

Care home residents' quality of life and its association with CQC ratings and workforce issues: the MiCareHQ mixed-methods study

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

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Plain English summary

The MiCareHQ mixed-methods study

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Plain English summary

This study was about care home quality and how we can improve the quality of life of residents. We looked at quality in different ways.

We looked at how we might measure residents' health- and care-related quality of life. Normally, we would ask people to tell us how they feel about their health or about the care they receive, but in care homes many people cannot do this because they are living with dementia. In this study we developed and tested new ways of measuring pain, anxiety and low mood in care home residents by observing everyday life, as well as talking to residents, staff and family. This worked well and is an approach that others could use in future research.

In England, the Care Quality Commission inspects care homes and gives them quality ratings of 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. We found that residents have better quality of life in care homes rated 'good' or 'outstanding'. Residents who need the most help benefit the most from good-quality homes, particularly with respect to social participation and feeling in control of their daily lives.

Using a large national data set, we were also able to look at how staff and working conditions affected Care Quality Commission quality ratings. We found a positive relationship between care quality and both staff wages and staff being trained in dementia and person-centred care. Homes that were short-staffed or struggled to keep staff tended to be of poorer quality.

Our research shows that care home quality is important to the quality of life of residents, especially those who have higher care and support needs. One way in which care homes can improve care quality, and, therefore, improve residents' quality of life, is by investing in their care workforce through leadership, training, and better pay and working conditions.

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