

Identifying, involving and supporting unpaid carers who have a relative or friend in a care home

Luminus was asked to investigate the extent to which care homes understand the role and importance of unpaid carers, including such aspects as involvement in care planning and recognising signs of deterioration in a resident. The study investigated the experiences of unpaid carers whose relatives and friends live in residential and nursing care homes, including dementia specialist care facilities.

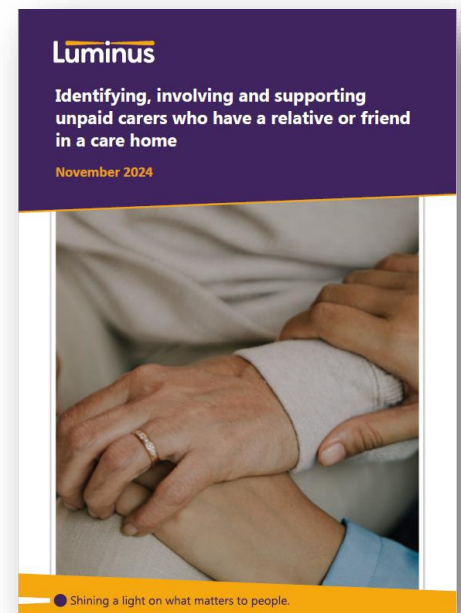
Our approach

Unpaid carers were asked about the following;

- How can the role of unpaid carers contribute to better outcomes for family and friends in care homes?
- In what ways (if any) are care homes engaging with unpaid carers?
- What does a good collaboration between an unpaid carer and a care home look like?

The experiential data from unpaid carers was gathered through;

- An online survey, also supplied to care homes in print - 40 complete responses
- In-depth interviews - 5 case studies.
- A discussion group with 7 unpaid carers at a combined residential and nursing care home.



Themes that are important to unpaid carers

- Regular communication
- Feeling that they are part of the caring team
- Access to care home management when issues arise
- Involvement in care planning
- Involvement in activities and outings
- Meeting personal preferences.

"The latest you can visit is 4pm and visiting slots have to be pre-booked. Working from 9-5 on weekdays this is not flexible. I am given the impression that the nursing home is run for their convenience and not for the convenience of the residents and their family."

Recommendations

- The unpaid carer should be involved as far as is possible during the transition of a person from their home or hospital into a care home.
- Develop mechanisms for unpaid carers to work in partnership with staff to manage behaviours.
- Support unpaid carers to continue caring in the way they want to.
- Communication between the care home and an unpaid carer should be regular and provide enough information for the carer to make good decisions.
- Consideration should be given about how unpaid carers could access daily information remotely without needing to request it.
- Unpaid carers should be invited to regular care planning meetings and be kept informed of changes to care.
- Provide more information about financial arrangements.
- Signpost unpaid carers to other areas of support such as mental health and wellbeing resources.
- Ensure a varied selection of activities and outings are organised for residents and that all are given the opportunity to take part.
- Regarding dementia care, consistency of care staff who can develop a relationship with the resident is important to provide informed care and support unpaid carers.

Impact & influence

After the Giving Carers a Voice report about unpaid carers with their cared for in care homes Surrey County Council are now developing a toolkit for good practice in care homes to support carers and their families.

You can read the full report here: [Care-homes-Identifying-involving-and-supporting-unpaid-carers-November-2024.pdf](#)

"It is not like them and us. It is like we are part of their family."

