

Presentation 1 – Keeping connected: carer experiences of staying in touch with family and friends living in care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic

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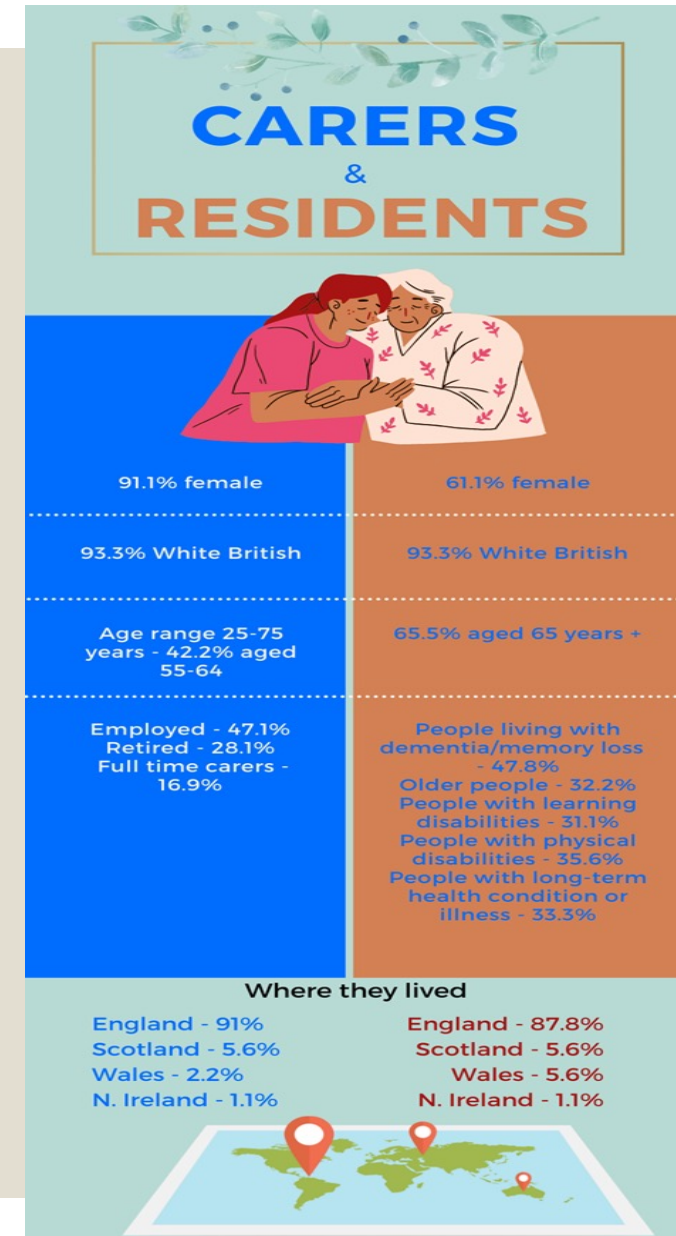
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Keeping connected

- Online survey conducted July – December 2020
- 90 participants in the UK
- Family/friends of care home residents including older people; people with learning disabilities; people living with dementia
- Multiple relationships represented; spouses; adult children; parents; siblings; friends
- Survey focused on:
 - *Experiences pre and during pandemic*
 - *How family/friends stayed in touch*
 - *Positive experiences & challenges*
 - *Residents' support needs and support delivered*



Key messages

- Carers tried many different methods of staying in touch. All of these methods work well for some, and not for others. Individualised and personalised ways of staying in touch are required.
- Staff support to stay in touch is critical for many care home residents. This includes support with setting up calls, reading/writing cards, using tech, *and* conversing:

Staff teams put the phone in my brother's view and we have a conversation which staff team answer for my brother (in a respectful way which supports him to be involved without verbally answering)

- So, access to methods of staying in touch are important – but must be accompanied by support to use for many.

WHAT WE FOUND OUT

Our main findings



<h4>KEEPING IN TOUCH BEFORE COVID-19</h4> <p>Visits were really important and carers helped in many ways during visits. Feeling welcome was important.</p>	<h4>KEEPING IN TOUCH DURING COVID-19</h4> <p>Carers tried different ways to stay in touch - including technologies, posting gifts and socially distanced visits. All worked well for some people but not for others. For some people only visits worked.</p>
<h4>SUPPORT TO KEEP IN TOUCH</h4> <p>Most care home residents needed support from care staff to help them stay in touch. The amount of support varied.</p>	<h4>THE COSTS OF SEPARATION</h4> <p>Being apart was painful for carers & residents. Carers felt sadness, distress & guilt. They worried about the impact of separation on their relative/friends.</p>
<h4>HOW DO I KNOW THEY ARE SAFE?</h4> <p>Not being able to see residents worried carers, and they could not always spend time together privately.</p>	<h4>RELATIONSHIPS</h4> <p>The relationship between carers and the care home is really important in helping carers stay in touch.</p>

DIFFERENT WAYS OF STAYING IN TOUCH WORK FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE



A personalised approach is needed to meet individual needs and preferences. And good staff support is essential.

Key learning and further recommendations

- Care homes require resources and infrastructure to support residents to stay in touch – including staff trained, skilled and confident to use technology and other methods
- Families/friends may also need support to access and use new methods of staying in touch – many are skilled but this should not be assumed.
- Supporting contact (in person and remotely) should be seen as a key care home role, responsibility and priority.
- Technology works well for some – but more familiar methods should not be overlooked.
- Security and safeguarding are important areas for consideration - balancing privacy and security with online access.



Long-term implications

- Difficulties staying in touch go beyond COVID
- Carers living at a distance need effective ways to 'keep connected' between visits.
- Care homes need the infrastructure, time, resources and *willingness* to support contact. A key care role.
- *Report of findings available from c.white@hull.ac.uk*



CARING FROM A DISTANCE:
USING NEW AND FAMILIAR
WAYS OF KEEPING IN TOUCH
WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS
IN CARE HOMES DURING
COVID-19

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