



ARCBITE



Brokering Innovation Through Evidence

Impact of COVID-19 related social support service closures on the lives of people with dementia and unpaid carers: A qualitative study

Background

The global pandemic in 2020 caused by a coronavirus [Covid-19] resulted in temporary closures of a number of face-to-face support services for people living with dementia and their carers. In addition to lack of support services, such as day care centres, memory cafes, etc., people with dementia were advised by government and Public Health England to stay at home to protect them from the virus.

How did we recruit people?

We recruited people via social care and social support services mainly across the North West Coast of England, but also nationally via dementia support organisations. We provided information about the study in regular newsletters, social media channels, and directly contacted eligible participants over the telephone and discuss the study.

What was the aim of the project?

The aim of this longitudinal study was to explore the effects of coronavirus related closures of social care services on the lives of older people, people with dementia and unpaid carers.

What did we do?

Contact details of interested unpaid carers and people living with dementia were forwarded to a researcher, who then contacted the participants.

We completed 50 semi-structured telephone interviews with 42 unpaid carers and 8 with people living with dementia during April 2020 .

The telephone interviews asked about services that were accessed before and after the public health advice on lockdown and questions relating to resilience, health and mental well-being.



What we found and what does this mean?

For the 50 people we interviewed we found that there was a significant reduction in social support service usage since the outbreak.

There were three common themes from the analysis, and these were:

- 1) Loss of control
- 2) Uncertainty
- 3) Adapting and having to adapt to the new normal.

Loss of control was reported as drastic changes due to the pandemic, faster deterioration of the person with dementia and concerns about how to handle care and paid carers. Uncertainty was reported as how life and care will be when this virus has gone and we are back to 'normal', uncertainty about public health restrictions and their loved one unable to understand them and concerned about people living in care homes and the impact of their well-being, activity and social engagement levels.

Adapting and having to adapt to the new normal was reported as having to accept the current situation with limited social and remote support.

What does this mean?

This study has highlighted significant negative impacts that closures are having on the lives of those affected by dementia. Therefore, policy guidance needs to address how activities and day care could potentially be conducted and provided in a social-distance safe environment, which might involve restricting the number of people who can access a service at any given time. Given that public health measures will stay in place in some form or another for some time, we recommend policy makers adapt social support services to refine the offer to boost accessibility of care and support

Clarissa Giebel, Jacqueline Cannon, Kerry Hanna, Sarah Butchard, Ruth Eley, Anna Gaughan, Aravind Komuravelli, Justine Shenton, Steve Callaghan, Hilary Tetlow, Stan Limbert, Rosie Whittington, Carol Rogers, Manoj Rajagopal, Kym Ward, Lisa Shaw, Rhiannon Corcoran, Kate Bennett & Mark Gabbay (2020) Impact of COVID-19 related social support service closures on people with dementia and unpaid carers: a qualitative study, Aging & Mental Health, DOI: 10.1080/13607863.2020.1822292

What is NIHR CLAHRC / ARC North West Coast?

The Applied Research Collaboration North West Coast (ARC NWC) superseded CLAHRC NWC in September 2019. It is a partnership between universities, NHS, public and local authorities. Its mission is to undertake applied research to improve public health, wellbeing, quality of care & reduce health inequalities across the North West Coast region.

<https://arc-nwc.nihr.ac.uk>
arcnwc@liverpool.ac.uk