

## Additional information about care homes

### What is a care home?

People who need extra support in their daily lives might choose to live in a care home. Here they will receive care, accommodation and support. A range of different people live in care homes, including people who have had accidents, have health problems and/or people with additional needs. In this project we are specifically focusing on care homes for older people (usually defined as 65+).

Again, there will be variation as to why an older person might live in a care home – they might still be quite independent, but require some extra support with daily tasks such as personal care and cooking, or they might have much more complex health needs, including those that require 24-hour nursing care. Approximately 70% of people living in care homes are living with a form of dementia.

It's important to remember that, for someone living in a care home, the care home should be viewed and treated as their home.

### Types of care home

#### *Residential care homes*

Residential homes provide 24-hour care and support. People are looked after according to their needs, enabling them to keep living full and meaningful lives. Each person will have their own bedroom in the care home and there are communal areas, for example a lounge, where people can interact and spend time together. Sometimes people may take temporary respite in a care home to recover from illness or injury. Others live there permanently.

#### *Nursing homes*

Nursing homes are very similar to residential care homes, but they also have at least one qualified nurse on site at all times to provide nursing care. People living in nursing homes usually have more complex health needs for example specific conditions or disabilities and need the added nursing support.

#### *Specialist care homes, e.g. dementia*

Some homes provide specialist care, where staff are trained to care for people with a specific medical condition. This often includes caring for people living with dementia and means that staff are more experienced in dementia care.

All care homes are inspected and regulated by the Care Quality Commission, often referred to as CQC.

### What are people who live in a care home called?

This term varies between care homes. Some care homes refer to the people who live in them as 'residents'. Others just refer to them as 'people', reinforcing that people living in care homes are no different to anyone else

### Who works in a care home?

A range of different people work in care homes, supporting the people that live there. The career of caring can be unfairly seen as an unskilled and undesirable role - in reality, care staff are highly skilled and compassionate and have great expertise in caring for the physical, mental and wellbeing needs of older people, both through training and through experience.

Week 4 of our challenge will focus on the role of care home staff in more detail.

## Perception of care homes

Perception and understanding of care homes can vary. This is often influenced by how much experience a person has with care homes, and the kinds of experiences they've had. Cultural background can also play a role – for example some cultures may put more emphasis on the importance of caring for older relatives at home.

For many people, care homes are still places of mystery where people are unsure what happens within them. Stereotyping of older people, ageism and negative media reports have in some cases contributed to a perception of care homes as restrictive places that are not a positive option for older people. However, this perception can often be based on misinformation and pre-existing prejudices.

Care homes are places where people live, and so like other types of 'homes', they have the potential to be bustling, lively places that are vibrant and have an energy, particularly when they are well supported by their community. They can be places of joy, engagement, laughter, love and tenderness. For many, they offer a level of care, safety, reassurance and interaction that they may not get elsewhere.

## COVID-19

Care homes across the world have been under extreme pressures to protect and shield older people living in their services through the pandemic. Staff have gone to huge lengths to keep people supported and safe. Astonishing sacrifices have been made. Staff have taken on extra hours and extra roles, often with limited PPE. Some left their own families to take up residence in the care home, to help minimise the risk of spreading the virus.

Care homes still continue to be impacted by COVID-19, but arguably after so long in isolation, away from relatives, visitors and their local communities, there is no better time to be reaching out to care homes and showing recognition and support.

## Sources of information:

- My Home Life England - <https://myhomelife.org.uk>
- The Care Quality Commission - <https://www.cqc.org.uk>
- Social Care Institute for Excellence - <https://www.scie.org.uk>
- Skills for Care - <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk>
- The National Care Forum - <https://www.nationalcareforum.org.uk>
- Care England - <https://www.careengland.org.uk>
- The National Activity Provider Association - <https://napa-activities.co.uk/>
- Alzheimer's Society - <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk>
- Dementia Friends - <https://www.dementiafriends.org.uk>
- Age UK - <https://www.ageuk.org.uk>
- Find your local care homes with this website - <https://www.carehome.co.uk> (this will form part of an activity later on)