

Specialist nursing support for unpaid carers of people with dementia: a mixed-methods feasibility study

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of research and contains language that may offend some readers.

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Plain English summary

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Unpaid carers are the most valuable resource we have in dementia care, but little is known about how best to support them. Different types of services are available across England. Admiral Nursing is the only specialist nursing dementia service with a focus on supporting carers.

Our research asked:

- What are the costs and benefits of specialist nursing for carers of people with dementia?

To answer this, we collected new information from carers and professionals and looked at existing information collected by Admiral Nurses.

From the existing data, we saw that Admiral Nurses are successfully targeting the most complex cases and, on average, the needs of carers being supported by Admiral Nurses reduced over time. However, we did not have the right information to link this reduction to the activity of the Admiral Nurses.

In interviews and focus groups with 35 carers of people with dementia, we heard how the support they get can influence their health, quality of life and confidence in caring. Having contact with a professional who understands dementia *and* has the time to get to know their situation could improve carers' confidence and help them to feel supported. In-depth interviews with 20 professionals found that the wider impact of services such as Admiral Nursing is not well understood.

Our survey, completed by 346 current carers of people with dementia, showed the heavy burden that carers carry, the low levels of support that they get from health and social care services and the financial impact of paying for services. Carers who used Admiral Nursing were older and more heavily involved in caring than other carers. Despite this, their quality of life may be better than that of carers without Admiral Nursing support, although the costs of the other services they use are similar.

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