

# CLAHRC BITE

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A bite-sized summary of CLAHRC research: Care Homes as partners in care



**“It takes time for the NHS and care homes to learn how to work together, and services designed solely to reduce demand on NHS resources are not sustainable”**

## What?

CLAHRC EoE is funding and supporting research into care homes, including research demonstrating the importance of working with care homes as partners.

This has informed the concept, and successful creation of a national care home research collaboration, led by Professor Claire Goodman, Deputy Director of CLAHRC EoE.

## Recommendations:

- Researchers and commissioners should use the current evidence to inform how they commission services and plan research
- Care homes and the NHS should work together and have shared aims
- A joined up approach across the whole system is needed
- All staff need an understanding, and access to expertise in dementia care

**Background:** Care homes provide the majority of long-term healthcare to older people. They rely on primary care for access to medical support and referral to specialist services, yet studies consistently show that healthcare provision for care home residents across England is unpredictable and uneven. For the NHS, care homes are a conundrum; they provide care that used to be supplied by the health service, but are often perceived as a poor alternative that generates avoidable demand on hospitals. In the [Optimal Study](#), researchers from seven UK universities tracked the care received by 232 care home residents over 12 months. The evidence of what works, when and in what circumstances was reviewed, and suggestions for effective collaboration were identified.

**Results:** Findings revealed that when extra NHS provision was offered, either on a resident-by-resident basis or focused on a single issue – such as prevention of hospital admission – there could be unintended consequences. It could lead to a sense of “them and us” and mutual recrimination if the desired improvements in healthcare were not achieved. In contrast, if the focus was on the care home as the provider of care to frail older people, there were more opportunities for NHS staff to discuss and plan with care home staff how additional investment or training from the NHS could improve residents’ healthcare. This approach clearly supported and sustained working relationships between the NHS and care homes.

**Conclusions:** When NHS commissioners and healthcare professionals see care homes as an integral part of the health and social care system, and take the time to learn how to work together, there is a marked improvement in appropriate access to, and use of, healthcare.

## References

1. Goodman C, Davies SL, Gordon AL, Dening T, Gage H, Meyer J, et al. Optimal NHS service delivery to care homes: a realist evaluation of the features and mechanisms that support effective working for the continuing care of older people in residential settings. *Health Serv Deliv Res* 2017;5(29). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK459420/>; doi: 10.3310/hsdr05290
2. The Guardian. (2018). The NHS should see care homes as partners, not problems | Claire Goodman. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2017/sep/18/nhs-care-homes-partners-not-problems>

## What is NIHR CLAHRC East of England?

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) East of England is a five year programme of applied health and social care research which focuses on the needs of people with complex problems, often vulnerable, when multiple agencies are involved in their care: young people, frail older people, those with dementia, learning disabilities, acquired brain injuries or mental ill health.

The CLAHRC East of England collaboration encompasses some thirty-six organisations, with research hubs in the Universities of Cambridge, Hertfordshire and East Anglia working closely with individuals and organisations involved in the whole care pathway.

Service users and carers are at the heart of what we do, in parallel with an ambitious public health research programme.

Co-production and collaboration at all stages of the research process are fundamental to making a positive impact through applied health research.

To find out more:



<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK459420/>

<https://bit.ly/2O0xHD2>

<https://bit.ly/2Qb5dDP>

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