

'More independence, not less': Families praise 'reassuring havens' during Covid.

Helen with a strawberry feast.

Professional nursing capability and consistent group-wide support are among the factors that set Colten Care apart from other care home operators. Its robust, sensitive and clinically-led management of the Covid risk has further reassured families of residents at all its 21 homes. Now, a safe visiting solution enabling face-to-face contact through specially installed screens is lifting spirits even higher. As a new promotional offer begins, four relatives share their confidence:

Janet Ballard says she has been amazed by the care she has witnessed since her mother Jean moved into Linden House, the Outstanding-rated Lymington dementia care home, 18 months ago. "She has complex needs but she immediately got settled," recalls Janet. "I was absolutely astounded that the staff found it easy to deal with her. Everyone is trained in dementia care. They wanted to understand her, what made her happy, what made her sad. In hospitals they don't have time to get to know people like that. I have always felt reassured. This is one of the best care homes in the country. Any friends or family who have been in to see mum have been gobsmacked by Linden House and how good it is."

Since lockdown, Janet says she has stayed confident about her mother's care. "I've never had any worries. I would have had if she had been back

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Daughter of Resident

at home with carers going in and out. I am more than happy. It couldn't be any better."

Janet's sentiments are reflected by former nurse Helen Clark, whose dad Jack lives at The Aldbury in Poole. "This is a safe haven. I have total reassurance. When it's my turn, I'll be putting my name down for Colten Care. They're doing a fantastic job. They were actually recommended to us by someone who runs a care home locally, and not a Colten one! As I have a nursing background I am aware of how hard care work is, I understand that, and nursing-wise everyone at The Aldbury is amazing."

Helen was quick to take advantage of the new safe-visit protocol to see her dad in person for the first time since March. "I had been 'beamed in' on a big TV screen before, which was amusing for dad, but I was so excited when I heard about the safe visiting.

I knew I wouldn't be able to touch him but I couldn't wait to see him and know he was happy. I'm so grateful and feel very privileged."

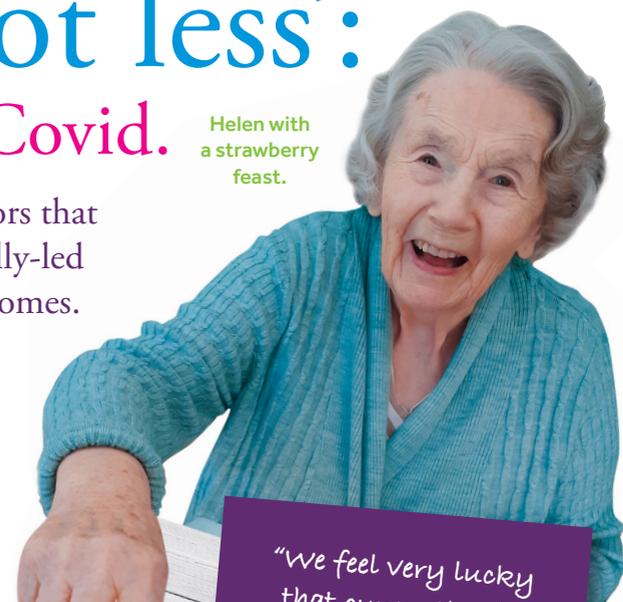
After visiting her mother Rosemary at Newstone House in Sturminster Newton, fellow Colten relative Jenny Cottrell said: "I had been going in two or three times a week before lockdown. We were both delighted and excited to be seeing each other again. There was a pang of emotion that you can't have a big hug because that's what you want to do and that's what the residents need but the screen worked well and it was absolutely delightful. It's a sign that things are getting better. Elderly people should be seeing friends and family in their twilight years."

Relatives also praised the way Colten Care has communicated during lockdown. There have been regular messages from each home and Chief Executive Mark Aitchison.

Jenny says: "I know I will be informed straight away if there is anything my siblings and I need to know about our mother. At the same time, it's incredibly reassuring to hear direct from the CEO about things like testing and procuring

PPE, and then, at the home level, how companionship and activities are continuing. We feel very lucky that our mother is where she is. Not everyone is fortunate to have the Colten experience but I think it is a model we should all be striving towards."

Peter Wardle, whose elder brother Jack lives at Avon Cliff in Bournemouth, agrees the tone and level of communication has been welcome. "It's fair and clear, just what you need for reassurance. It reinforces my feeling that we couldn't have picked a better place for Jack. He's thriving there. The model of people living at home is not the right one. A care home with nursing is best. It's given him more independence, not less."



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Daughter of Resident

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