
<b>Beechwood &amp; Heath</b>	Councillor Margaret Ratcliffe Councillor Christopher Rowe Councillor Gareth Stockton	No care homes in this ward			

Council Ward	Ward Councillors	Care home(s) situated in this ward	Number/type of beds	Address and telephone number of care home	Name and email address of Manager
<b>Birchfield</b>	Councillor Angela Ball Councillor Mike Fry Councillor Bill Woolfall	Lilycross Care Centre	60 step-down beds	Wilmere Lane Widnes WA8 5UY 0151 315 1046	Nicola Prescott <a href="mailto:nicola.prescott@catalystchoices.org.uk">nicola.prescott@catalystchoices.org.uk</a>
		Madeline McKenna*	23 residential beds	Haddon Drive Widnes WA8 9DY 0151 511 6460	Angela Colebrook <a href="mailto:angela.colebrook@halton.gov.uk">angela.colebrook@halton.gov.uk</a>
		Regency Park	3 autism residential beds	6 Regency Park Widnes WA8 9PH 01925 759162	Chelsea Holdgate <a href="mailto:chelsea.holdgate@brightfuturescare.co.uk">chelsea.holdgate@brightfuturescare.co.uk</a>
<b>Bridgewater</b>	Councillor Emma Garner Councillor Stef Nelson Councillor Carol Plumpton Walsh	No care homes in this ward			

Council Ward	Ward Councillors	Care home(s) situated in this ward	Number/type of beds	Address and telephone number of care home	Name and email address of Manager
<b>Central &amp; West Bank</b>	Councillor Stan Hill Councillor Noel Hutchinson Councillor Pamela Wallace	No care homes in this ward			
<b>Daresbury, Moore &amp; Sandymoor</b>	Councillor John Bradshaw Councillor Sian Davidson Councillor Mike Ryan	No care homes in this ward			
<b>Ditton, Hale Village &amp; Halebank</b>	Councillor Eddie Dourley Councillor Mike Wharton Councillor Marie Wright	Ferndale Court	58 beds 34 nursing 11 residential 13 residential dementia	St. Michael's Road Ditton Widnes WA8 8TF 0151 257 9111	Jewin Edwin (leaves post 28.01.23) <a href="mailto:jewin.edwin@hc-one.co.uk">jewin.edwin@hc-one.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:ferndalecourt.manager@hc-one.co.uk">ferndalecourt.manager@hc-one.co.uk</a>
		Ferndale Mews	34 beds 17 residential dementia 17 EMI nursing	St. Michael's Road Ditton Widnes WA8 8TF 0151 495 1367	Lisa Kerr <a href="mailto:lisa.kerr@hc-one.co.uk">lisa.kerr@hc-one.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:ferndalemews.manager@hc-one.co.uk">ferndalemews.manager@hc-one.co.uk</a>

Council Ward	Ward Councillors	Care home(s) situated in this ward	Number/type of beds	Address and telephone number of care home	Name and email address of Manager
<b>Farnworth</b>	Councillor Valerie Hill Councillor Angela McInerney Councillor Aimee Skinner	No care homes in this ward			
<b>Grange</b>	Councillor John Abbott Councillor Mark Dennett Councillor Joan Lowe	Croftwood	47 residential / dementia beds	Whitchurch Way Halton Lodge Runcorn WA7 5YP 01928 576049	Cheryl Frankland <a href="mailto:manager.croftwood@minstercaregroup.co.uk">manager.croftwood@minstercaregroup.co.uk</a>
		Simonsfield	63 beds 35 dementia 28 residential	53 Boston Avenue Runcorn WA7 5XE 01928 500223	Debbie Smith <a href="mailto:simonsfieldmanager@hillcare.net">simonsfieldmanager@hillcare.net</a>
<b>Halton Castle</b>	Councillor Chris Carlin Councillor Chris Loftus Councillor Sharon Thornton	No care homes in this ward			

Council Ward	Ward Councillors	Care home(s) situated in this ward	Number/type of beds	Address and telephone number of care home	Name and email address of Manager
Halton Lea	Councillor Kath Loftus Councillor Alan Lowe Councillor Dave Thompson	Beechcroft	66 beds dual registered for residential / standard nursing  2 beds can be used for dementia clients	Lapwing Grove Palacefields Runcorn WA7 2TP 01928 718141	Gemma Bunting (interim)  <a href="mailto:gemma.beechcroft@hotmail.com">gemma.beechcroft@hotmail.com</a>
		Bredon Respite Service	4 beds for short-term respite care for adults with a learning disability aged 18-65 years	Lapwing Grove Palacefields Runcorn WA7 2TJ 01928 715108	Dawn Moss  <a href="mailto:dawn.moss@creativesupport.org.uk">dawn.moss@creativesupport.org.uk</a>
		St Luke's*	56 EMI nursing beds (over 65 years of age)	Palacefields Avenue Palacefields Runcorn WA7 2SU 01928 791552	Kerry Fisher  <a href="mailto:kerry.fisher@halton.gov.uk">kerry.fisher@halton.gov.uk</a>
Halton View	Councillor Tom McInerney Councillor Louise Nolan Councillor Rob Polhill	Edward Street	6 beds – physical and sensory disability	1 & 3 Edward Street Widnes WA8 0BW 0151 420 3364	Gaynor Layton  <a href="mailto:gaynor.layton@ambitocare.co.uk">gaynor.layton@ambitocare.co.uk</a>



Council Ward	Ward Councillors	Care home(s) situated in this ward	Number/type of beds	Address and telephone number of care home	Name and email address of Manager
		St Patrick's*	40 EMI nursing beds	Crow Wood Lane Widnes WA8 3PN 0151 495 3593	Nicola Lloyd <a href="mailto:nicola.lloyd@halton.gov.uk">nicola.lloyd@halton.gov.uk</a>
		Warrington Road	12 beds – physical and sensory disability	102-108 Warrington Road Widnes WA8 0AS 0151 423 3621	Gaynor Layton <a href="mailto:gaynor.layton@ambitocare.co.uk">gaynor.layton@ambitocare.co.uk</a>
<b>Highfield</b>	Councillor Robert Gilligan Councillor Paul Nolan Councillor Andrea Wall	Glenwood	12 ALD nursing beds	Liverpool Road Widnes WA8 7HJ 0151 420 5945	Karen Hayes <a href="mailto:karen.hayes@c-i-c.co.uk">karen.hayes@c-i-c.co.uk</a>
		Maeres House	8 beds – mental health (not LD) & physical disability & sensory impairment	56 Blundell Road Hough Green Widnes WA8 8SS 0151 424 0622	Jorjia Swash <a href="mailto:jorjiaswash@voyagecare.com">jorjiaswash@voyagecare.com</a>

Council Ward	Ward Councillors	Care home(s) situated in this ward	Number/type of beds	Address and telephone number of care home	Name and email address of Manager
<b>Hough Green</b>	Councillor Sandra Baker Councillor Phil Harris Councillor Kevan Wainwright	No care homes in this ward			
<b>Mersey &amp; Weston</b>	Councillor Victoria Begg Councillor Rosie Leck Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh	Holmdale	6 ALD residential beds	2A Company's Close Weston Village Runcorn WA7 4NA 01928 581448	Michelle Carmon <a href="mailto:michelle.carmon@c-i-c.co.uk">michelle.carmon@c-i-c.co.uk</a>
		Wide Cove	8 ALD residential beds	20 Brook Street Runcorn WA7 1JJ 01928 572635	Ellie Tracey <a href="mailto:eleanor.widecove@gmail.com">eleanor.widecove@gmail.com</a>
<b>Norton North</b>	Councillor Irene Bramwell Councillor Peter Lloyd Jones Councillor Geoffrey Logan	Norton Lodge	32 residential / dementia beds	Norton Village Runcorn WA7 6QA 01928 714792	Lorraine Manson <a href="mailto:manager@nortonlodgcarehome.co.uk">manager@nortonlodgcarehome.co.uk</a>

Council Ward	Ward Councillors	Care home(s) situated in this ward	Number/type of beds	Address and telephone number of care home	Name and email address of Manager
		Smithy Forge	6 ALD residential beds	3A Norton Village Runcorn WA7 6PZ 01928 790986	Lynn Price <a href="mailto:dlprice@ntlworld.com">dlprice@ntlworld.com</a>
<b>Norton South &amp; Preston Brook</b>	Councillor Dave Cargill Councillor Martha Lloyd Jones Councillor Tom Stretch	No care homes in this ward			

Information correct at May 2023



**Your feedback:**

Please provide feedback on your visit by answering the questions below. Think about what people told you and what you observed. Think about the general environment, meals, activities, staff etc. What does the service do well and what could be done better?

What positive feedback would you like to provide about the care home you visited?

Do you have any negative feedback to provide about the care home you visited?

What can be done to address the negative issues outlined above?

Have you taken any action to resolve any issues highlighted as part of your visit (e.g. have you spoken to a member of staff at the home)?

