

Narrator:

Life can be a struggle sometimes. A struggle to make things fit; to make things work; and to make do with the best resources you've got.

Here at Lapstone House near Millom the staff have been struggling for a while. They're well-trained and provide the best care they can. But Lapstone House itself - its bricks, its mortar, its very structure - is letting them down.

Residents are crammed into bedrooms only eight metres square. Nowadays national standards require a minimum of 12 square metres.

National standards don't expect people to share bathrooms. Here at Lapstone house like other Cumbria Care homes, residents share bathrooms; this in a day and age when people demand and deserve more privacy.

The care home often has to turn away potential residents in wheelchairs - because its narrow corridors and small bedrooms just aren't suitable.

As a result, some of the rooms are empty, and are destined to remain so.

***Christine Pidduck
Lapstone House Manager***

"What people are very surprised about is the fact that the room sizes are so small. People will come in and ask 'Do they not have facilities to bathe?, Is there no en-suite toilet?,' which lots of people look for now and which unfortunately we can't provide.

There isn't enough space for 2 residents with Zimmer frames to pass each other in the corridor. Accessing the toilet can be extremely difficult if somebody has poor mobility and is trying to shut the door to maintain their privacy whilst using a Zimmer frame. Also, the rooms are not big enough to allow hoists to be used to get people with poor mobility out of bed."

Narrator:

In fact none of Cumbria's 33 residential homes for the elderly meet the national standards in full. It means customers are looking for other options.

Duddon Mews is a new development which is breaking the mould by giving people the security and independence they and their families want. Many people staying here couldn't manage in their own homes and require round-the-clock support. But they have their own front doors and their own space, which they can share with family.

Christine Pendleton
Relative of Resident of Duddon Mews

“In Lapstone House the care is very good but it is a very clinical environment. She has a little bedroom which is not really adequate, there’s not much space. If she has to bring furniture from home to live there it would be a nightmare as there isn’t enough space for a wardrobe, at best you would have a chair and that would be it. It was just too much of a bare environment. It’s more care orientated like a hospital, and I wanted her to have her own little place like here at Duddon Mews.”

Narrator:

The residents’ families now have peace of mind that their loved ones are in a safe, comfortable place; well looked after, but also free to be their own person.

Christine Pendleton
Relative of Resident of Duddon Mews

“I would say that it’s a lot better value here too, as I paid more to keep her in Lapstone House and Mum is getting every bit as good a quality of care here as the carers are extremely good.

Mum had a bad fall here and the care was excellent. I thought I would have to stay over that night but the carers checked on her every hour, so what more can you ask for really?

And the fact that the family can come and spend time with Mum, on her own, and also join in with other people in the lounge area where they have a brilliant time with games, singing, balloon football”.

Narrator:

Duddon Mews is classed as ‘extra care housing’, meaning it combines the advantages of sheltered housing schemes with the on-site care and support provided in residential homes. It was built in 2002, so it conforms to all the national standards for accessibility, safety and room sizes - with ensuite facilities in every bedroom. It was built with today’s more sophisticated requirements in mind.

Ann Harrison
Social Worker:

“When family members come round to have a look at the scheme and when potential tenants come to have a look, they’re just amazed at the space and the quality of the build, which you don’t get with residential care. They’re amazed

that they've got their own separate bathroom. The kitchen's been designed by people who if you don't remember where you've put things you can see what's in the cupboards. The space and the light is wonderful. You can bring in things that are familiar to you such as personal belongings. If a person goes into residential care which is often the only other option you can't take any belongings. And all of this has helped her to retain her identity."

Narrator:

And it's not just the standard of the bricks and mortar which is different at Duddon Mews: there's a whole different approach to getting the balance right between providing care and allowing residents to live their own lives.

Ann Harrison
Social Worker:

"People coming in here are tenants, so this is a person's own home. They retain they're own rights, they get the same bills that we all get. You've got your own furniture, it's your home and that's the difference."

Jenny Cutcheon
Community Psychiatric Nurse:

"We also try to promote skills that people have lost, for instance if someone has been living alone and their mood is dipping and they're gradually getting lonelier then they start to withdraw. When they move into here we try to re-skill them again, for instance cooking skills, and that wouldn't happen in residential care."

Ann Harrison
Social Worker:

"The other thing as well is keeping couples together. We've both been involved in the past when a couple have been married for a long time and then one of them needs to go into care, so having this setup here with the 2 bed roomed bungalows it allows people to stay together."

Narrator:

There's not a single vacancy at Duddon Mews - proof that more and more people are opting out of the traditional residential care home for this more flexible, independent option.

Bessie Walker
Resident at Duddon Mews:

"I can't find any fault with it. It's well run, and everybody's amicable with everyone else, we're all friends together."

Margaret Lamb

Resident at Duddon Mews:

"You can come and go as you please, nobody every questions what you're doing".

Narrator:

Britain is getting steadily older. At the moment 23 per cent of people in the UK are aged 65 or over. But Cumbria is higher than the national average, with 27 per cent of householders are aged over 65. And here in the county the number of people aged over 85 is expected to increase by 20 per cent over the next five years - more than half of them will need some form of care.

Not everyone will need to stay in places like Duddon Mews. Most will prefer to stay in their own homes and live independently for as long as possible; others will require more specialist support.

In Lancashire, a new generation of residential homes has been developed to offer care to those with more acute needs - such as people with dementia or more severe physical restrictions. Woodhill House is one such home, and following its refurbishment it now meets both national standards and the standards expected by the people that live there.

Sue McGrath

Area Manager, Lancashire County Care services:

"I think prior to the refurbishment, the people of Lancashire appreciated that Lancashire County Care services provided an excellent standard of care in their residential homes. I think what we failed to have was the premises that matched up to the standard of care.

It was apparent that the occupancy of our residential homes was falling, that the people of Lancashire were voting with their feet in some circumstances and were choosing to remain in their own homes, albeit supported by packages of care, attending day centres, and of course the criteria of people for coming into residential homes is much more stringent.

These days we tend to have very frail old people, people with dementia, and if I just look back a few years often we would have people admitted who were still capable of taking themselves off to the local pub or go out shopping, and these days that is quite unusual."

Now all rooms have ensuite facilities, they're light, bright, airy and safe, too. Just as importantly, the people staying there are the ones who should be; the ones who cannot be supported in their own home or in extra care housing.

Back in Cumbria, the residents of Duddon Mews already enjoy the independence provided by modern care facilities. Cumbria County Council hopes to be able to offer that choice to more and more people in the future.