

# 'WE COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A BETTER PLACE':

## Families' confidence in the care their loved ones receive at Colten Care

Professional and committed care home staff have won praise for their dedication and skill in keeping residents and families safe and reassured during the pandemic. One of the factors that sets Colten Care apart from other providers is that all its 21 homes are registered for nursing and benefit from a group-wide support structure. Here, three families share their reasons for confidence.

Peter Wardle's 87-year-old elder brother Jack has been living at Colten Care's Avon Cliff care home in Bournemouth since September 2017. Previously he had lived alone in an upstairs flat in Surrey with no lift. After a hospital stay and an unsatisfactory home care experience, the family decided Jack would be better off in a quality care home closer to Peter and his wife. Avon Cliff, just ten minutes from where they live, has proved ideal.



Our residents enjoy playing music in the homes.

"In the three years he has been there, he has thrived," says Peter. "It's a combination of good food and care, and not having to worry about cold callers, gas bills and so on."

Before lockdown, Peter would visit Jack regularly. While the pandemic has been a challenge, it has confirmed his view that Jack is in exactly the right place. Peter recalls: "We explained to him we wouldn't be able to go in so often. It was mid-March. He watches the news and was understanding. He knew the situation. One of the reassuring things for us is that we know the staff will look after him.

Everything he wants is there if he chooses to have it. I am reassured that Avon Cliff is a safe haven from the pandemic. I would be pulling my hair out if he was living on his own in his flat. Avon Cliff is as safe as anywhere can be."

Peter also praises the tone and level of communication that the family have received from Colten Care since Covid began affecting every walk of life. It includes regular emails from both the Chief Executive Mark Aitchison and the team at Avon Cliff. "It's fair and clear," says Peter. "Just what you need for reassurance. It reinforces my feeling that we couldn't have picked a better place for Jack. 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."

Peter's sentiments are shared by fellow Colten relative Jenny Cottrell, whose mother Rosemary lives at

"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."

Daughter of Resident

Outstanding-rated Newstone House in Sturminster Newton. 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."

Jenny also compliments the way Colten staff have been able to reintroduce safe visiting for relatives through see-through screens positioned in the 21 homes' entrance ways. "I had been going in two or three times a week before lockdown and 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."

Former nurse Helen Clark is another relative who has taken advantage of the safe visit protocol. She had been missing face-to-face contact with her dad Jack, a resident at the Poole dementia care home The Aldbury, 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."

Helen says The Aldbury team are doing a 'fantastic job', adding: "I have total reassurance. When it's my turn, I'll be putting my name down for Colten Care. 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."

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Joanne making colourful bird houses for the garden.

