Exploring and Supporting the Continued Growth of Positive Learning Environments in Care Homes for Everyone

Tamsin MacBride
Senior Lecturer/PhD candidate, University of the West of Scotland
Supervisory Team: Dr Margaret Brown, Dr Robert Boyd, Dr Aisling McBride
Background

- Challenges to recruitment and retention in care homes (Spilsbury, Hanratty and McCaughan, 2015; Scottish Care 2021; Douglas, 2022)
- Perceived lack of learning opportunities in care homes amongst study nurses (Watson et al., 2020)
- Experiencing enriched environments of learning and care is key to informing perceptions around working with older adults (Nolan et al., 2006).
- Care homes offer opportunities to learn about building relationships and emotional connections with scope to understand further how this learning comes about (McAllister et al, 2020; Page et al, 2020)
- Literature discusses the student nurse experience of learning environments in care homes (e.g., Husebø et al, 2018; Loffler et al, 2018; and Splitgerber, Davies and Laker, 2021), with opportunities to understand more about how residents and relatives contribute to and experience the learning environment.
Informing this study: My Home Life

• International social movement that aims to improve quality of life for those who live, work and visit care homes (My Home Life England, 2021)

• Leadership Support and Community Development programme: working with care home managers to enhance the culture in care homes (Dewar et al, 2019)
Appreciative Inquiry

- Focus on what works, what is valued and what helps this to happen more of the time (Stavros, Whitney and Cooperrider, 2015)
- Participatory: researching with people not on people
- **Discover**: opportunities for learning in care homes and practices that enable this learning to come about
- **Envision**: the ideal learning environment in care homes
- **Co-create**: approaches that support the continued growth of positive learning environments in care homes
- **Embed**: practices that support the continued growth of positive learning environments in care homes
Setting and Participants

• 2 Care Homes in one Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) in Scotland
• September 2017 – April 2019

• Staff (37)
• Students (4)
• Residents (1)
• Relatives (3)
• Key Stakeholders (29)
Generating Data

• Participant observation (working alongside)
• Generating stories:
  • Visual inquiry
  • Emotional touchpoints
• Envision event
• Co-create meetings
Visual Inquiry (Roddy et al, 2019)

Prompt question: What does learning mean to you?

You never finish learning. Every day we learn, it changes our direction and way of thinking. It is about passing onto others to help with their direction.

This sums up learning for me – it is important because it opens up doors.

It allows us to be innovative, you don’t know what is around the corner. We need change and the learning environment that helps us to take chances.

I can feel a bit like a fish out of water – getting to know people in the small group helps me learn.

Young staff are often looking for direction. I feel like the wise old owl – I like passing on things, seeing others get motivated and develop skills.
Emotional Touchpoints (Dewar et al., 2010)
Findings: Shining a light on learning in care homes
The thing about working here is there’s so much love, you can see the team really love the residents and not it’s not just a person to tick off a sheet and move onto the next, it’s hugs and kisses and all these things that you can’t make up....... at the hospital, although they treated people with respect and dignity, it’s a different setting....so it’s been really good to come to a residential home where the care is brilliant, you can just see that they care and (carer) giving (resident) a kiss on the head when she went to bed and that just moved me, I got goose pimples.

Learning about human connection

Human connection is about people being together in a meaningful way, on a human to human level (Gordon et al, 2022).

This study provides detail to the elements of human connection, for example:

**It’s more than likes, dislikes and preferences**

‘When I first came, I was scared, like what do I do, I was out of my comfort zone and now I know everyone’s personality and what they do, like, if they are getting sad, you know how to comfort them.’ (CB4 – Emotional Touchpoints Story – Discover phase).
It’s all about we

• ‘...people were learning from everybody, they were learning from different staff members, they were learning from the residents ........ I thought it was a lovely learning environment, because people weren’t defensive, about who they were learning from........’(Key Stakeholder – Envision event – Composite story exercise).

• Subtle roles and boundaries
• Reciprocity in Learning
• Learning through informal feedback
Noticing and sharing what we learn

• “Learning is not only about going on a training course, sitting in a room, listening to information or doing e-learning. It’s much more than this and happens every day. But helping people to see this is hard”. (KS – Composite story exercise - Envision event).
• Care home staff are skilled in noticing
• Sharing learning often happens informally with opportunities to make this more conscious
• Care Home B focussed on this during the co-create phase
Relationships for learning

“I suppose that’s a visual representation of care and support workers and people we work with as well. That flower didn’t get there on its own and in order for them to grow and be beautiful flowers that bumble bees will come to, you have to nurture them....You want to have a beautiful natural relationship and nurture people...”. (SCB1 – Visual Inquiry - Envision event).

• This study added detail to positive relationships for learning e.g.
  • Knowing who to go to
  • Sharing our wee mistakes

• Care Home B focused on this during the co-create phase
Shining a light on learning and bringing this learning to life

• This study shines a light on the opportunity to learn about human connection in care homes
• Noticing is a key skill you can learn in care homes
• Sharing and exploring stories about what we notice brings this learning to life
• Everyone in care homes plays a key role in the learning environment – we are all learning together

#shinealight
References


References


