

Study of care home residents' and relatives' expectations and experiences



WHAT RESIDENTS TOLD RESEARCHERS ABOUT CARE

Care home residents who took part in a study by the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) at the University of Kent believe their experience of living in a care home has been better than they expected when they first moved in. Most of the residents, aged mainly in their 80s and 90s, told researchers that:

They have **more say and control** over their lives in the home than they had expected.

Their **quality of life has improved** compared with how it was before they moved in.

Their **health and other needs are being better met** now than before they moved in.

They are **socialising in their care home** as much as, or more than, they used to.

They **see their friends and relatives** as much as, or more than, they used to.

Their **experience of being in a care home** has been good.

They have **a good impression of care homes** in general.

WHAT RELATIVES SAID

Relatives of residents who were interviewed for the study were also generally positive about the experience. For example, all of them without exception said that staff were meeting their loved one's health and other needs, the care home was comfortable and warm, the resident was clean and appropriately dressed, the care home felt secure, and staff were caring and sensitive.

WHY, WHEN AND HOW THE STUDY WAS CARRIED OUT

Although much is said and written about care homes in official reports and the news media, there has previously been relatively little independent research into the views of the people who live there.

The PSSRU study, commissioned by the Registered Nursing Home Association (RNHA), was undertaken between March 2008 and April 2009 to find out what the residents themselves think about their experience of life in a care home, and whether it fulfils, exceeds or falls below their original expectations. Funding for the project was provided both by the RNHA and the Department of Health.

The 69 residents who took part were living at the time in 46 randomly selected care homes (some with nursing and some providing personal care only) across six different regions of the country.

The mix of homes included some with three, two, one and zero star ratings. In other words, they were as representative as possible of the range of care homes in England.

Each resident was interviewed twice. The first interview took place just after they had moved into their care home. The second occurred at least three months later, when they had been able to form a view about whether the actual experience of living there was better or worse than they had expected.

On average, the residents interviewed were assessed as having lower than usual levels of dependency. For this reason, relatives of some of the much more dependent residents were also interviewed in order to ensure that those with greater health and social needs were represented in the study.

THE CARE HOME RESIDENTS WHO TOOK PART

Of the 69 residents who took part in the study:

83%

were over 80 years old.

33%

were over 90 years old.

77%

were female.



23% were male.

55%

had been living alone before moving to the care home.

72%

said they had not moved far from their original accommodation.

74%

of those who lived in their own homes before moving had been receiving informal help and support - principally from outside the household.

58%

of those who lived in their own homes before moving had been receiving formal care services.

45%

were now in receipt of public funding for all or some of their care home costs.

THE DECISION TO MOVE: Who took it, who influenced it

The vast majority of care home residents had either made the decision to move there entirely on their own or had done so with the help and support of their family, friends and professionals.

42%

said the decision to move into a care home was entirely theirs.

39%

said the decision to move into a care home was partly theirs.

REASONS FOR THE MOVE: Why residents felt they needed to go into a care home

Health and mobility problems were the main reasons why people decided they needed to move into a care home.

79%

said that deteriorating physical health was the most important reason behind their decision to move into a care home.

60%

reported difficulties with their mobility, coping with household tasks and the upkeep of the house.

33%

said a family carer could no longer look after them.

28%

cited a lack of family or friends nearby.

20%

said their home needed adaptations or was too far from shops and amenities.

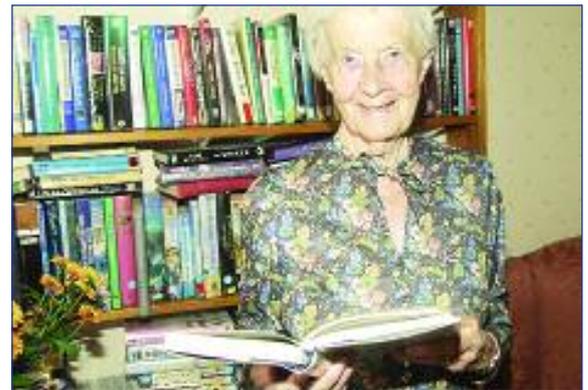
20%

said they no longer wanted to live alone.

Of the 69 residents, 28 had moved into nursing homes (often now referred to as 'care homes with nursing') and 41 had moved into care homes providing personal care only.

RESIDENTS SAID THEY HAD A GREATER SAY THAN EXPECTED IN HOW THEY LIVED THEIR LIVES

Without exception across many different aspects of how they lived their lives in their care home, residents had more say (in some cases significantly much more) than they had initially expected.



Visitors

Expectation 74% expected a say in when they had visitors.

Experience 94% received visitors when they wanted.

Ability to come and go

Expectation 64% expected a say in coming and going.

Experience 74% came and went as they wanted.

Being alone

Expectation 62% expected a say in when they could be alone.

Experience 100% were alone when they wanted.

Getting up in the morning

Expectation 43% expected a say in when they got up.

Experience 84% got up when they wanted.

Going to bed at night

Expectation 58% expected to go to bed when they wanted.

Experience 96% went to bed when they wanted.

Getting a hot drink

Expectation 55% expected a say in when they had a hot drink.

Experience 80% had a hot drink when they wanted.

Arranging their own room

Expectation 51% expected a say in how they arranged their room.

Experience 86% had a say in arranging their room.

Help from staff

Expectation 49% expected a say in when they had help from staff.

Experience 82% had help from staff when they wanted.

Choice of meals

Expectation 41% expected a choice of meals.

Experience 84% had a choice of meals.

Locking their room

Expectation 29% expected to be able to lock their room on leaving it.

Experience 60% were able to lock their room on leaving it.

RESIDENTS SAID THEIR CARE HOMES WERE MEETING THEIR HEALTH AND OTHER NEEDS

Residents' expectations of how their health and other needs would be met were generally exceeded, even though their initial expectations had been fairly high.

Health and other needs



Comfort and warmth



Cleanliness and attire



Feeling safe



Caring staff



RESIDENTS SAID THEIR SOCIAL LIFE IN THEIR CARE HOME WAS BETTER THAN, OR AT LEAST AS GOOD AS, IT USED TO BE

The follow-up survey explored how moving into a care home had affected residents' social life.

Ability to socialise

78%

said that, since moving into a care home, they socialised more than they had before or that there was no difference in their social life.

Taking part in activities

66%



said they took part in activities in the home and felt that friendship and company were the main benefits they gained from doing this.

Seeing family and friends

82%

said that since moving into a care home they saw their family as much as, or more than, they had done before.

Making new friends

70%

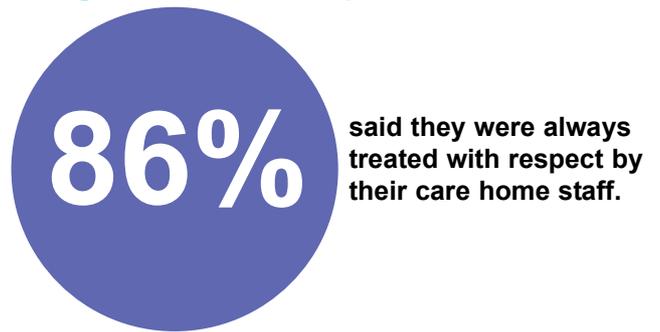
said they had made two or more friends since moving into their care home.

RESIDENTS SAID THEY WERE GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH THE HELP THEY RECEIVED FROM STAFF

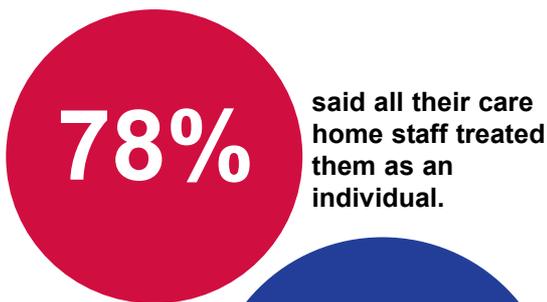
Satisfaction with help from staff



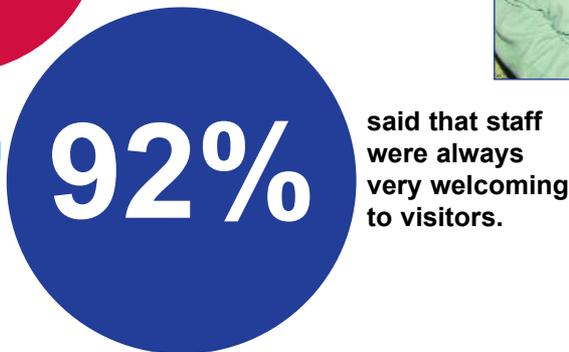
Being treated with respect



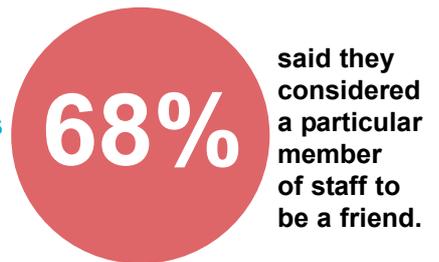
Treated as individuals



Welcoming to visitors



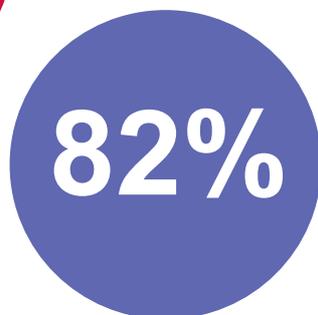
Staff seen as friends



IMPROVEMENTS IN QUALITY OF LIFE



In the follow-up survey this figure rose to...

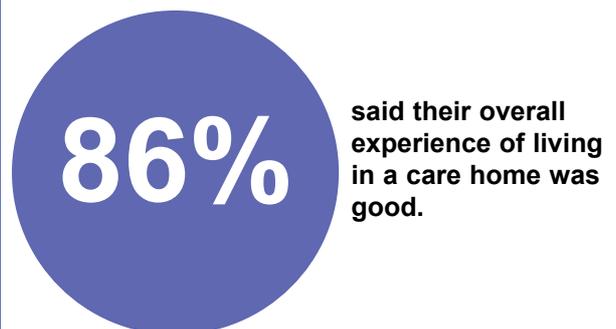


26%

48% The proportion of residents who felt their quality of life was 'very good' rose from 26% before their move to a care home to 48% after they had settled in.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF RESIDENTS SAID THEIR EXPERIENCE OF LIVING IN A CARE HOME WAS GOOD

The follow-up study found that residents were generally satisfied with the care home they were now living in. 86% said their experience of living in their care home was good, with 14% saying it was both good and bad. None thought their care home was bad.



14% said their overall experience of living in a care home was good and bad.

RESIDENTS' IMPRESSIONS OF CARE HOMES IN GENERAL (INITIAL STUDY)

Good

39%

of those who had not previously lived in a care home thought that care homes in general were good.

Good and bad

9%

of those who had not previously lived in a care home thought that care homes in general were good and bad.

Bad

21%

of those who had not previously lived in a care home thought that care homes in general were bad.

Not sure or don't know

30%

of those who had not previously lived in a care home were not sure or answered 'don't know'.

RESIDENTS' IMPRESSIONS OF CARE HOMES IN GENERAL (FOLLOW-UP STUDY)

Good

84%

of residents who had lived in their care home for more than three months now thought that care homes in general were good.

Good and bad

12%

of residents who had lived in their care home for more than three months now thought that care homes in general were good and bad.

Bad

0%

now thought that care homes in general were bad.

Not sure or don't know

4%

RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF NEGLECT AND MISTREATMENT

In the initial study, 28% thought that generally speaking care home residents were likely to be neglected. In the follow-up study, 24% held this view. However, in the follow-up study more residents (24%) than in the initial study (12%) thought that care homes residents in general were likely to be mistreated or abused. Given that residents were generally satisfied or very satisfied with their own care homes, there is no clear explanation for this change in beliefs about care homes in general.

RELATIVES WERE GENERALLY AS POSITIVE AS THE RESIDENTS THEMSELVES ABOUT THE CARE HOME EXPERIENCE

Thirty-three of the newly arriving residents in the care homes that had been selected for the study were assessed as being too frail and dependent to be interviewed by researchers. Instead, interviews were conducted by telephone with one of their relatives. Overall, relatives' expectations had been higher than those of residents regarding the amount of say the residents would have about their lives in the care home; the extent to which their needs would be met; and the likely degree of comfort they would enjoy. When interviewed three or more months after the resident had moved into a care home...

100%

of relatives said that staff were meeting their loved one's health and other needs; the care home was comfortable and warm; the resident was clean and appropriately dressed; the care home felt secure; and staff were caring and sensitive.

RELATIVES' IMPRESSIONS OF CARE HOMES IN GENERAL

92%

of the relatives who were followed up thought that care homes in general were good, whilst only 17% of this group had thought so initially.