

Crosshill is outstanding too!

IT'S not only schools these days that are judged by regulatory bodies because care homes – quite rightly – are too.



Some of Crosshill's staff and residents.

Staff and residents at Crosshill in Stanhope were celebrating last month when they achieved the highest grade – Band 1 – after an intensive

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Enjoying the celebrations.

inspection by Durham County Council. The inspectors arrived and looked into every nook and cranny of the home, including the environment and quality of care.

Durham County Council has overall responsibility for all care homes in the county and had previously awarded Crosshill a Band 2. But as the Director of Nursing, Maria Vincent, explained, since the last inspection, there has been a lot of refurbishment, the staff have received even more training, and the home has improved the processes by which they monitor their services.

The inspectors spent three full days at the home, scrutinising and validating every area relating to the care of the residents. "It is a very robust system," said Maria. "We have highly-trained and well-qualified staff, most of whom have been here for a very long time. They come here and they stay, which is always good for continuity of care but ironically this could have proved to be detrimental to our banding. The last inspectors were unable to review documentation relating to the recruitment process because we had not employed any additional care staff since their last visit. Our commitment to the apprentice programme proved to be a life saver as we were able to

provide them with information relating to the recruitment of two apprentices who recently joined our team."

The care home was established 22 years ago by Maria's parents, initially at Westholme. Maria, who is a highly qualified nurse herself, is passionate about the home and the business of caring for older people. Crosshill was praised for its transparency and openness – it is certainly welcoming of visitors. Their 20 bedrooms were checked for size and the provision of facilities to cater for the needs of individuals who are physically disabled. "We have refurbished 18 bedrooms, to date, and made them larger," continued Maria. "As care needs have increased and new technology has become available, we needed to increase them in size for the equipment that may be needed e.g. profiling beds, ceiling hoist etc. We have also made sure that they maintain a homely feel and residents are often able to choose their own decor and additional furnishings; one lady chose a red colour scheme with a feature wall, matching duvet and curtains and we even fitted a mini kitchenette so she could make herself and her visitors a hot drink. We have had many comments from relatives that say it 'feels like home' with a small 'h' and that is what we strive to achieve."

The inspectors asked to see the complaints book two years ago but, as Maria pointed out, "we don't get complaints, we deal with issues as they arise, thus preventing things from escalating into a complaint. We hold residents' meetings every three months and we now always ask if they have any complaints. A resident queried, "Why do you always ask us this?" I had to explain that it was because Durham thought it was unusual for a home to have none. We now have a comments book to record issues and feedback which has informed decisions within the home and this was presented to the last inspectors."

Crosshill has applied for planning permission to build a small EMI (Elderly, Mental and Infirm) unit in the grounds. "Just over two years ago I realised that there was no local provision for individuals suffering from dementia so we decided to try to provide this," explained Maria. "It has been in the pipeline for quite a while and it is coincidental that the debate about Newtown House has developed in the interim. What we offer here is completely different to Newtown but we have, and will always continue to, be responsive to the needs of the local community. We may therefore need to re-think about the use of the new unit at a later date, if the community needs us to."

"We are very privileged to have such wonderful staff, who are highly skilled, committed and loyal to Crosshill. It's the staff who make it a home and most are local people, so they understand our residents and are knowledgeable about the area. They are Weardale people looking after their own!"

Crosshill itself is also loyal to the Dale, using local businesses and suppliers whenever possible. "Being able to offer care

for residential, nursing, continuing health care, day care and potentially EMI residents on one site means that, once settled, residents will not need to be moved and, although my parents and I are probably still perceived as incomers, we would hope that the Dales Community can now appreciate that we are committed to providing them with a local care home that delivers the highest possible standards of care".