

Care Home Sweet Home: CARE HOME OF THE FUTURE

International Longevity Centre-United Kingdom (July 2012),
by **Mark Mason** (Accessed: 1 March 2013)

Read the full article at ilcuk.org.uk

The **International Longevity Centre-United Kingdom (ILC-UK)** is an independent, non-partisan think-tank dedicated to addressing issues on longevity, ageing and population change in the UK. This report, based on findings from their “Futures Workshop” (May 2012), highlights trends and challenges which may impact UK residential care homes over the next 20 years. It also outlines some of the recommendations made by 40 practitioners and policy makers with expertise in the UK care home sector.

Issues and Recommendations

Staffing

Areas include: Difficulties in recruitment (due possibly to negative perceptions of care homes); high turnover rates; and ageing among qualified nursing staff

Recommendations: Tap on older workers and parents re-entering the workforce; create a positive care working environment¹ and more supportive student clinical placements to foster positive experiences working with older clients; and develop recognised career paths that do not necessarily involve nursing qualifications.

Volunteers

Areas include: Difficulties in volunteer recruitment and the need to create attractive environments that retain them

Recommendations: Create awareness/generate a good reputation about care homes by highlighting their services to the community; promote homes as learning environments for students from various disciplines; “time-bank” (reciprocal service exchange) volunteer hours; and create formalised agreements and reimbursements (i.e., transport, etc.) for volunteer hours rendered.

Technology

Areas include: Finding opportunities for technology to supplement (not replace) care/improve residents' lives; its cost-effectiveness; and ethical issues on privacy

Recommendations: Use technology to supplement care (i.e., offer quick references to patients' likes/dislikes, as medication reminders, etc.) and track patients' movements (i.e., through global positioning system [GPS], fall detectors, bed monitors, etc.).

Resident Care

Areas include: Catering better to the needs of the next generation of care home residents who are likely to have different demands and requirements (i.e., more demanding, informed and technologically literate)

Recommendations: Care approaches should be based on individualised need² with technology augmenting care (i.e., telemedicine, shared electronic medical records, etc.). In tandem with this, will be the need to develop frameworks that ensure residents have good control over their medical privacy.

Environment

Areas include: Finding opportunities to better environmental sustainability through the use of more energy efficient technology

Recommendations: Use energy-saving/efficient options such as solar panels, lighting options (i.e., Light-emitting Diode [LED] lighting); and “brown water” (i.e., harvesting rainwater to flush toilets, etc.).

Wider Care Home Environment

Areas include: Raising the profile of care homes and integrating them into the community

Recommendations: Position care homes as “community hubs” which provide services beyond those for its residents. This includes spaces/services such as health facilities, healthy eating outlets, amenities (e.g., meeting rooms, cafes, swimming pools, gyms, etc.), and open spaces (e.g., walking areas and gardens, etc.) to normalise care environments.

Conclusion

Care homes need to be flexible and responsive to meet the needs of the future. This will require looking beyond physical buildings to include models of care with common unifying features among an array of care models. The driving forces for these endeavours will be the needs of residents and will increasingly use technology to enhance care provision.

References:

¹See Cardiff University's “Positive Working Environment” initiative – cardiff.ac.uk/humrs/pwe

²See “My Home Life” initiative, which celebrates best practices being developed in the UK – myhomelife.org.uk

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