

## Evidence Briefing #12a

### The impact on carers when the person they care for moves to a care home



#### The Issue

Carers often experience difficulties when someone they have been caring for moves into a care home, even when they believe such a move is unavoidable.

#### What we wanted to find out

How are carers affected when the person they care for moves to a care home, and how might practitioners best support them during the transition?

#### What we did

We searched for relevant reviews and research studies on the experiences of carers when the person they care for moves to a care home, and what might help those who find this difficult. We also included evidence from two reviews<sup>1,2</sup> that we identified when preparing the briefing on the impact of a move to residential care for older people themselves.

We assessed the quality of the evidence using CASP<sup>3</sup> tools.

#### What we found

We found three systematic reviews,<sup>1,2,4</sup> a literature review<sup>5</sup> (published in 2020, 2015, 2017 and 2013 respectively) and a research study<sup>6</sup> (published in 2022). All were concerned with those caring for people with dementia.

The 2013 literature review<sup>5</sup> was based on a systematic search, but the authors did not explain how they synthesized the 49 papers they included. The three systematic reviews synthesized the evidence about the causes of nursing and care home placement,<sup>1</sup> the experiences of carers following permanent admission to residential care<sup>2</sup>, and the factors influencing their transition experience.<sup>4</sup> The study<sup>6</sup> examined caregivers' feelings of guilt, and how this was influenced by conflicts with care staff and satisfaction with the care provided.

#### What the evidence suggests

##### Possible impacts on carers

When a move to a care home has not been anticipated, such as moving to a home directly from hospital, carers experience high levels of stress and feelings of powerlessness<sup>6</sup>. When making decisions in such circumstances, carers may feel they have had little choice about when and whether such a move should take place, or to which home the older person should go.

When the person they care for moves to a care home in such circumstances, carers experience mixed feelings including loss, regret, sadness, guilt and a sense of failure, alongside relief.<sup>2,6</sup> They may seek validation of their decision and need support before, during and after the move.<sup>6</sup> Carers seek to maintain a continuity of caring relationship with the person and visit frequently to alleviate feelings of loneliness and a change of identity.

##### The experience of carers when the person has moved into a care home

When a person moves to a care home the role of the carer can change from one of assistant and supervisor to advocate for the quality of the life and identity of the person they care for.<sup>2</sup>

Carers' satisfaction with care, conflicts with staff and carer burden remain similar over time.<sup>5</sup> Levels of guilt may remain after the person has been resident for a number of years.

Conflicts with care home staff and carers feeling burdened are associated with higher levels of guilt, whereas higher satisfaction with care is associated with lower levels of guilt.

### Factors supporting carers

For carers of people with dementia, connection is important during the transition period to a care home. Preserving a caring role by sharing responsibility for caring can help to reduce stress and alleviate feelings of guilt.<sup>4</sup> Building familiarity with the home prior to the move date helps carers reduce their experience of loss of control.<sup>6</sup> Transition to a care home is easier for carers who consider the home welcoming, when there is good communication between the carer and the home, and when the carer is confident that the staff are able to meet the needs of the person.<sup>4</sup>

Connecting with family and friends has supported carers with the transition of the person they care for moving to a care home. Some consider this support only to be available short term as family and friends' interest in the carer's situation wanes. Carers have found it helpful to engage with others in the same situation as them, either informally or via support group.<sup>4</sup>

### Quality of the evidence

We are reasonably confident in the quality of the evidence. The systematic reviews assessed the quality of studies and compared data appropriately. Cited studies were all from developed countries, and only English language were included. The primary research study was undertaken with care homes in the Netherlands.

### For more information about this briefing, contact

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### References

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