

# Healthwatch Warwickshire

## Enter and View Report – Castle Brook

**Name of Service Provider:** WCS Care

**Premises Visited:** Castle Brook, Common Ln, Kenilworth CV8 2EQ

**Date of Visit:** 12th June 2025

**Time of Visit:** 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Registered Manager:** Kate Bradshaw

**Service Manager:** Pearl Mackey

**Authorised Representatives:** Robyn Dorling, Sue Roodhouse, Maggie Roberson, Dilys Skinner

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## **Executive Summary**

This Enter and View visit to Castle Brook observed a well-managed, welcoming care home with a strong ethos of independence, respectful staff-resident interactions, and notable staff satisfaction. Safety is supported through innovative monitoring technologies, and the home provides a wide range of in-house facilities. Improvement opportunities include broadening activities and further aligning them with the interests of residents.

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## **Disclaimer**

Please note that this report relates to observations and feedback gathered during a single visit on 12th June 2025. It may not reflect the experiences of all service users, staff, or relatives.

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## **Purpose of the Visit**

This unannounced visit was conducted as part of Healthwatch Warwickshire's statutory responsibility to gather insights into health and care services. Castle Brook had not been inspected by the Care Quality Commission since 2019. We aimed to listen to residents, observe how people with dementia were engaged in activities and mealtimes, and ensure that people were treated with dignity and care.

## **Approach Used**

Healthwatch Warwickshire's Enter and View Lead and three volunteer Authorised Representatives arrived unannounced at Castle Brook. We were welcomed by the most senior person on duty and shortly met the Registered Manager and Service Manager. We toured the home, observed lunchtime, and spoke with ten residents, eight staff members, and one relative. At the end of our visit, we provided feedback to the managers.

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## **Summary of Findings**

Castle Brook is a large, modern, purpose-built care home in Kenilworth offering residential and respite care to up to 88 older people, including those with dementia. It is divided into six 'households' across three floors, each with a domestic-style kitchen and open-plan lounge, promoting a homely and independent lifestyle.

Key observations:

- The environment is warm and welcoming, from both residents and staff.

- The home is clean, safe, and supportive of independence and comfort.
  - The ground floor is lively, while the upper floors are quieter.
  - There is a strong ethos of normality and independence, with access to shops, a cinema, and shared kitchens.
  - Ground floor facilities require the use of lifts, so residents with more advanced dementia may need reminders or assistance to access them.
  - The home is well-staffed, with no agency staff and low turnover.
  - Staff report high job satisfaction, with training and career progression opportunities.
  - Innovative tools are used to enhance safety and staffing efficiency.
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## Recommendations

### 1. **Broaden Activity Options**

Increase the range of activities, particularly during quieter afternoon periods, to reflect the size and diversity of the resident group.

### 2. **Use Surveys to Identify Resident Interests**

Conduct regular resident and family surveys and utilise existing information to align activities with residents' interests and staff skills (e.g., forming a cooking club to encourage the use of the shop, household kitchens, fresh fruit and vegetables, and staff and residents eating together).

### 3. **Participation in Resident Life**

Explore structured and informal opportunities for staff to engage with residents' routines that are familiar to them, especially those with advanced dementia, for example, reading their preferred newspaper.

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## Interview and Tour Overview

Upon arrival, the most senior person on duty welcomed us. Shortly after, the Registered Manager (Kate Bradshaw) and Service Manager (Pearl Mackey) arrived and spent time with us before showing us around the home.

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## Interview with the Registered Manager

Kate Bradshaw has been the Registered Manager since 2018. Pearl Mackey, the Service Manager, oversees several homes and has 35 years of experience working for Warwickshire Care Services (WCS).

### Key Points:

- **Ethos:** Residents are encouraged to live a “normal life” with independence in daily activities, including using kitchens, visiting the shop, cinema, and salon.
  - **Staffing:** 120 staff, with no agency usage since January 2022.
  - **Staffing App:** “Book Jane” allows staff to select real-time shifts, increasing flexibility and job satisfaction.
  - **Training:** 34 mandatory training modules via Altura, shadowing for new staff, buddy systems, and ongoing external training (e.g. District Nurses, Speech and Language Therapists). Staff are encouraged to pursue nationally recognised qualifications, such as NVQs.
  - **Monitoring Technology:** Acoustic systems, motion sensors, and night vision cameras are used with consent; staff reported that this significantly reduced nighttime falls.
  - **Healthcare Access:**
    - GP visits weekly from two surgeries.
    - District Nurses provide diabetes and wound care.
    - Speech and Language Therapists offer responsive support and onsite training.
    - Limited local dentistry—some residents travel to Coventry.
  - **Dementia Care:** Pearl Mackey is a qualified dementia care mapper. A professional musician (employed 16 hours/week) provides therapeutic engagement.
  - **Food and Nutrition:**
    - Apetito provides chilled ready-to-cook meals.
    - Residents can shop for and prepare food themselves using shared kitchens.
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## Observations and Findings

### Environment and Facilities

- The building is modern, clean, and spacious.
- Each floor has two households (14 rooms each), and some couples' suites.
- Bedrooms on the ground floor have private outdoor patios; upper floors offer pleasant views.
- Ground-floor facilities include a café, shop, hairdresser, launderette, spa room, and cinema.
- The garden is attractive, wheelchair-accessible, and includes a memory garden and a pet rabbit.
- Residents from upper floors come down to access services, though some may need encouragement.

### Activities and Engagement

- **Music Sessions:** A Professional musician leads the weekly choir and visits individual rooms. During our visit, about 25 residents participated in a lively session.
- **Gardening Club:** Residents maintain planters and a greenhouse with herbs and vegetables.
- **Other Activities:** Include knitting, colouring, table tennis, cinema screenings, and church services.
- **Lifestyle Coach:** Was not present during our visit.

### Dining and Nutrition

Meals are served and supported at the resident's pace. The atmosphere at lunchtime was relaxed, with all residents being given the time they needed.

- **Meals:** Provided by Apetito chilled and then cooked in household kitchens.
- **Presentation and Atmosphere:** Meals looked appealing; dining was calm, accompanied by soft classical music.
- **Resident Choice:** Two main dishes are offered, staff assist with choices through discussion.

- **Staff Support:** Observed as respectful and attentive.
- **Interaction:** Staff responded well to resident needs (e.g. assisting a resident with a headache).
- **Food Feedback:** One resident felt food was “aimed at people who can’t chew.”
- **Improvement opportunity:** Our visitors noted that individuals with advanced dementia may require encouragement to shop for fresh fruits and vegetables to maintain a balanced diet.

### **Resident Autonomy and Routine**

- Residents are supported to maintain independence:
  - Choice to eat in-room or communally
  - Use of the in-house shop and café
  - Some do their own laundry
  - Continued personal routines such as visiting the salon or gardening
- Staff-resident relationships appear strong, with mutual respect.
- Staff are assigned to specific households, building familiarity and continuity.
- Staff and residents appeared to know each other well.
- Cultural inclusion is evident; for example, one Sikh resident is supported in attending a temple.

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### **Feedback from Residents, Relatives, and Staff**

#### **Residents**

- “Lovely and caring, they always check you are alright before bed. I feel safe and looked after.”
- “Happy to be here. It suits me fine.”
- “I like it, especially since I’ve had bad legs; my husband is here too—he has dementia, so it’s good for both of us.”
- “I don’t know anywhere better.”
- “Everything changed after COVID. Things aren’t as good, and there are fewer activities now.”

## Relatives

- “Mum’s safe and in good hands.”

## Staff

- “This home is homely and filled with love. I feel looked after, which makes it easier to look after other people.”
- “We love all the residents and support each other with teamwork.”
- “I like learning new things and having variety—I’ve helped with reception and cleaning.”
- “There are lots of opportunities for career progression here.”
- “The Book Jane app is handy. I can fit shifts in with my life, I plan to stay working here.”

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## Conclusion

Castle Brook is a modern care home with a well-defined dignity, safety, and independence ethos. The environment is thoughtfully designed to promote a sense of community and normality, with multiple households that support residents in maintaining familiar routines and autonomy. The home’s facilities, including the shop, café, garden, and leisure spaces, provide various opportunities for social engagement and meaningful activity.

Staff at Castle Brook are dedicated and well-trained, contributing to a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The absence of agency staff and innovative staffing tools such as the “Book Jane” app demonstrates a stable and responsive workforce. Monitoring technologies enhance resident safety, particularly at night, and healthcare services are accessible and responsive.

Residents and relatives expressed satisfaction with the care provided, though some noted a reduction in activities post-COVID. Continued efforts to broaden activity offerings and align them with resident interests may help people with dementia to stay engaged.

Overall, Castle Brook provides a good standard of care that balances safety with resident choice and independence.