

The support of ancillary workers in English care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond

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Presentation outline

Background of the study

Methodology

Sample

Good Practice Guide

Questions and discussion

Introduction

NIHR funded study drawing on workplace experiences to identify and develop (a co-produced) best practice guide for supporting the ancillary workforce of care homes

1st January 2021 - 31st October 2021

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/the-other-keyworkers>



Why did we do the study?

Ancillary staff crucial in infection control in care homes, yet often overlooked in terms of relationships with residents and care workers

Behind the scenes work

Overlap/interface with care work

Covid-19 brings their work to the fore – responsibilities yet low status? emotional labour newly recognised? skills yet unskilled?



Who did we speak to?

Stage 1: Interviews

- ancillary or housekeeping staff = 38
(21 cleaners; 13 caterers; 4 hospitality supervisors)
- care home managers and Human Resource (HR) managers = 13
- care home residents and their relatives/friends = 5 + 7

Table 1: Participants interviewed in Phase 1 (N=63)

Sample

Participant group	Sub-groups	Number
Ancillary staff		38
	Cleaners	9
	Catering or kitchen staff	14
	Housekeeping staff	12
	Hospitality/ancillary staff manager	3
Care home managers		8
HR managers		5
Care home residents		5
Relatives/friends of care home residents		7

Who did we speak to?

Stage 1: Interviews

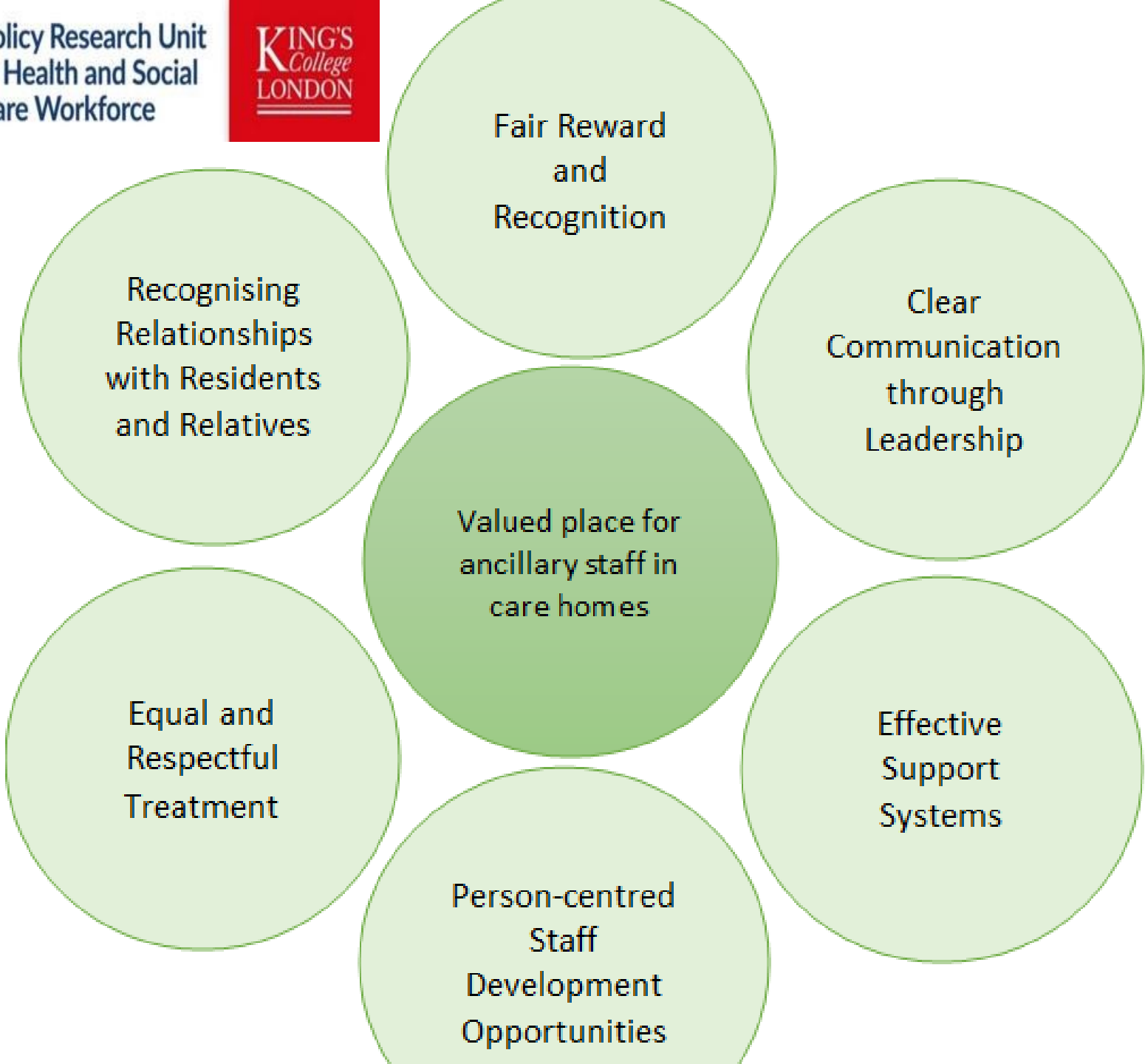
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- care home residents and their relatives/friends = 5 + 7

- ### **Stage 2: Co-creation of a good practice model from interview data**
- further group discussions about emerging workforce model with 'expert' stakeholders (e.g. staff representatives, care home managers) = 13

Good Practice Guide: Valued Place for Ancillary Staff in Care Homes

Background to the Good Practice Guide

- Reflective tool for to support ancillary workers:
- Care home managers and senior care home staff to help them support their ancillary colleagues.
- Training providers, policy makers, and staff representative organisations
- For ancillary staff to ask questions and raise discussion points with their colleagues and managers.
- Each Principle is described, followed by reflective questions.



(1) Fair Reward & Recognition



*“... being a housekeeper, we do get overlooked. We've got strict cleaning in place because of this virus, we've got extra work to do. But we never get recognised for it. The carers (care workers), they get all the praise and what have you. I've worked there for three years and I've never won employee of the month. It's always the carers. Because there's about 40 carers and just three housekeepers, we get overlooked every time. It's very unfair.” – **Housekeeper 1***

Reflective questions:

- 1) Do ancillary staff feel recognised as valued members of staff; if not, how may this be improved?
- 2) How can ancillary staff who are less vocal talk about their needs and can it be ensured that they are met?

Tips & prompts

- Tell relatives and friends about the contributions made by ancillary staff to individual residents. Assist and support residents to show gratitude to ancillary staff.
- Clarify sick pay arrangements for ancillary staff who take time off sick and ensure these are in job descriptions and employee contracts.

"Information was coming mainly by bulletins, through meetings and then emails. Lots of posters around, especially for those who were [non-IT-literate] and a general newsletter every week. So, yeah, in terms of communication about what's going on and so forth... yes, overall, I think it was managed very well." – Ancillary staff supervisor

(2) Clear Communication through Leadership



Reflective questions:

- 1) Are there clear channels of communication for ancillary staff to use if they wish to raise an issue?
- 2) Are ancillary staff routinely involved in formal processes such as handovers, settling a new resident into the care home, or in care plans?

Tips & prompts:

- Create opportunities to engage with ancillary staff who may struggle with English, language, IT, and ensure they are included in communication and training.
- Keep open lines of communication with ancillary staff and make sure that they feel able to speak with someone specific in the home about any queries.

*“I’ve been feeling depressed, like everybody else. We have our down moments, but we’ve kept each other going. Because we’re quite a happy team. It just seems to be going on and on and on. But yeah, hopefully things are looking up. We’ve helped lift each other up, basically, just support each other. When they’re feeling down, they come and talk to me. It’s not just [the kitchen team], it’s the carers as well, we’ve been supporting each other, we’re in our kind of bubble.” -
Chef 2*

(3) Effective Support Systems



Reflective questions:

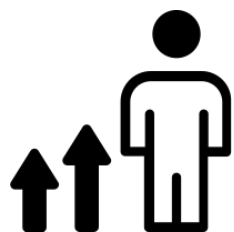
- 1) Do ancillary staff feel supported? How do you know?
- 2) Are there external sources of support, for example, support groups, trades unions or representative groups, that ancillary workers can be signposted to?

Tips & prompts:

- Ensure staff get to know and find support from each other, such as through WhatsApp groups, social activities, and (photo)introductions.
- Consider a buddy system or mentor system for some new staff.

*“There were lots of positive changes to be honest with you. So, we've managed to sort of take a little bit of a step sideways where we don't just have housekeepers doing housekeeping work, carers doing care work and wellbeing staff doing wellbeing work. We're now arranging it so the housekeepers help do some care, and they also help do some wellbeing [work]. Some of the wellbeing and care staff do some cleaning and we're making it more like a home. It makes you realise that actually, care is more than just care.” – **Manager 2***

(4) Person-centred Staff Development Opportunities



Reflective questions:

- 1) Do you know about the sometimes hidden or multiple skills and talents of ancillary staff? Do they know about training opportunities available to them as well as ways to develop confidence, for example – shadowing other care workers, helping with mealtimes or snacks, providing dignity in care?
- 2) Are there opportunities for one-to-one discussions with ancillary staff members to set out a ‘personal development plan’ to find out about individual hopes and wishes at work? Is this built into regular personal development reviews?

Tips & prompts:

- Explore a ring-fenced fund to support training and development of ancillary workers; for example, using the Apprenticeship levy or resources from Skills for Care.
- Assess whether ancillary staff can be given time in their rota for training rather than in their own time or a hybrid model. Explain why training is beneficial to them and possible career pathways.

“I've been very lucky to work for this company where I have got a really good support management system. We have got weekly calls where we can pitch in, give our ideas, you know, and share our things that we've been doing within the homes. We do walk around very often and our presence within the community is seen by many. And it feels like for us and for the team, that we are working together.” –

Hospitality manager

(5) Equal and Respectful Treatment



Reflective questions:

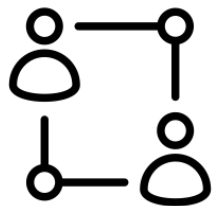
- 1) Are ancillary staff treated as well as other staff? How do you know, especially about staff whose first language is not English?
- 2) What is the best way to ensure ancillary staff are included in a positive care home culture? What makes this happen?

Tips & prompts:

- Routinely invite ancillary staff to outings, care home events, and discussions of residents' care plans. Can they take the lead in organising social activities and cultural celebrations? Consider whether job descriptions require amending.
- Develop a sense of trust, so staff feel safe to disclose potentially private information, such as family history or medical records, for risk assessments or similar procedures.

"I think in the office there are schemes thought out and plans thought out. But what you have to do is to acknowledge how rare a really good worker is. The actual personal element. You [may] have all the schemes in the world, but it's a fatal mistake not to acknowledge when you've got a really good person. We as residents can see how good they are. Do they really appreciate how good they are in the office?" - Resident 4

(6) Recognising Relationships with Residents and Relatives



Reflective questions:

- 1) How are ancillary staff helped to create or maintain meaningful relationships with residents (for example, do they work with the same groups or individuals, do they need any emotional support if a resident is distressed, are they told when a resident moves, falls sick, or dies)?
- 2) How can ancillary staff be helped to communicate effectively with residents and make sure that what they are doing is welcome (for example, a resident wanting their laundry to be folded in a certain way)?

Tips & prompts:

- Help residents communicate with ancillary staff about their wishes and needs regarding their rooms and other parts of their life.
- Ensure that relatives are aware of meaningful relationships with different staff members and introduce relatives to ancillary staff where possible. Feature ancillary staff (with photographs) if they would like on the care home website, newsletters, or noticeboard.

Reflections and context of the study

Largely positive narratives – missing perspective of agency staff

Research-cautious group – anonymity, language barriers to reassure, unable to recruit f2f

Ancillary staff are like “bits in a jigsaw puzzle” and vital to care home culture

Residents and relatives value these relationships; as do ancillary staff

Support, encouragement, recognition from management crucial in maintaining vital role of the ancillary workforce

Ancillary staff should be integral part of care home activities e.g., care planning, staff handovers

Thank you for listening!
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