

Care Homes

.....a cause for celebration

A care home can be a splendid thing, providing tenderness and nurture to our elders who are no longer strong enough to look after themselves. We must talk more about care homes and the urgent action required to ensure that each one of them is a place in which our proud, though sadly, frail elders receive constant competent and compassionate care.

It's to be welcomed that increased media attention is being paid to the very tricky dilemma, on how best to provide affordable care to the increasing number of older people needing it.

Up pops the IPPR in recent days to inform us that there will soon be fewer relatives available to care for their dependant parents, aunts and uncles and therefore preparation for demographic change is long overdue.

Those needing care are soon to be greater in number than available carers. Yes, much talk has taken place over the years, but, sadly little effective action.

Information extolling the joys of excellent care homes is currently absent, while there is plenty to read on what terrible places they too frequently are, with the result that there is now a strongly held view that it is preferable for people to receive a ludicrously called, package of care within their own homes then become a resident of a care home. These needs to be challenged and a more balanced perspective on how wonderful care homes can be for our frail elderly citizens emerge.

I could be accused of being biased, so am delighted to admit that my 95 year old mother is lucky to live in a loving care home.



The food is nutritious and tasty, where special staff are employed, where a variety of entertainments are held each afternoon and where huge efforts are made every day to ensure that residents enjoy the rest of their lives as best they can.

Lynn Young **To know that my mother is living in such a haven of safety and comfort gives me untold reassurance, enabling me to feel totally relaxed - and yes, liberated - when not visiting her.**

Now, compare this set up to a frail and confused older person living on her own, but with a package of care (whoever invented this term?) in place.

Several visits a day from a variety of well meaning, but rushed people, no human contact between visits when loneliness and anxiety can become overwhelming, not to mention household dangers such as gas and electrical appliances being ever present.

Obviously, one size does not fit all, but I speak as one who spent many years closely connected to the world of community

nursing and now often wonder if current efforts to invest in complex packages of care, rather than improving care home provision is misplaced.

Choice has to be cherished, but should we do more to help older people give staying in a care home a try? Fear is the unknown and experience often changes all previous thoughts and opinions. While entering a new environment can add confusion in the short term, people can settle, adapt and flourish (often as a result of good food and constant companionship), finding new enjoyment and zest for life.

And, after all how confusing must it be to have a variety of different people visiting each day, at the same time as waiting for necessary attention in between visits?

We need a fresh look at how we care for our elders and do what we must to ensure that all care homes provide the same exquisite standard of care as that currently being received by my mother.

Loneliness is a terrible thing, humans, regardless of age and mental cognisance is social animals needing the warmth of human kindness, particularly when fragility and confusion are present.

At their very best care homes stop loneliness and isolation overnight, new friendships are made - between residents and between residents and staff. Many of our care home staff are many miles away from home and I have observed how they enjoy and benefit from feeling close to their charges.

Ironically, I happened to be with my mother during a recent unannounced CQC inspection and was cheerfully interviewed by the well-meaning inspector. The right questions were gently asked and our answers dutifully recorded, maybe some form of inspection of care homes is a force for good?

The future needs fewer hospital beds, more superlative care homes, less talk about packages of care and another conversation on the ways and means of enabling our frail elderly to enjoy their final stage of life in the local thoroughly trusted, friendly, joyful and humane care home.

Oh yes and finally the care home that I happen to be so closely involved in has now been bought by another, unknown to me, organisation.

Contracts are signed, everyone has been informed, so we now move forward with huge hopes for a similar ethos and dedication to being the very best which shined through by the previous owner.

[Lynn Young](#)