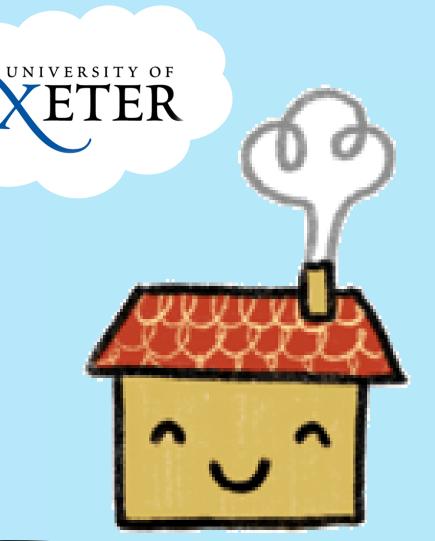
NIHR | Applied Research Collaboration South West Peninsula





The Exchange Collaboration:

A realist evaluation of a collaborative model to support research co-production in long-term care settings in England



C. Place, MSc1, J. Day, PhD1, K. Wilkinson, MSc1, I. Lang, PhD1, J. Thompson-Coon, PhD1, V. Goodwin, PhD1, K. Liabo, PhD1, C. Marriott1, C. Abel1, G. Coxon2 and G. Cox, MSc2





Background:

There are many gaps between researchers' activities and the needs of people working, living in and visiting care homes. The ExCHANGE Collaboration (The University of Exeter Care Homes Knowledge Collaboration) brings together researchers and care home stakeholders to improve mutual understanding of evidence-use in care homes and to generate research that directly addresses the needs of care home stakeholders.

Objectives:

We conducted an internal, realist-informed evaluation of the collaboration to understand where and how the project had done well (and where it had struggled) in meeting its aims.



Methods:

- ✓ Observation of events and activities.
- ✓ **Documentary analysis** of risk/issues logs, knowledge broker journal and other relevant project paperwork.
- ✓ Semi-structured interviews with care home providers, family members and researchers.
- ✓ Framework Method analysis, focusing on areas allowing us to develop a theory of how the collaboration could have or did achieve change.

Limitations:

- Limited resources of care home sector further restricted through pandemic.
- The reach and embeddedness of collaboration was restricted due to the pandemic. Although, online format enabled wider geographical reach.
- Issues in translating practice concerns into researchable questions.
- Long-term sustainability complicated without further funding.

"I think it felt very much like a team effort, I felt very listened to" "now if I'm looking at an issue in my rest home then I'm going to go and see what research has already been done"

- Care home provider

- Family member

Results:

Our collaboration developed the capacity of care home stakeholders to engage with research and enhanced researchers' understanding of care homes, by:

- the inclusion of diverse care home stakeholders (care home providers, staff, family members and residents);
- developing equitable relationships between researchers and care home stakeholders;
- stakeholder participation in project running/decision-making;
- practice-needs focused goals (rather than academic-needs focused);
- co-design/co-delivery of workshops enhanced accessibility.

Factors reducing collaborator inequalities:

- family members and care home providers attending delivery group meetings;
- all participants were financially compensated.

The collaboration has facilitated multi-directional knowledge flow with the support of a knowledge broker who acted as mediator between diverse stakeholders.

The collaboration facilitated identification of care home stakeholders' uncertainties which were turned into **future** research questions.

Project adaptability/flexibility enabled it to continue throughout the pandemic.

"it's been good to get people from all aspects of care together" "for me what I learned about was what it's like to be a worker in a care home"

- Researcher

Let's EXCHANGE

- Family member

Conclusion:

Our study suggests academic-practice collaborations can be effective in helping support care homes to develop capacity to use evidence, mobilise knowledge, and identify research needs, to ultimately benefit the health and wellbeing of people working, living in and visiting care homes.



MAKING SENSE OF CARE HOMES

Illustrations by Grace Elizabeth www.graceelizabeth.co.uk

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