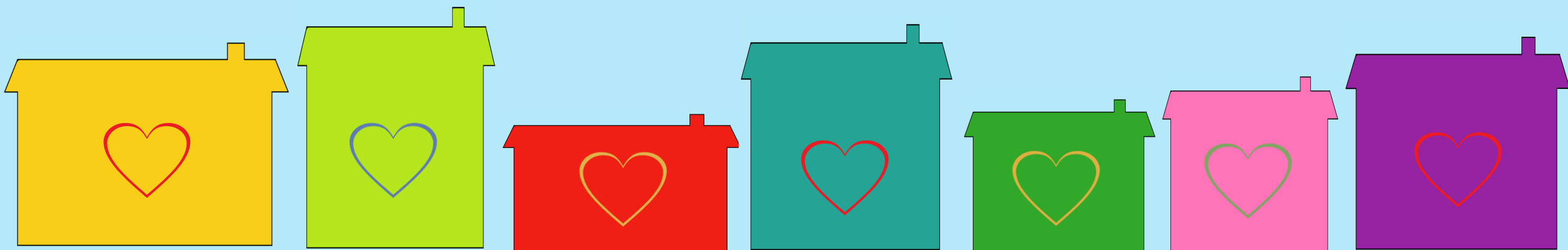




# The **ExCHANGE** Collaboration:

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

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# Background

- There are many **gaps** between the activities of professional **researchers** and the **needs** of people who work, live in, and care for others in **care homes**.
- We established the ***ExCHANGE (the University of Exeter and Care Homes Knowledge) Collaboration*** as an innovative way of bringing together researchers and care home stakeholders.
- We aim to **improve mutual understanding of research and evidence-use in long-term care homes** and to **generate applied research**- e.g. small study on [the impact of Covid-19 on care home staff wellbeing](#) (ILPN Covid-19 studies list).
- The collaboration was created due to a successful bid to the ***Care Collaboration Programme*** by the **Alzheimer's Society** and **Dunhill Medical Trust**, and is one of three funded projects.



# Objectives

We conducted an internal, **realist-informed evaluation** of the collaboration:

- We sought to understand ***where*** and ***how*** the project had **done well**;
- and ***where*** and ***how*** it had **struggled** in meeting its aims.

N.B.- aims were understood from the perspectives of all those involved



# Methods

We gathered data using *qualitative* methods:

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



2020-2022

# Results

We found the ExCHANGE Collaboration developed the capacity of care home stakeholders **to engage with, understand, and use research** by...

"it's been good to get people from all aspects of care together"

- Family member

...the inclusion of **diverse** care home stakeholders (care home owners, staff, family members and residents)

"I didn't expect...the kind of close relationships I would build with people on this project – it's not like any other research project I've ever been involved in before"

- Researcher

...developing **collaborative, equitable** relationships between researchers and care home stakeholders

"I think it felt very much like a team effort"

- Family member

...care home stakeholder **participation** in the **running and decision-making** of the project (e.g. regularly attending delivery group meetings)

# Results

We found the ExCHANGE Collaboration developed the capacity of care home stakeholders **to engage with, understand, and use research** by...

"it felt very co-productive"

- Care home owner

...the co-design and co-delivery of training workshops and other activities between care home stakeholders and researchers

"[you] need to be quite open-minded to changing idea[s] and being a bit flexible and adaptable."

- Researcher

...**flexibility/adaptability** allowed collaboration to run throughout pandemic

"the breakthrough moment really was when we started getting funded for being involved in research"

- Care home owner

...**incentives** used to reduce inequalities between collaborators- all participants were financially compensated

# Results

We found the ExCHANGE Collaboration developed the capacity of care home stakeholders **to engage with, understand, and use research** by...

"explaining something in a way that anybody could understand"

- Researcher

...using **accessible communication and language** to ensure equal collaboration between diverse stakeholders

"[speaking about care home owners]...they're so enthusiastic and dynamic...I've just learnt loads from them"

- Family member

...the **passion and enthusiasm** of care home stakeholders and researchers **shared interests** to improve care home practice

"some people...speak more than others...if you've got a good chair that makes a big difference"

- Researcher

...the **effective facilitation** of diverse stakeholders to enable multidirectional knowledge flow, supported by a **knowledge broker**, and a **project manager** who oversaw project goals

# Results

We identified **11 mechanisms** that **positively drove co-production** throughout the ExCHANGE Collaboration project:

**EQUALITY**

**CO-DESIGN**

**DIVERSE  
ENGAGEMENT**

**COLLABORATION/  
RELATIONSHIP-  
BUILDING**

**SHARED  
INTERESTS**

**FLEXIBILITY/  
ADAPATABILITY**

**LANGUAGE**

**REWARDS/  
INCENTIVES**

**PASSION &  
ENTHUSIASM**

**FACILITATION/  
MANAGEMENT**

**COMMUNICATION**



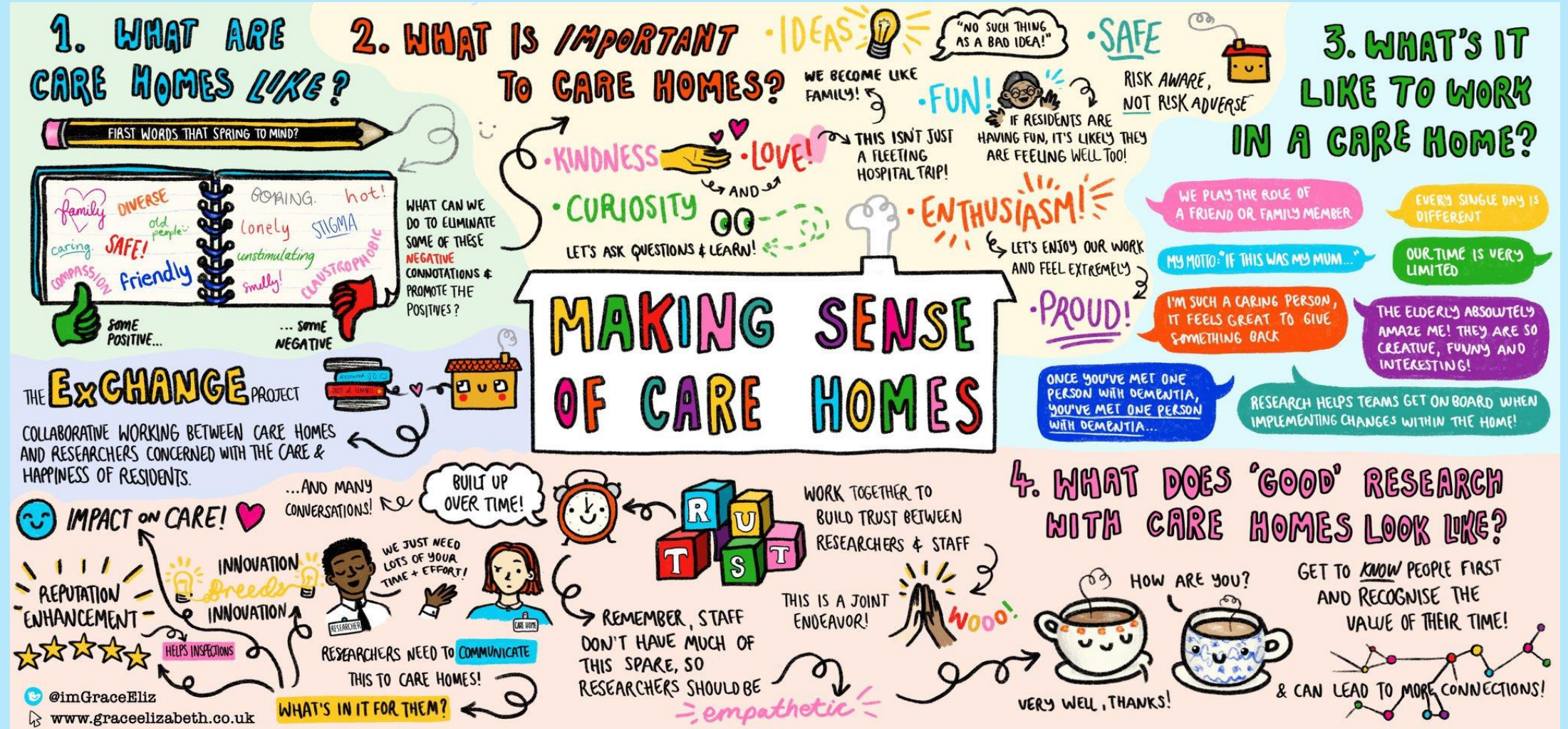
# Contextual Issues

- **Limited time/resources of care home** sector, which were further restricted through Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Limited time/resources of researchers** on the project.
- The **reach** and **embeddedness** of our collaboration was **restricted** due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- + Although, **online** format enabled **wider geographical reach**.
- **Long-term sustainability complicated** without further funding.



# Creative Dissemination

Innovative sketchnotes of ExCHANGE's work were produced by illustrator, Grace Elizabeth (<https://www.graceelizabeth.co.uk/>), displayed at local care homes:





# Conclusion

Our study suggests **academic-practice collaborations can be effective in helping support care homes:**

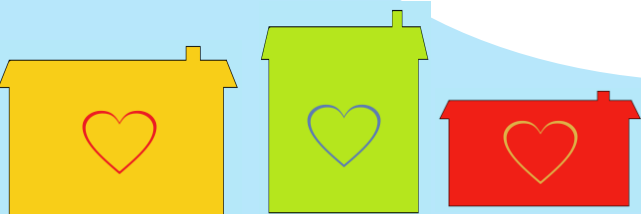
- *to develop capacity to use evidence;*
- *to mobilise knowledge between researchers and care home stakeholders;*
- *and to identify future research needs that are practice-focused;*
- to ultimately **benefit the health and wellbeing of people working, living in and visiting care homes.**



# References, Weblinks & Acknowledgements

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- Wilkinson, K. 2022. *Care Homes and Coronavirus: Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the emotional wellbeing of care home practitioners (UK)*: [https://ltccovid.org/project/care-homes-and-coronavirus-exploring-the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-the-emotional-wellbeing-of-care-home-practitioners-uk/?neve\\_preview\\_hook=show](https://ltccovid.org/project/care-homes-and-coronavirus-exploring-the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-the-emotional-wellbeing-of-care-home-practitioners-uk/?neve_preview_hook=show)
- The ExCHANGE Collaboration website: <https://exchangecollaboration.wordpress.com/>
- NIHR Project webpage: <https://arc-swp.nihr.ac.uk/research/projects/the-exchange-collaboration/>
- Sketchnotes produced by illustrator, Grace Elizabeth, website: <https://www.graceelizabeth.co.uk/>
- The ExCHANGE Collaboration is sponsored by the Alzheimer's Society (<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/>) & the Dunhill Medical trust (<https://dunhillmedical.org.uk/>)

*This presentation represents independent research supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Research Applied Research Collaboration South West Peninsula. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the National Institute for Health and Care Research or the Department of Health and Social Care.*





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