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Sustaining and developing the role of the nurse in care homes

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RCN Foundation and York University Research into nursing in care homes

The research team at York University funded by the RCN Foundation have released their report into nursing in care homes.

To download and read the full report please [click here](#). (PDF)

In the UK, approximately half a million older people live in twelve thousand care homes. The care home sector is an increasingly important source of long term care for older people. Care homes are an essential part of local health economies, but remain separate from the NHS and are subject to frequent, critical, commentary.

On presenting the research lead researcher Professor Karen Spilsbury noted


It's such a timely issue it will be incredibly important and not just in the UK. The outcomes of the research aim to inform the research and policy agenda, encourage attention on care homes, and ultimately benefit care home nurses and residents.

Emeritus Professor Tony Buttenworth CBE Trustee of the RCN Foundation commented

It is a privilege to fund a project with such huge potential benefits, the outcomes from the study will also be used to design the RCN Foundation's grant giving programme in 2015, as the organisation looks to fund further projects supporting nurse led care.

The University of York has been funded to work in partnership with the charity as the first step in developing a new grants programme focused on supporting projects that will help deliver benefits to patients through nursing in care homes

http://www.rcnfoundation.org.uk/latest_news/2015-news/care-home-research



Supporting nursing in care homes

Project Report for the RCN Foundation
Patient Care and Professional Development for Nursing Staff in Care and Nursing Homes: A Research and Consultation Project

Report submitted 18 February 2015

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Context

- **Care homes**
 - important source long-term care for older people
 - important role in health economy
- **Health of residents**
 - Increasing diversity and complexity of needs
- **Workforce**
 - association with quality of care
 - limited understanding of the workforce

Overall aim

To map and identify key issues in relation to the care and professional development needs of nursing staff employed in care homes



Scoping study

Rapid review

Secondary UK
data sources

Delphi survey

In-depth
interviews

Virtual advisory group

**Who are the nursing
workforce in care
homes?**

'Hidden' workforce

- Poor understanding
- **5089** independent care homes with nursing
- **253,751 beds**, average 50 beds per home, 90% occupancy
- No recommended safe nurse staffing levels

Aggregate information

In England: National Minimum Dataset for Social Care

- Estimate 41,700 individual nurses working in care homes
- 54% nurses work full-time
- Annual turnover 32%, 47% employed < 3 years

Wales, Scotland, N. Ireland:

- project information gap



**What do we
know about care
& development
needs?**

Literature themes

End of life care

Dementia care

Resident
safety

Quality of care

Care home
relationships

Personal care

Staff well-
being and
safety

LT condition
management

Tissue viability

Delirium

Depression

Hospital
admissions

Nurse
education/
training

Staff
development

Support for
care homes

Nursing roles

Literature headlines

- RN role broad and multifaceted
- Few studies on RNs: 'care home staff' and poor quality
- Understanding, knowledge and competence - outcomes
- Care home staff enthusiastic to engage with training
- Resources (staff and time) present challenges
- Creative approaches and link nurses
- Training considerations: more than 'one-off' event; equity
- Culture and environment: residents and staff
- Care home manager is key
- Opportunities in the care home for nurse education

End of Life Care

Overview

- Twenty five UK publications (2006 onward), comprising:
 - Descriptive or exploratory or evaluative studies (n=17)
 - Reviews (n=2)
 - Opinion pieces (n=2)
 - News items (n=3)
 - Conference abstract (n=1)
- The majority of literature uses the general term 'care home staff' rather than focusing specifically on the needs of registered nursing staff
- Much of the UK literature consists of small, descriptive studies and is therefore of relatively low methodological quality

Headlines

- A wide range of educational needs relating to palliative care are identified amongst care home staff including the theory and practice of pain and symptom management, communication skills and nutritional assessment
- Staff are keen to improve their knowledge of palliative and end of life care, and educational interventions are welcomed.
- Educational interventions appear to improve staff knowledge and confidence in end of life care. Morale and motivation may also be enhanced by training
- Staff knowledge, skills and confidence to engage in discussion and advance care planning with residents and families is a distinct area where training is perceived to be useful
- Lack of time and resources (including staff cover) are barriers to attendance at training events
- Teamwork, adequate staffing levels and management support are thought to be essential to improving end of life care
- It is important for care home to consider the emotional wellbeing and support needs of their workforce
- The Gold Standards Framework has provided a structured approach to end of life care in care homes that is welcomed by staff
- Gold Standards Framework in Care Homes (GSFCHs) training has led to perceived increases in staff confidence and competence, enhanced communication and collaboration with the NHS and improved resident experiences (including fewer crisis admissions and hospital deaths)
- Most of the evaluation studies of the GSFCHs are small in scale and non-experimental design. Hence, there are few objective data available to evidence changes in staff skills or resident outcomes resulting from the GSFCHs

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**What are the
priorities for
frontline staff?**

The care home nurse

- 87% agreed: RN requires particular set of skills, knowledge, competencies and experience

Care Home Nurses	Overall top three priorities
Responsibilities of the role	1 Promoting dignity, personhood and wellbeing 2 Resident safety 3 Enhancing quality of life
Continuing Professional Development priorities	1 Dementia care 2 Personal care 3 Managing LTCs

Training

Care Home Nurses	Overall top three priorities
Barriers to accessing CPD activities	1 Staff shortages 2 No access to NHS courses 3 Need to train in own time
Types of education and training	1 Formal courses 2 On the job training 3 External specialist support

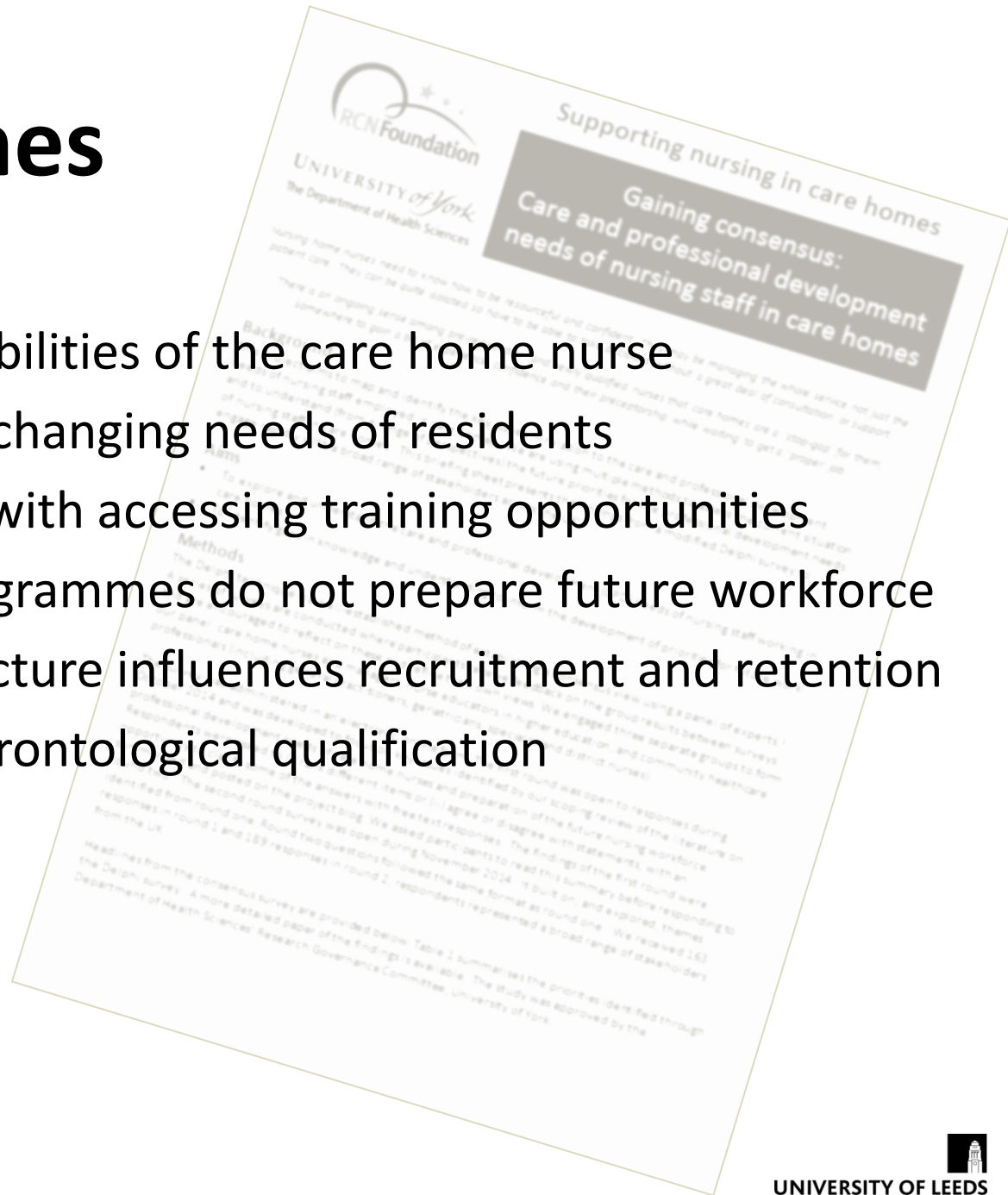
Future workforce

- 30%: undergraduate pre-registration programmes prepare future nurses
- 35%: care homes provide supportive learning opportunities for students
- 41%: the industry offers challenging and rewarding career pathways

Care Home Nurses	Overall top three priorities
How to ensure nursing profession attracts best people in to care home nursing	1 Offer similar development opportunities as those for NHS staff 2 Increase understanding and valuing of role by NHS staff 3 Specialist gerontological education for care home nurses

Main headlines

- Consensus on responsibilities of the care home nurse
- CPD corresponds with changing needs of residents
- Challenges associated with accessing training opportunities
- Undergrad pre-reg programmes do not prepare future workforce
- Absence of career structure influences recruitment and retention
- Time for a specialist gerontological qualification



In-depth interview headlines

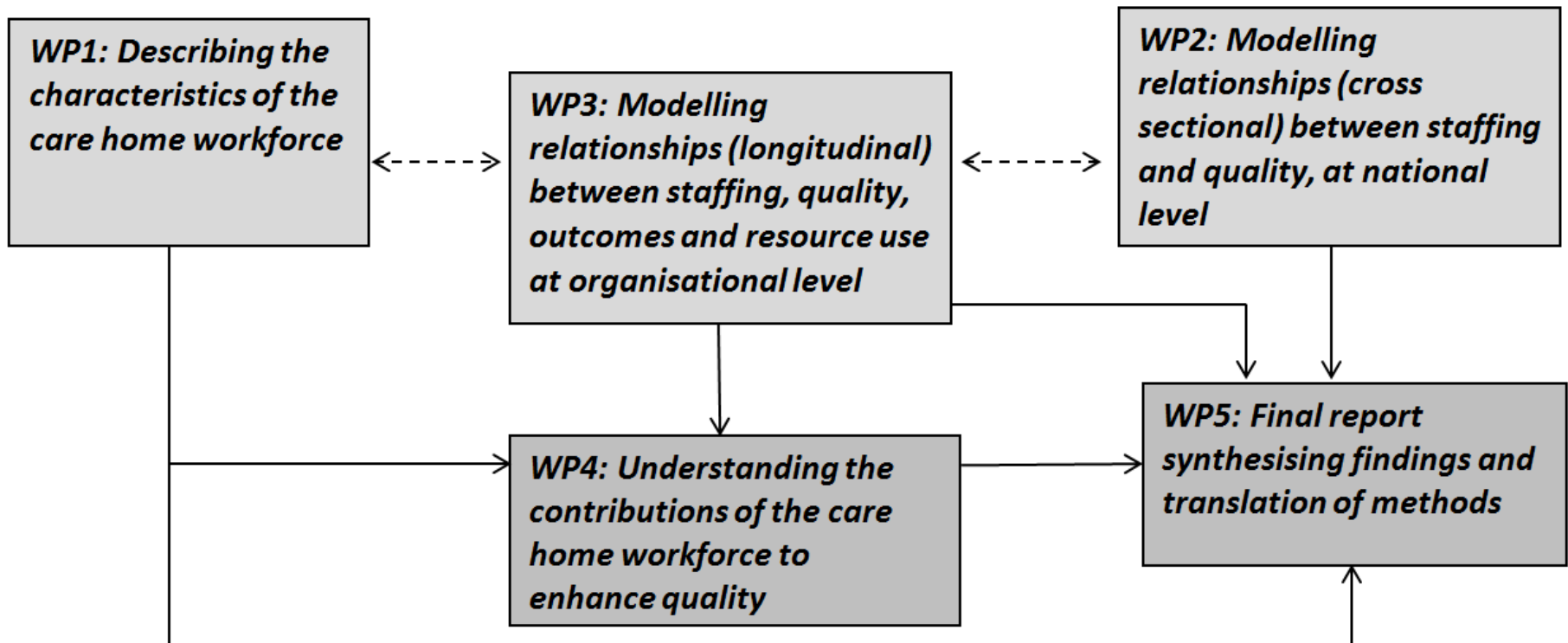
- Broad role, overall responsibility, work in isolation
- Full potential of nursing role not always utilised
- Specialist knowledge to manage complex needs
- Post-registration qualification: care for older people
- Focus of nursing education – NHS and acute care
- Overseas nurses employed in care homes
- Difficulties accessing CPD
- Career pathway for care home nurses
- Partnership working, recognition of care home nurse

Sustaining and developing the role of the nurse in care homes

- Care home nurse 'on the agenda'
- Role of care home and care home nurse will increase
- Ensuring nurse in care home fit for purpose
- Taking responsibility for CPD in sector
- Promoting careers for care home nurses
- Recognise potential of workforce to benefit residents

Future work

Relationship between care home staffing and quality of care:
a mixed methods approach



<https://medhealth.leeds.ac.uk/homepage/796/workforce>

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