

In March 2015 we wrote out to past and present residents' families and visitors to the home requesting their honest opinion and views of the Home. We have never felt the need to show testimonials on our site, however, due to events in the last couple of years, we have decided to share some of the replies scanned in below, which simply bowled us over:

Comments from a resident's daughter:

When I first visited St Dominics with a view to my Mother initially coming for respite care I was very impressed. We visited during the Summer Fete – it was very well organised the Care Home Manager Jean Dolmor came to see us and spoke to Mum about the home We looked around St Dominics and was impressed at the bedrooms –the layout of the lounge and dining area.. We were also impressed with the attitude of the carers towards the residents.

My Mother decided after Respite Care that she wanted to stay at St Dominics, during which time she was cared for extremely well I could not have asked for better care for her whilst she was here.

The ambience of the home was always excellent , the residents and carers always happy and it felt like a real home. There was always some activity or other going on during the day, singing, quizzes, colouring, craft, Residents outings were also arranged during the year.

It became part of my home whilst Mum was residing here I always felt comfortable when visiting and always coffee and tea offered.

There was a good choice of food on the menu and if at any time Mum changed her mind from what she had chosen she was always offered something else. There is nothing too much trouble for the kitchen staff.

I ate with Mum usually on a Friday lunchtime and the quality of the food was excellent.

The Carers at St Dominics are excellent — I would visit my Mother adhoc times during the day and evening . I noticed that the Carers were attentive to the residents and treated them with respect not only in their care but in their attitude towards them , the way they spoke to the residents was very impressive and I knew that Mum was being looked after as well as I would have done at home if not better. Mum only ever disliked one member of staff during her time –this member of staff did not work for St Dominics for very long. Jean Dolmor is an excellent Manager – she is behind the carers at all times – giving them support and respect. Always available to any resident or their family at any time of the day or night. A tightly run home and a happy home.

I remember visiting one afternoon and there were staff shortages – Jean was working " hands on" from Manager to carer in seconds .

During Mums last few months at St Dominics she became bedridden, the care and respect given to her was first class, I could not have asked for any better care for her. The day and night staff were so attentive - exceptional people to say the least. I know that their care and attention towards Mum helped her during her final 24 hours.

I stayed during this difficult time not only attention towards Mum but to myself also.

First class Home Manager - First class carers, kitchen staff and domestic staff well done everyone. I would RECOMMEND St Dominics anytime.

Finally I would like to say that although Mum has passed away I know I am always welcome to visit St Dominics at anytime –the door is always "open".

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Comments from a resident's son:

I am writing to you in response to your letter of 25 March 2015.

I would be very happy for you to use this letter in any way you think fit and also I am more than happy on behalf of both myself and my sister to say how much we appreciated the high standard of competent care that my mother received from your staff and in particular I was impressed by your registered manager Jean Dolmor. I thought that she was highly motivated, caring and committed, as you say in your letter, and above all very competent.

My impression was that Jean clearly has a detailed and thorough knowledge of the system and how best to

use that for the benefit of your residents. My sister and I both feel that we were fortunate to find a place where she could receive such a high standard of good care which was all that we could ask for in what turned out to be the last few months of her life. I think that if my mother's health had been better she may in time have come to love the place and to become more involved with your community.

Both my sister and I are minded to make some sort of donation to the home for the benefit of the residents and when Probate has come through and we have collected some of my mother's assets we will be in touch with you again as we would like to talk to you about that, so as to ensure that any donation that we do make would be put to the best use.

On re-reading your letter I note the mention of end stage of life care. Once again, as in almost without exception all instances of care, this was delivered to the highest standard and again Jean proved to be very sympathetic and competent in dealing with that situation. I am particularly glad that the care home staff phoned me in good time to enable me to make the journey to be with her when she passed on.

As I have said above I am very happy for you to use this letter in whatever way you feel appropriate and I can assure you that the care of my mother with you has done nothing to diminish St Dominics already considerable reputation in the area.

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Comments from a current resident's daughter:

As it is nearing the anniversary of 3 years since I had to make the heart rendering decision to put my dear Mum into a care home, I felt I must just write to let you know how we have found St. Dominic's over this time.

My Daughter (a carer herself) set out to find the right place for Mum, my daughter had experience of some care homes good and bad so we had a good idea what we were looking for.

Our first impression when we arrived at St Dominic's the grounds were very well maintained and looked after the building looked very nice and cared for, once inside we noticed no bad smells (we had experienced in other homes)(his was a good start, the staff very friendly and helpful, we met Jean and Nichol who were so kind and understood how upset I felt and reassured me straight away, we looked around and Jean offered us a room for Mum, she kindly came to see Mum at home and reassure her it was a little holiday, we booked Mum in for respite care, she was very unsure at first but soon joined in with the entertainment in the lounge. I went away for a week and when I came back Mum asked to stay she was so happy having people to talk to and being well looked after and enjoying the lovely food which she could not fault.

So with Mum settled in I visit at least 3 times a week never at a specific time, and have always found Mum quite happy. We have had a couple of times when we have not been happy, but went to Jean and it was addressed straight away, I often go down to the home and get involved with the entertainment, which is always first class as are the Summer outings. Christmas is very special when every resident get a present, as is Birthdays (Mums was made very special last year being her 100th).

So both me and my brother feel we made the right decision when we chose St. Dominic's Mum is very happy and settled, and very well looked after, thanks to all the caring staff, and Jean and Mr Banning for running such an excellent home, I have recommended it to many of my friends having to make the same choice.

I do feel Mum has enjoyed extra years to her life being part of the St. Dominic's family. So thank you all for making my life easier and giving me piece of mind my dear Mum is being well cared for.

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Comments from local Parish Priest:

Thank you for your recent letter inviting comments on St Dominic's Residential Home. Over the past fifteen years I have visited a number of different residents on a regular basis. I have always found the staff most welcoming and supportive, both to myself and also to the residents. Residents have been encouraged to bring some items from home to make them feel at home. Provision has been made for guests to join their relative or friend for lunch. The rooms are comfortable and well-furnished and the whole place is bright and well kept. The staff put a lot of effort into organising various activities for the residents both internally and as far as circumstances permit in the form of excursions.

I would have no hesitation in recommending anyone looking for such a facility to investigate what St Dominic's has to offer.

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Comments from a current resident's husband:

I think of Janet and me as being very fortunate that a place at St Dominic's was available to take Janet when it was no longer possible for her to stay at home. Jean and the staff helped both of us through very difficult times when Janet first moved in. I will always be thankful to Jean for helping both of us adjust and come to terms with our situation.

All the team are very thoughtful and attentive. Nearly every day someone will say something chirpy or funny that puts a smile on Janet's face (and mine). I very much appreciate the compassion that Janet and I experience.

I get to know all the carers. When regular carers leave and new ones or agency staff come on board it sometimes worries me that they will be unfamiliar with Janet's condition. However, they soon get to know Janet and her needs.

Janet receives very good care. I know someone caring is always on hand.

I think everyone knows how appreciative we are and it's nice to be able to let you and the team know this in writing.

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Comments from a current resident's advocate:

As you know, I keep my eye on [Resident] and have total confidence in St. Dominics. All members of your team, yourself included, are readily available to discuss any issue, and on occasion these discussions have been initiated by the home, to nip any anxieties in the bud.

It seems obvious to me, that St Dominics is a happy caring place where all the residents are treated with respect, and I have witnessed no signs to the contrary.

Lasting memories of loved ones actually includes their final days, and I can think of nothing worse than visions of mistreatment.

I have nothing but praise for you and the obvious pride you and your staff take at St. Dominics, and the glass of red wine I enjoyed last Wednesday was delicious

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Comments from a current resident's daughter:

Our Mum came to St Dominics on 16 March this year. Having already experienced a rollercoaster 3 months of stays in Broomfield Hospital and another care home I cannot tell you the huge relief felt by myself and my sisters when the day eventually arrived for Mum to come to St Dominics. I feel I must outline the events prior to her arrival with you so that you can fully understand how we feel.

Mum had previously been a fiercely independent lady, living on her own and coping with day to day life quite adequately. She had a fall at home on Sunday 14 December 2014, dialled 999 as she thought she may have suffered a stroke (but she hadn't) and consequently ended up in A&E at Broomfield. She spent the entire night and all of the following day in A&E as there were no available beds in any of the wards – my sister and I arrived on the Monday morning, fully expecting her to be in a ward, only to find that she was still in a cubicle in A&E, sprawled across the bed - she had become incontinent, was hallucinating and had become some kind of 'mad woman'. I cannot express how distressed we felt. The nursing staff seemed not to care for her in the slightest and we were left to look after her ourselves, changing her and trying to get her something to eat/drink - we felt totally abandoned and could not believe how an elderly lady could be left in such a state, with all dignity gone.

Early evening she was eventually taken up to the EAU, where a Spanish nurse who could hardly speak a word of English and seemed to have no idea of what she was doing was assigned to Mum. By the next day Mum had been moved to another ward where she remained for 3 weeks – we had to push and push to talk to a doctor, anyone really, who could tell us what was going on with Mum - her general well-being was not improving, she was struggling to feed herself and her mobility was awful. After numerous tests/scans the doctors told us it was 'delirium' and left it at that. Overnight she had gone from a totally independent lady to someone who needed help to perform the most basic of everyday tasks.

As there was nothing more they felt they could do for her, and they needed the bed, they discharged her, but did not deem her fit/safe enough to look after herself. We were given very little warning and virtually no time to prepare and look at alternative care, so they put her in [a Care Home] in Witham, where after 1 night she fell and broke her hip and was back in Broomfield on possibly the busiest night of the year for A&E and experienced a 4/5 hour wait, in a corridor on a trolley bed, before she was even assessed. After a 2 week recovery spell in hospital she was discharged back to [Care Home]. She was constantly afraid there, always left on her own, the food was dreadful, she didn't sleep well because she was so scared, she just wasn't receiving the care she should have been getting and after every visit we left the home feeling extremely uneasy.

During one of my visits on a Saturday afternoon 3 residents came into her room, shouting at each other, looking through Mum's cupboards/drawers, not taking any notice of me politely asking them to leave – Mum grabbed my hand, a look of such fear in her eyes and begged me not to go. There were no staff to help and I knew that I had to get Mum out of there.

This was when I made the call to St Dominics and spoke to Jean. I was taken aback by the kindness and understanding she showed right from the start – she didn't know us at all, yet she genuinely seemed to care for the well-being of someone she'd never even met and, after our recent experiences, this was quite overwhelming and from the moment I put the phone down I knew that things were going to get better – that same morning Jean met me at [Care Home], assessed Mum and said that there was a room available if we wanted it. When I went to visit St Dominics it instantly felt welcoming – the staff were friendly, everybody seemed happy, there was a buzz of conversation, even the chef knew everybody by name andthere was no horrible smell!!!!

Mum has been with you for over a month now – she's settling in slowly and seems happier. She is gradually putting on a little weight, enjoys the food and especially the afternoon cakes! She is encouraged to sit with the other residents, although I think she's constantly on the move and wearing the staff out! I like to think of St Dominics as more of a 'hotel for the elderly' – every care is taken to ensure the resident is happy, and nothing seems to be too much trouble. It's the little touches that make it feel special. We, as visitors, are always offered refreshments and are always made to feel welcome. Even after such a short time my sisters and I feel that Mum, and us, are part of a bigger extended family and I cannot express enough how much happier we all feel. After our visits we leave St Dominics with peace of mind and have no worries that our Mum, who we love so much, is getting the care she deserves.

Thank you, St Dominics

Comments from a resident's son:

On behalf of our family I would like to thank the care home for the way they looked after Mum. We fully realise that she was not the easiest of residents to deal with and it must have been difficult for the staff to manage her at times.

We were very pleased with the care she received and most of all the attitude of the staff towards her which was always kind & caring. Above everything else, a caring, patient & understanding attitude was comfort to the family, as although Mum was often distressed by her condition, we knew she was properly cared for. I cannot emphasise this enough. It should be a cornerstone of any care home. Please kindly express our thanks for this to the staff