

HOW CARE HOMES SUPPORT OLDER PEOPLE TO THRIVE

My Home Life England has conducted one of the largest research studies on older people's experiences of living in residential care.

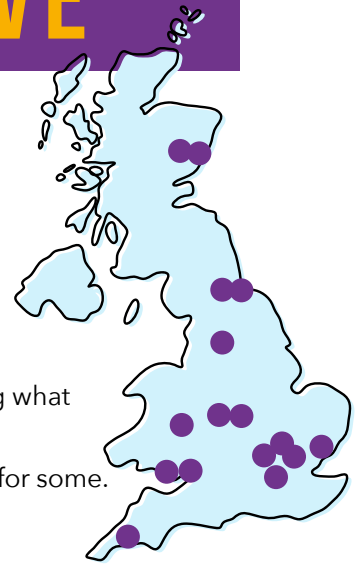
We spoke to 125 people across 16 care homes in England, Scotland and Wales.

We heard the stories of **older people**, as well as **families** and **care teams**.

We wanted to find out what the experiences were of living in residential care, including what mattered to older people.

We found that, whilst care homes may not be right for everyone, they can be everything for some.

Our research reveals **six key ways** that older people can **thrive** in a care home, if the conditions are right.



THRIVE RELATIONALLY

Being around others was a lifeline for many older people, who had felt isolated living on their own. Many had formed friendships with others and relationships with their care team.

Moving to a care home had also helped restore strained family relationships. Families felt welcomed, reassured, and able to stay actively involved in their older relative's life.

"The enjoyment of saying, 'Good morning,' 'good morning,' 'good morning,' 'good morning.' [*Imitating different voices*] ...I think a feeling of that you are part of a community. And things go wrong, things go right. Rally round."

Tom, aged 92



THRIVE ACTIVELY

Whilst living at home, some older people had not been able to do the things they enjoyed.

Care home activities and connections with the community enriched lives and helped older people to find purpose and feel valued.

"Instead of being miserable at home and nothing to do, ...plenty of things to do here... Occupy my mind."

Wally, aged 93



THRIVE INCLUSIVELY

Care homes can be inclusive environments where diversity is valued and respected.

We heard examples of older people being supported to embrace their faith, culture, ethnicity, sexuality and gender identity. This also helped families feel confident their loved one would be well-supported.

"We have made an environment where somebody feels so safe that at age 82... he's been able to come out [as gay]... If this environment is safe enough that somebody feels that they can do that, this environment is correct."

Jay, care home manager



THRIVE SECURELY

Before moving into a care home, some of the older people we spoke to were living difficult lives, experiencing poor housing, insecurity and even violence. Others felt anxious about being alone in their own homes, especially at night.

Care homes can offer the reassurance and safety that some older people might need, and also alleviate the strain and worry for families.

"I've been here a year now... So, this is my home. [Crying]... When I get into that bed at night, I know I'm safe. And I know if I'm not well someone will come in. It's a lovely feeling... And just contentment, really. And they're so kind."

Irene, aged 81



THRIVE WITH DIGNITY

Many older people found it increasing difficult to keep on top of household chores such as laundry before they moved to a care home.

They really valued that these things were now taken care of.

Others had previously struggled with personal care, but now had support from care staff with things like bathing and using the toilet.

"The carers are a wonderful bunch. And you can see how dependent I am on them... unfortunately, I have to wear pads. So, they're a big part of me wearing pads. I hoped I would never have to... so I am very, very dependent on the carers, who, here, I must say do a wonderful job."

Fifi, age 84



THRIVE HEALTHILY

Care homes support with healthcare, including managing medications and noticing when things aren't right.

Through care teams recognising changes and responding quickly, many older people felt that their health had improved since moving in.

They also put this down to regular mealtimes and good quality food.

"When I was at home, when I was feeling really bad with shortness of breath and feeling weak, I had to get myself something to eat. It used to take me an hour and a half to get a cup of tea and I lived for a fortnight on brown bread, Marmite and oranges... I was lacking good food."

Suzanne, age 98

We've shown that, although there can be challenges to living in a care home, when the conditions are right, residential care can support older people to really thrive.



To see more information and the full report, please visit: myhomelife.org.uk/thriving or scan the QR code.