

REcruiting and RetAining nurses, and care workers in
Care Homes: what works, for which staff, under what
circumstances, and at what cost?
The REACH Realist Review

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Care home staff shortage adding pressure on NHS

Relentless staff shortage leaves home care sector struggling

The pressure of staff shortages in care homes

Care homes forced to drop nurse provision amid staffing crisis

Volunteers may be required in staffing shortfall at English care homes

Staffing shortages the number one problem for care home operators

'Alarming' drop in workers signing up, with many put off by requirement to be fully vaccinated against Covid by 11 November

Staff shortages could force care homes to close

Care homes jobs should be on post-Brexit 'shortage' list

Migration body warns of problems recruiting in sector with end of free movement

Care staff shortages expected to reach 100,000 in 2021

Covid: Carer shortage 'biggest worry'

Fears compulsory care worker vaccinations will worsen staff shortages

Care homes face losing 40,000 staff from compulsory vaccinations policy

Job losses would add to exodus of care home staff since April, with providers facing estimated bill of £2,500 to replace each worker

One in four care home workers disagree with mandatory vaccination

COVID-19: Care homes brace themselves for staff shortages due to new vaccination rules

From 11 November, it will become mandatory for all staff working in care homes to be fully vaccinated against coronavirus, unless they are exempt.

Care workers in England leaving for Amazon and other better-paid jobs

Retailer is luring staff with 30% higher wages, while some workers object to the care sector's 'no job, no job' policy

What do we know?

- ‘One-size’ solution to address staff shortages is unlikely to be effective
- A nuanced understanding of what works to attract, recruit and retain staff is an important next step.

COMMENTARY

Attracting, recruiting and retaining nurses and care workers working in care homes: the need for a nuanced understanding informed by evidence and theory

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Abstract

The care home sector relies on nurses and care workers to deliver care to residents living with frailty and complex needs. However, attracting, recruiting and retaining staff is one of the biggest challenges facing this sector. There is evidence available that describes factors that influence staff decisions to join and/or remain in the care home workforce, for example, individual rewards (such as feeling valued at work or training opportunities), relationships with colleagues and residents, supportive management or working arrangements (including flexible hours). However, it is less clear how different strategies are informed by evidence to improve recruitment and retention. Care homes are heterogeneous in terms of their size, staffing levels and mix, staff age groups, geographical location and working conditions. What matters to different members of the care home workforce will vary across nurses and care workers of different ages and levels of qualification or experience. Recognising this diversity is key: understanding how to attract, recruit and retain staff needs to discriminate and offer solutions that address this diversity. This important area of practice does not lend itself to a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution. This commentary provides a brief overview of known workforce challenges for the care home sector and argues for studies that use empirical evidence to test different theories of what might work for different staff, how and why, and in different circumstances.

Keywords: care homes, long-term care, workforce, social care, care staff, registered nurse, older people

Key Points

- Staff working in care homes provide care and support to society’s most frail and vulnerable older people.
- Attracting, recruiting and retaining staff is a challenge across the sector.
- Consideration of heterogeneity across care homes and staff characteristics means that a ‘one-size’ solution to address this challenge is unlikely to be effective.
- A nuanced understanding of what works to attract, recruit and retain staff, under which circumstances, why and the associated cost implications, is an important societal issue.

Research questions

- *What strategies are effective in attracting and recruiting Registered Nurses and care workers who are new to care homes, and retaining those currently employed?*
- *What works best for which staff, under what circumstances, and what are the resource implications?*

What does the REACH study involve?

Consultation with care home stakeholder groups

Step 1:
Develop initial
programme theories

Step 2:
Search for
evidence

Step 3:
Article selection,
and analysis

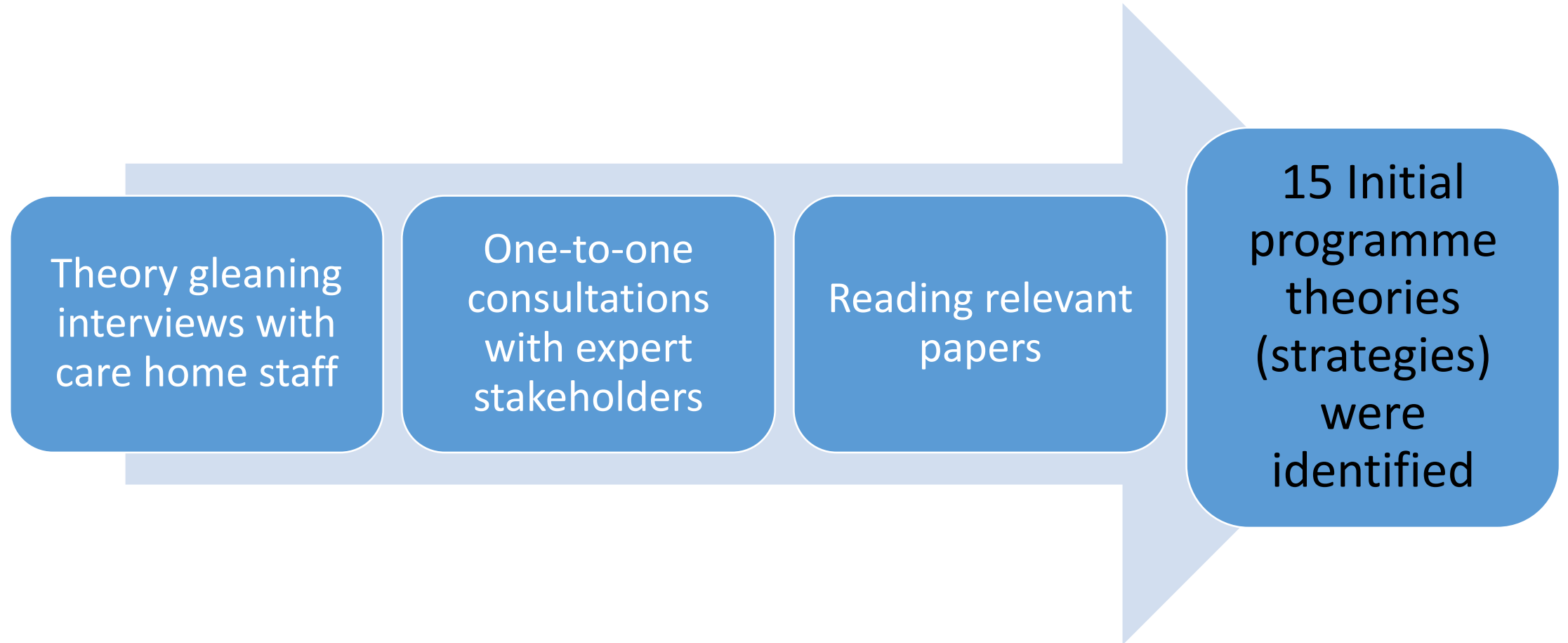
Step 4:
Bringing
evidence
together

Step 5:
Dissemination

Aug 2021

June 2023

Step 1 – Developing initial programme theories (IPTs)



IPT Prioritisation Exercise

Care home staff
(n=16)

Expert
stakeholders
(n=18)

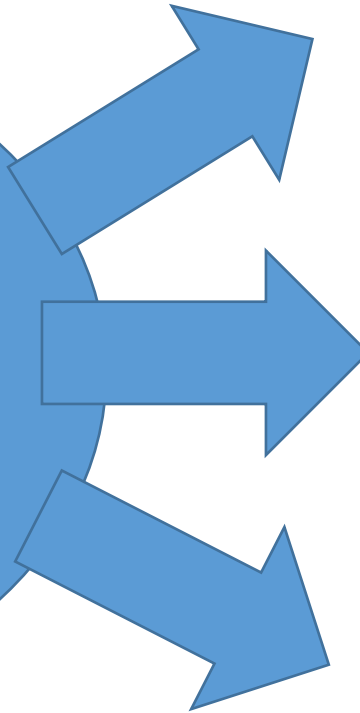
No	IPT Strategy	Number of stakeholders rating IPT as important
1	Reward and recognition	29/34
2	Flexible working	27/34
3	Career development	26/34
4	Salary package	25/34
5	Early investment	25/34
6	Induction	25/34
7	Continuous feedback	23/34
8	Caring community	22/34
9	Effective interviewing	22/34
10	Listening to all staff	21/34
11	Positive story telling	20/34
12	Simple application process	19/34
13	Support for registered managers	15/34
14	Social relationships	10/34
15	Peer support for RNs	9/34

IPT1: Reward and Recognition



What is it?

Work is rewarded through: vouchers, certificates, prizes, time off and/or recognised through celebrations and gestures such as praise or thank you notes



Who will it work for?

ALL staff

Why will it work?

Staff see that hard work pays off. This raises morale and helps increase staff engagement.

Under what circumstances will it effective?

If those in senior positions reward good work in a fair and equal way.

The manager is able to access resources through the provider



"Good job!"



IPT2: Flexible working



What is it?

A fair system for offering shifts to suit staffs unique needs i.e. shorter shifts, longer shifts, overtime.



Who will it work for?

Staff with different needs.

Why will it work?

Flexible working provides a sense of work/life balance

Under what circumstances will it effective?

Staff well-being is the focus of the provider.

Managers and supervisors listen

There are enough staff.


A stable, willing team

Next steps

- We will test the 10 initial programme theories against the evidence to develop, refute and refine them
- This involves focused searches and consultation with the evidence
- We will offer evidence-based strategies to care home providers

Thank you, any questions?

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