

# HomeFirst patients and carers research

May 2026

## Background

Surrey Downs Health and Care (SDHC) commissioned Luminus to explore the experiences of unpaid carers supporting patients using HomeFirst services, including Virtual Ward, Recovery at Home and Urgent Community Response, all providing hospital level care in people's homes. The study aimed to understand carers' experiences, identify opportunities to improve support and involvement, and make recommendations for future service development.



## Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was used for this study, including:

- A review of relevant literature covering similar services in England.
- Interviews with carers, stakeholders and voluntary representatives.
- An online survey and collaborative workshop.

Progress was overseen by a multidisciplinary steering group and findings were disseminated in a comprehensive report, at 'The Big Tent' event in Surrey Downs, and presented to the frailty and discharge development group.

## Findings

Carers and patients valued being cared for at home rather than in hospital. Home based care was often viewed as more personal and less distressing than hospital care, particularly for people living with dementia. However, carers also described the significant emotional, physical and practical pressures associated with caring at home. The findings highlight the importance of recognising carers as equal partners in care, involving them in decisions and proactively supporting their wellbeing.

"Luminus delivered a comprehensive and insightful piece of work that has provided us with a much deeper understanding of the experiences of unpaid carers supporting patients using the Surrey Downs HomeFirst service. The findings highlighted both the strengths of the HomeFirst model and the challenges faced by carers, helping us identify important gaps in support and opportunities for service improvement. The recommendations are practical, evidence-based, and will play a valuable role in shaping future developments. We particularly valued Luminus's commitment to ensuring carers' voices were at the centre of the project and translated into meaningful action."

**HomeFirst Delivery Lead, Surrey Downs Health & Care Partnership**