



ARCBITE

Brokering Innovation Through Evidence



January 2021

COVID-19-related social support service closures and mental well-being in older adults and those affected by dementia: A UK longitudinal survey

Background

Covid-19 has impacted both on people living with dementia and the people who care for them. The biggest impacts have been on those who totally rely on their carers for support and the normal resources provided by Local Authorities, the NHS and Volunteer organisations such as the Brain Charity.

How did we involve people?

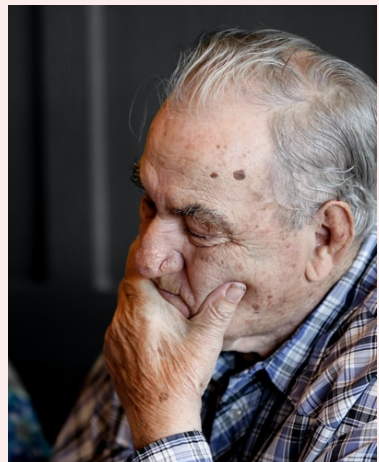
Unpaid carers, people living with dementia and older adults took part in a survey either by telephone or online. We asked how their social support usage was prior to Covid-19. They were also asked about their levels of depression, anxiety and mental wellbeing. 377 participants completed all 3 stages of the research in total.

What was the aim of the project?

To explore how social support service use by older adults, carers, and people living with dementia, and their mental wellbeing changed over the first few months since the pandemic outbreak.

What did we do?

We recruited participants across the UK. Those who participated were recruited from various sources such as social services, unpaid carers (both current and past) those who were aged 65+ could also take part. Others came from contact with support groups such as SURF (Liverpool Service User Reference Forum - a group of people who represent the views of people living with dementia, their carers & families across the City of Liverpool) and other similar groups.





What we found and what does this mean?

Access to social support services was severely effected. There was a difference in mental wellbeing across all groups, with additional support required to maintain better wellbeing across the groups as Covid-19 progressed.

Social support service usage dropped shortly after lockdown measures were imposed. Access to paid care was least affected by COVID-19. Cases of anxiety dropped significantly across the study period, whilst cases of depression rose. Well-being increased significantly for older adults and people living with dementia throughout the study.

What next / Conclusion

Access to social support services has been significantly affected by the pandemic, which is starting to recover slowly. With mental well-being differently affected across groups, support needs to be put in place to maintain better well-being across those vulnerable groups during the ongoing pandemic. While it appears that some services have started providing remote support, not everyone will be able to access these, leaving many people without much needed support.

Future research needs to assess how older adults and people affected by dementia are accessing social support services in the time of COVID-19, with clearer support for people to access any format of services – either face-to-face or remotely. Considering that the pandemic is going to continue for the foreseeable future, the mental health of older adults and those affected by dementia needs to be closely monitored, particularly when more stringent public health measures are put in place again.

Research in full

COVID-19-related social support service closures and mental well-being in older adults and those affected by dementia: A UK longitudinal survey, Published in BMJ open, January 2021

What is NIHR CLAHRC / ARC North West Coast?

The Applied Research Collaboration North West Coast (ARC NWC) superceded CLAHRC NWC in September 2019. It is a partnership between universities, NHS, public, etc.

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/>