

Caring for elderly loved ones in Haringey

June 2025



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Executive Summary

The aim of this research was to bring light to the different forms and models of caring for elderly loved ones in Haringey. This work was prompted in part by recent care home closures in Haringey, and the wider national pressures on care services. We wanted to hear people's experiences and then help partners and stakeholders in Haringey to think about specific approaches and models of care that would best suit the needs of the local community.

Whilst some of the project's participants were users of Haringey's adult social care, there were many others who have been caring for their loved ones in their family home. Whether this was completely independent, or resembled a hybrid model of domiciliary care, it nevertheless illuminates the current state of care within Haringey. Additionally, we heard the perspectives of staff who work in adult social care services within the local authority, to understand some of the trends that they have witnessed over recent years.

Key research insights

- The importance of the family home as a care setting.
- Family members taking on unpaid caring roles to ensure an appropriate standard of care is provided.
- The prevalence of younger carers in families caring for elderly loved ones.
- Residents' thoughts on care home provision in Haringey.
- The psycho-social impact of isolation on the elderly within care homes.
- The role of relocation and its effects on wellbeing.
- Motivations for providing care in the home.
- The need for information about what support is available to older people and families and how to access care.
- The need for greater clarity on future adult care provision, including the prospects for the development a large modern care home.

Headline recommendations

- Increase financial support for independent carers in Haringey.
- Raise greater awareness of pathways for caring for the elderly in Haringey.
- Increase joint working between care service providers and families.
- Enhance holistic support networks in Haringey aligned with care services.
- Provide tailored support for vulnerable service users in Haringey.
- Improve current care home services based on feedback.

Research methods: Interviews

We interviewed the following people for this project:

- Seven people either impacted by care home closures in Haringey or are currently caring for elderly loved ones in Haringey.
- Two Haringey Council staff who work within adult social care. Their insights are detailed in the initial sections of this report. They will be referred to as 'AA' and 'BB'.
- A Haringey care home provider with years of experience.

Background

The population of the United Kingdom is rapidly ageing. The number of adults 75 and older will increase by 38% by 2040, requiring older people's housing to expand in response.

There are an estimated 36,700 older people's units in the pipeline, meaning an annual supply of roughly 7,340 units until 2029, assuming an average of 46 units each scheme, consistent with the previous five years. The yearly delivery of 50,000 additional units was suggested by the 2022 Mayhew Review a report that looked at the future of senior housing in the UK. There will be a significant shortfall. (JLL, 2024). So older people may be left without an appropriate home, and concerns persist around quality of care for elderly loved ones in the context of local government cuts.

'BB' from the local authority emphasised that:

"Well nationally I think care homes are sort of... suffering a little bit, obviously with regards to all the cuts that's coming from central government towards local authority, obviously that sort of gets pushed onto them. So in terms of fees, I think they are getting the butt end of the stick, so to speak, do you know what I mean? Because you know, all these savings that we are having to realise... particularly in Haringey, we weren't able to actually give some of the care homes an uplift, and as you know... cost of living... energy prices, all of that, it's been sort of an increase."

**Interview with local authority adult social care team staff member 'BB',
29 August 2024**

The shortfall in future older people's housing development

A yearly delivery of an additional 50,000 older people's units was suggested by the 2022 Mayhew Review, a report that looked at the future of older people's housing in the UK.

However, it is evident that in the upcoming years the building of older people's housing will continue to lag well behind this desired aim. There are smaller providers of care home provision locally in Haringey, but are such small providers able to keep up with the pace of changes in this market?

'AA' from the local authority replied:

"We see two things. We see providers who were small a few years ago deciding to leave the market, either because they are retiring, or because their arrangements are no longer meeting current legislation, in terms of building regulations etc. and we are seeing some new providers coming in, but the residential market - that is at a standstill. I saw yesterday that in Haringey there is one new registered residential location which has a capacity for five people. This is the only registration in the past ten years. With the learning disabilities and mental health market, Haringey has been sending out a message that we want to steer away from residential services, and have supported living services, with far greater tenancy rights and residents have greater autonomy to get a new provider if they want to. And you can't just evict somebody at short notice."

**Interview with local authority adult social care team staff member 'AA',
23 August 2024**

Types of residential developments for older people's care

Below outlines the types of housing with care available to the elderly in the United Kingdom:

Type of care	Retirement Housing (aka retirement flats, sheltered housing, retirement communities)	Integrated Retirement Communities (aka assisted living, independent living, extra care, housing with care, retirement village)	Care Homes (aka nursing home, old people's home, residential home)
Offers	Self-contained homes for rent, shared-ownership or sale	Self-contained homes for rent, shared-ownership or sale	Residents occupying individual rooms, sometimes with en-suite bathroom
Staffing	Part-time warden, emergency call system	Restaurant or café available for meals, optional care or domiciliary services, 24-hour on-site staff	Residents occupying individual rooms, sometimes with en-suite bathroom
Typical facilities available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No meal provided ▪ Guest room ▪ Gardens ▪ Laundry, ▪ Communal lounge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular social events ▪ Activity rooms, guest rooms, communal lounge ▪ Gardens ▪ Leisure clubs, for swimming, sauna, spa and exercise classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gardens ▪ Activities ▪ Communal lounges ▪ Dining room
Typical number of units in development	40 - 60	60 - 250	60 - 80

Regarding the different types of care present in Haringey, AA explained:

"Assisted living is not supported living. Assisted living is a much less intense place, a place for individuals who are older who don't need to have a license to provide personal care. Supported living has tenancies and may or may not have personal care. Protheroe is one of four Extra Care provisions in Haringey. There are discussions at NCL [North Central London] level to see how we can maximise the use of Extra Care and change the portfolio. It has helped take some of the pressures off, especially for some people who are boarder residential but with a little extra help can live in Extra Care."

**Interview with local authority adult social care team staff member 'AA',
23 August 2024**

AA's reference to 'Protheroe' is Protheroe House, which is an assisted living project in Tottenham, off Tottenham High Road. 'BB' also informed that:

"The Protheroe model is what I'd like to see more of because it's people in their flats [and] they've got the support onsite. The family can go and sort of see them, they can stay with them overnight if they need to."

**Interview with local authority adult social care team staff member 'BB',
29 August 2024**

The cost of older people's housing

'AA' also stated about the costs of assisted living, as some people in the borough paid over £2000 per month while in such accommodation, that:

"It could be more than that, depending on the level of needs. Your housing benefit pays the rent and then you are paying for the support you get. If you have one-to-one support, that's an hourly rate, but then you have that core cost where you have people on site to be able to assist you as and when needed, and that is slightly lower. The person living there, because they've got tenancies, they will have to pay for bills and those things add up. And you pay for food."

**Interview with local authority adult social care team staff member 'AA',
23 August 2024**

When asked would it not be more cost-effective for the local authority to keep control of the building and provide the care services themselves, 'AA' replied:

"It's all about number crunching, isn't it. For each project you've got to understand the level of resources you require, people going on full-time contracts etc. and you need to have a manager on site. Local authority, we are bound by certain standard, rates and salaries which means we do end up being more expensive as an option"

**Interview with local authority adult social care team staff member 'AA',
23 August 2024**

Care homes

Care homes with nursing care provide intensive medical support for those who may be frail, bedridden or have a chronic or debilitating condition which requires regular medical attention. A qualified nurse is always on duty at these care homes, while individuals with a dementia diagnosis may need to be relocated to a care home with bespoke dementia provision.

Care homes in the UK have been characterised by a shift from state to private sector provision as successive governments since the 1970s have aimed to reduce the state's role as a residential care provider. Care homes with the worst ratings in England usually have a much greater number of residents supported by state benefits. The issue of care home closures has been a cause of concern for some time in the UK (Darton, 2004; Netton et al., 2005). Over the last year, nearly a third of care homes in England have been under the threat of closure.

Domiciliary care

The mandatory duty for local authorities to provide a home help service was stipulated in the Health Service and Public Health Act 1968 within the remit of a broader responsibility to uphold the welfare of the elderly. Many studies from the 1980s up until present (Sinclair and Williams, 1990) have revealed that home care services are as popular as they are effective.

The home plays a key role in healthy ageing as it is a place of safety, comfort and privacy. Domiciliary services enable older people who are owner-occupiers on low-incomes to stay in their own homes for longer while retaining their quality of life.

The prevalence of domiciliary care in Haringey chimes with an overall approach within the local authority, AA stated:

"We do have a 'home first' approach. We want people to be in their own homes as much as they can, with their families, with the support they get there. We want to minimise the use of any of these bed-based services. However, it's inevitable some people may require that for various reasons."

**Interview with local authority adult social care team staff member 'AA',
23 August 2024**

Recent care home closures in Haringey

In 2011, Haringey Council undertook a consultation on the future of some of the adult services it directly provided. Government cuts to the council's budget at this time had major consequences for adult social care. At this time, Broadwater Lodge care home, Red House care home, Cranwood care home and Whitehall Street care home were all closed. The first three being for elderly residents and the latter being for young disabled people.

The care homes were based in Tottenham, with the exception of Cranwood which was based in Muswell Hill. As a result, over a hundred people in Haringey lost a place that they called home. The impact that this has had on elderly and learning disabled residents is immeasurable as many people had built lives, communities and connections within these spaces. Three of these care home closures took place in the east of the borough, increasing the factors of deprivation that have affected this area in recent decades.

However, the care home closures did not come without resistance. Whilst Councillor Dilek Dogus at the time defended the closures by stating that they had “carried out an extensive three-month consultation with service users and their families before arriving at the decisions...”, this was met with criticism from residents. In fact, many Haringey residents and care givers took part in a campaign to resist the closure of these care homes. Sue Hessel, who was the vulnerable groups officer for Haringey Federation of Residents' Associations commented on this as a “heartless decision” which was a “tragedy for defenceless profoundly disabled residents, many of whom cannot even speak”. Additionally, Celia Webster, who led a Christian service for the elderly residents at Cranwood, challenged the idea that a fair consultation was had on behalf of service users. Webster stated that it was “meant to be a consultation but people couldn't hear what was being said. I think the whole process has been very unkind” (Royston, 2011). It is evident to see that these care homes meant a lot to many local communities in Haringey and the campaign against their closures reaffirmed this.

When residential care homes close this can be a very traumatic experience for residents and Corby notes that it can even be linked to increased mortality (2006: 124). Yet with the closure of beds and residential care homes, along with financial strain of recent years, it is not easy to ensure people remain in their home area.

Challenges for care home residents

There are several challenges which face older people who reside at care homes. Melville-Wiseman (2013: 189) notes that placing a person in a residential care home distant from their home area can present multiple challenges. The role of family and social networks in wellbeing for older people is paramount.

Dowling (2022: 218-19) has highlighted that there has been a distinct lack of value attached to social care and this came to light during the pandemic when COVID-19 patients were discharged from NHS hospitals into care homes in order to free up hospital beds. This was actioned even though care homes did not have the appropriate protective equipment or resources to both treat and shield residents.

Reports of care homes and staff not having the right procedures or facilities to handle the pandemic were widespread. Nearly a year later in March 2021 over 39,000 care home residents had died with COVID-19.

The pandemic brought to the fore how social care had been afforded a low priority with staff shortages, low pay, difficult working conditions and inadequate protective equipment.

Retention of care home staff

UK care homes employ over 440,000 people (Laing, 2018) yet both recruitment and retention has been difficult (Peace, 2022: 206). Education and ongoing staff training is also an issue. Care home workers work longer shifts and take less breaks, and then also face declining pay, inadequate training, limited supplies and poor working conditions (Dowling, 2022: 127). 'BB' from the local authority thought some of the key challenges facing care homes were to do with staffing:

"Staffing is the main one. Obviously, they are having to compete in the market with, you know, with supermarkets who are now, you know, obviously kind of at least offering the staff London living wage and above. There are obviously the utilities, you know, with gas and electric obviously in a care home, ... Food prices, I think that also went up a little bit...but the main thing that we can hear from care homes is the cost of staffing, and it's mainly the staffing cost."

**Interview with local authority adult social care team staff member 'BB',
29 August 2024**

Discussion of people's experiences in Haringey – main themes emerging

After the interviews with key participants these were the main themes which emerged:

- What people had to say about caring for elderly loved ones.
- The inadequacy of care provision outside the home forces families into the role of unpaid carers.
- Domiciliary care can be helpful to families, but it is not always appropriate or sufficient.
- Caring responsibilities falling onto families and young carers.
- How people felt about recent care home closures in Haringey.
- The lack of adequate, safe care homes in Haringey.
- The psycho-social impacts of isolation within care homes.
- Unpaid carers wanted clear and tangible support from the local authority.
- The importance of a care home near family and social networks.

What people had to say about caring for elderly loved ones

There were some profound views regarding caring for elderly loved relatives that we heard from many residents. For instance, one person told us:

"I help care for my grandma, so anything that she needs done, I will try and help as much as I can, whether it be shopping, physically doing things for her inside her home...I am the only grandchild, so since I live literally four minutes down the road I'm the closest person to her, so it's been a bit hard because I've got to drop my kids to school, then I've got to go to her..."

Explaining her daily routine she stated:

"I see my son off to the bus stop, drop my daughter and then I will walk to her house from my daughter's school. I will make sure she's had her breakfast, I'll make sure she's had her wash, any clothes washing that needs to be done, hoovering, and I'll stay with her for a little bit, so she has that company."

Also:

"I've got a food business, so during the week I will do a meal-prep for her, so I know she's got her lunch and dinner. She likes to cook her own breakfast, but lunch and dinner I will definitely do for her."

Interview with OO, 13 September 2024

Another participant articulated:

"Well, we have thought about it [a care home], but you know, that's probably the last resort. You know, I'm looking after mum, [but] I still got two kids. Three kids now, my son's back and they all under 14 so it is a little bit of a strain. Getting them to school, getting them back, that's basically what it is...and trying to fit mum in at the same time but that's why the carers that come in..."

Interview with PP, 9 May 2024

The challenge in caring for elderly loved ones was emphasised by this participant:

"Some people haven't got a choice. Now if you haven't got a house, and you haven't got no family [sic], you're either gonna live in a hospital till your dying days or they're gonna put you in a home. That's basically it. I personally believe that mum deserves more than that, and we don't want her last days to be locked up and have someone else look after her. But that could be the case, if anything was to happen to me, tomorrow, who knows, she'd have to go into a home unfortunately"

Interview with PP, 9 May 2024

Another participant informed us:

"I don't think that they're given as much importance as what they should be. I think it's not even just within Haringey though, is it? There's not enough support for these elderly people within the borough. I feel like there's not as many home visits and stuff, so not as frequent anymore for people that require it. From the district nurses or stuff like that, that used to be a lot more of an option, for people that struggle to get out. Accessing appointments is not very easy, especially now the technology is changing so, so fast....".

Interview with VW, 11 November 2024

The inadequacy of care provision outside the home forces families into the role of unpaid carers

"I wouldn't allow my parents to go into a care home. I wouldn't allow them to go into a hospital. I delivered comprehensive care within their house using personal budgets, but I admit that you didn't back then because my father died in 2014. Back then, you didn't get any help or support with personal budgets. That's why Disability Action Haringey has been set up to help and support people."

Interview with MM, 14 May 2024

Another person also mentioned:

"My mum was in a sheltered accommodation and the carers were not even coming in. I just said, 'no, I will look after her myself at home'."

Interview with WW, 14 May 2024

Domiciliary care can be helpful to families, but it is not always appropriate or sufficient

In terms of the quality of care which can be offered within the home by domiciliary care workers, the Haringey-based care provider offered the following reasons as to how it can work in practice for families within Haringey, highlighting how families can be involved with care planning for elderly loved ones:

"I write care plans and so does my deputy. When we do an assessment, customers, family, next of kin, neighbours, whoever wants to be involved in their care or is helping them with their care package we invite them. Any time there is a review, we invite everybody again, if there are any changes. We had a lady recently who went to hospital, she had no next of kin, we went to the hospital, found her and saw her. This is important, whether people are on their own or with their families, that we always going to be there for them."

Interview with a Haringey Domiciliary Care Provider, 27 November 2024

Hence, this growing trend is also recognised by the local authority, 'AA' mentioned:

"It is a national trend. People see the benefit of vulnerable adults being in the company of their own loved ones. That's where people are happiest, but the council has to support people who look after their loved ones. That also supports the council and takes pressure off the council, which is why we have a carer's support service – a contract with Carers First and we're constantly looking at improving the resources and facilities for unpaid carers, the family members. The 'home first' model is not just Haringey. The quality of life is always better at home. Unless you have safeguarding issues and then the council has to step in."

Interview with local authority adult social care team staff member 'AA', 23 August 2024

However, one person mentioned having to complain to get the right level of the care in the home for their parents:

"I couldn't understand why they weren't getting the care that they deserved. And of course, when it came to the personal budgets... as a result of the formal complaint...his personal budget went from £250 to £780. But if I hadn't had those contacts it would have been left at the £250. So when you're looking at £250, so if they had gone into a care home or whatever, I don't know what would have happened or what responsibility the family would have had to take on, but I was determined they wouldn't. But they instead had care, I thought that was extremely organised, very structured."

Interview with MM, 14 May 2024

Whereas some families in Haringey may like the option of domiciliary care at home many people cannot afford to give up jobs to look after their loved ones. The Haringey care provider stated:

"...people still have to work themselves, don't they? They still have to bring money into the house, you know. So I do feel that a lot of people are not given the option of not working to look after family members. We all have to earn money, we have to be out there earning the money to help to keep the heating on and stuff like that for our loved ones. So if someone needs to go out and they need to earn some money, and obviously they want to make sure that their loved one is safe in their own home, or it may be that mum or dad, son or daughter, doesn't feel comfortable giving them personal care."

Interview with a Haringey Domiciliary Care Provider, 27 November 2024

Caring responsibilities falling onto families and young carers

Some participants brought attention to how young people are also bearing some of the brunt of care responsibilities for elderly loved ones. A participant who comes from a family in which many of the members perform care roles informed us:

"Yeah, my younger brother, he helps. But my sons are 23 and 16, so they're young. So they can help as well, but it's a lot of pressure, it's even impacting the younger generation now as well. They're having to do things really that they shouldn't have to be doing at such a young age. They should be concentrating on what they want to do, you know, their education, their careers and enjoying life as kids. You've got you've children being carers..."

Interview VW, 11 November 2024

Another participant, who also comes from a family who share the care for their elderly loved one, stated:

"I don't mind doing my job, that's what I'm here for. At the same time, I do have kids, so sometimes she might call me and...I'll have to juggle. So, yesterday she called me and was like, 'you need to come and do this'. I'm like 'grandma, I have to do school-run at a certain time'. So I'll have to quickly run, and be like 'grandma, are you okay?' Then I'll go and pick up my daughter from there..."

Interview with OO, 13 September 2024

These case studies illuminate a current pattern we are witnessing in Haringey wherein many family members are assuming unpaid carer roles. Akin to this, some of our participants also noted the struggles of balancing their work and parental responsibilities, with being a primary caregiver. As a result, we can see that in efforts to provide the best care possible for their elderly loved ones, that many families in Haringey have found this difficult to manage independently.

How people felt about recent care home closures in Haringey

There were a range of feelings about care home closures in Haringey, and the people we spoke to had felt that not enough had been done locally to facilitate adequate residential accommodation for the elderly who have care needs. We heard for instance:

“Well. In an ideal world, I think local authorities do need to have some of their own in-house care homes where they can control the standards and hopefully, of course, decent wages. The whole thing about staff conditions and service is just so appalling across the country, it holds everything back. That is a big issue, which everybody in the field understands, but it is still to be resolved... There ought to be... two or three or four care homes in the borough, ideally, which the council could run, or a local cooperative or an NGO with service remit. Again, it doesn't have to be the council, it could equally be a locally based organisation, hopefully, rather than a big corporate, they're the bugbear because they're only interested in their profit margins at the end of the day.”

Interview with TT, 9 May 2024

It was also emphasised that the whole discourse around an adequate modern care home for Haringey was borne out of saving money for the borough by not sending elderly people out of the borough and huge spending costs on carers. For instance, we heard:

“But over time we were allowed to believe that there was money and that at the time we were spending a fortune on sending vulnerable people, including young people with severe autism, out of borough. And so the idea was that in order to reduce those costs we wanted Osborne Grove to be a very diverse community in terms of nursing care.”

Interview with MM, 14 May 2024

Another participant told us:

“There are people out there now in the hospitals that deserve a care home, but building a care home, investing all that money into it, we should be doing that for our elderly. It should be standard. We shouldn't be closing down homes, like I said if anything was to happen to me tomorrow mum would have to go into a care home, and if there isn't one here what can we do?”

Interview with PP, 9 May 2024

The lack of adequate, safe care home provision in Haringey

One person told us:

“A care home would have been the only option we would have had if we hadn't had family. There are people out there who haven't got family unfortunately, and they haven't got no money or no property, but they have to go either in a hospital or where they gonna go? So we do need a care home...Haringey needs a care home. I mean, there's little ones here and there, there's one in Muswell Hill, I dunno if it was a home converted into one...my friend's mum was there and that's where she passed away.”

Interview with WW, 14 May 2024

Whilst another participant said:

“I just feel like at the moment you just can't rely on the state right now. I've come across more people who would look after their parents than them being in the care home.”

Interview with VW, 11 November 2024

We heard that there had been declining standards when it came to care home provision in Haringey:

“...so I always became quite politically involved because I knew George Meehan at the time, I knew Bernie Grant as well, but that was back in the days when Bernie and I were interested in criminal justice, but I knew George and he was very supportive because I haven't been that impressed by Haringey in terms of its delivery of adult social care. I've been very critical of the standards of social workers. I've banned some social workers from coming into the house of my parents. I wouldn't allow them near my parents.”

Interview with VW, 11 November 2024

A person emphasised:

“I think sheltered housing is underpromoted as well as probably under-resourced, but I think there's just a peripatetic warden, i.e. there isn't a warden in every site, so it's probably because of staff shortage, the usual thing nowadays, not as well looked after as they often might be. But peripatetic wardens can be all right if you have several of them and they're on a rota rather than you wait days and days before anybody comes”

Interview with TT, 9 May 2024

“...And with £1,500 being for a basic home, you're talking about a lot of money very, very quickly. But I think with the care homes, the image that you get is that of very much of a passive type of service. So like when my aunt lived in so-called supported housing, which then came to assisted living, and even assisted living was nothing, a few weeks ago they found a woman dead. She'd been dead for three weeks in her room, and I knew the woman.”

Interview with MM, 14 May 2024

The participant mentioned to us:

“...because there was a case that got into the papers, must have been about 18 months ago, of a woman who was very much on her own, except she had two really good positive neighbours who would pop in to see her and whatever. And they became very worried about her and they went to a journalist because they weren't getting any help for her, but she had a care package. So she had carers going in, like he was saying before, several times a day, to get her washed, dressed in the morning, and then to make sure she had something to eat at lunchtime, and then to be got ready for bed at the end. However, what they were saying was that this woman was living basically in her own shit, that there was dirt all around the place etc. But the answer back from Haringey was that the carers aren't there..”

Interview with MM, 14 May 2024

Some people within Haringey are also starting to plan their own care options so as not to be a burden on their children, a person mentioned to us,

"...one of the scenarios that were given to us was where if you don't develop an effective will and some solicitors aren't necessarily that good at it as we've been told, so you've got to choose carefully. You could have situations where, and this example that was given to us, if you don't set up your monies, you could have say a husband who - say the wife dies, the husband then remarries or goes off, you know, so the money could then go to his partner rather than to the children. So it's about sort of you know having to think about all these things or if one of the partners goes into a care home all that money can then kind of drift away if you don't start thinking about protecting."

Interview with MM, 14 May 2024

"I have to think, we have to think, I just hope I die very quickly, because I wouldn't want my daughter to go through what I've gone through. You know, I had to give up my work."

Interview with MM, 14 May 2024

The psycho-social impacts of isolation within care homes

The psycho-social impact of a care home on older people was raised as concern:

"It's about actually having proactive care plans that would be regularly reviewed... You know a few years ago there would be people coming in, they would do exercise, they would have talks, they would have film nights, all of that. It's about not just sort of thinking about their physical needs, but their mental needs."

Interview MM, 14 May 2024

“...so going into a care home, we have thought about it, but mum has still got her memory, she's still got her independence. So if we take her there and just leave her there, that might break her.”

Interview with PP, 9 May 2024

Another informed us:

“My mum was just so lonely in there, with hardly anybody to speak to. This was another reason why we decided on caring for her from my home.”

Interview with WW, 14 May 2024

People mentioned some of the challenges which older people may experience in care homes. Accounts, news stories and exposés about care home abuses or inadequate care served to turn people away from putting their parents within care homes. Someone said:

“The ones that make the telly, you know, it's literally frightening...you don't know what goes on in there. That's why we'd rather do it ourselves while we can, but it does put a lot of strain on me.”

Interview with PP, 9 May 2024

The Haringey-based domiciliary care provider noted the importance of vetting staff:

“As part of the recruitment process you have to be so careful, and we are quite strict not just in the recruitment process but also for any issues, concerns and things like that.”

Interview with PP, 9 May 2024

A further challenge which we were told about was in regard to older people being placed in care homes in neighbouring boroughs in locations which are not the easiest to get to, especially for family members who may not drive. While placing an elderly loved one in a home in Barnet or Enfield may on paper be closer, we heard that some of these locations are quite obscure. For example:

"The bigger problem is for people who've got a part 3 care home place from Haringey and they're somewhere further away now. I think that I mentioned the visiting is sometimes difficult for relatives. There's somebody I've been trying to go and see with their close friend but we can never find a time when she and I can actually find a taxi to take us over to this place. Whereas if it was half a mile or a mile away in Haringey, we'd probably have gone there a long while ago. Yeah? So I'm just giving you a personal example of how difficult it can be to, say more than one person wants to visit this person in a home which is not in Haringey but somewhere in the neighbouring borough. It can actually be quite difficult to fix all that up."

Interview with TT, 9 May 2024

The placement of an elderly loved one in a care home which is difficult to travel to, although on paper it may seem close, was mentioned by several people:

"And so that's a big factor in getting people more housebound than they need to be, unless they've got a friend or a partner who can arrange things for them. So yeah I mean isolation at home if there's nobody to visit you, never mind going to see somebody who's quite a distance away and it's going to be two or three bus rides, that is a significant issue, no doubt about it.."

Interview with TT, 9 May 2024

The challenge with this is that there can be a lack of oversight:

"... And the other thing is monitoring. I think the monitoring of people because the local authority doesn't have the staff now to monitor people elsewhere, you know, so they're dependent on any reports that they get from others. So the standard of care of what's happening to the resident, who's a Haringey person living outside of Haringey, is often beyond the ken of the commissioners themselves. They don't know what's happening because they haven't got the staff themselves to monitor it. They depend on any news they get back from Barnet or Enfield or farther afield. So I think the lack of monitoring is a significant thing given that there are very few homes now left in the borough, with the exception of places like Protheroe which does well. of."

Interview with TT, 9 May 2024

Unpaid carers wanted clear and tangible support from the local authority

There was a feeling among some participants that there could more support from the local authority. These feelings have also led to frustrations and distrust:

"It's mentally and emotionally hard enough. Without the lack of support, there for us as well. What is going to happen to my brother when my mum goes? Just left out on the street. Obviously, he won't be able to stay in the same house. The council, they'll take it off him. Then what's gonna happen to him? They'd have to be housing in a one bedroom. Obviously, they'd have to but it's a 3-bedroom house there's no way the council's gonna leave a young single man in a three-bedroom house! They've already told my mum. Don't you think I still worry the guys can change their mind like they want to. I don't trust them. I don't trust the local authorities."."

Interview with VW, 11 November 2024

Another carer, 'OO', similarly mentioned:

"My daughter was diagnosed with autism at three and a half [years of age], so since she was three and a half, I have been her carer. Her autism is not severe, she is high functioning, meaning the government doesn't help her as much so I...am her carer and she gets her right money, but I do find that some of the challenges I do face is that I don't get the correct support because the government feel like because she's high-functioning she's not entitled to the rest of the stuff that she needs. Which isn't fair..."

"...There's not much for her, and there's not much information I can take. They will say 'this is what you do for a child that's not talking, or a child that's still in nappies.' I'm like: so what do you do for a child that does Algebra at the age of six, or plays the piano, or can play chess? What is there for these kids with higher intelligence? There is absolutely nothing at all."

Interview with OO, 13 September 2024

The Haringey care provider supervisor we spoke to noted:

"If I am being honest, I think local authorities generally, not just this one, should be more transparent about the care that can be provided to people, and not necessarily only offer it when needed. I think it needs to be transparent and say 'these are the services that we can offer you, if needed', because there's just a small minority of people that know about care. While there is a huge majority that have no idea about how to get care and who to even contact."

Interview with a Haringey Domiciliary Care Provider, 27 November 2024

The voices of these carers emphasise a key necessity for clear and tangible support for carers from the local authority.

Many of these carers have been experiencing emotional and financial strain, stress, and sometimes even loneliness. Others are managing complex situations, such as the participant who has been caring for their daughter with high-functioning autism alone, with no support from the local authority due to how the daughter's autism is perceived. In this case, the participant has also been caring for their elderly loved one at the same time, dedicating all of their time and efforts to supporting their family. Therefore, we can see that many carers are struggling to handle complex cases of care on their own and need greater support from the local authority.

Considering the inherent challenges that carers face on a regular basis, having clear and tangible support networks from the local authority would be deeply beneficial to relieving some of the emotional and financial pressure that these carers experience. It would also allow carers to have time to prioritise their own wellbeing and speak with local authority members directly about any concerns that they have.

The importance of a care home near family and social networks

A predominant topic within our dialogue with the local residents was related to the amount of Haringey residents being relocated out of the borough, and how future work that local stakeholders had planned with the local authority aimed to tackle this through the expansion of available provision within Haringey. This then poses the ethical dilemma of hindering contact with a people's social network and those who know them.

When talking about the impact of relocation of Haringey residents to other boroughs, one participant explained this in relation to Barnet and Enfield further:

"So nowadays most of what we used to call parts three, the old people's home placements are made in either homes in Barnet or Enfield, nearly all private or voluntary run, or in some cases beyond. And the big difficulty there is relatives being able to get to the places, because even in Enfield sometimes you might have to take a couple of buses, it's just an awful long way. Yeah, and you can't always afford a taxi if you're not very well off yourself. So the further away a home is from where people used to live, the worse it tends to be in terms of isolation of the person who's in the home, I think that's the issue."

Interview with TT, 9 May 2024

A participant explained how their work on planning Osborne Grove was meant to allow Haringey residents with autism to return to the borough:

“Osborne Grove was going to, in some ways, facilitate these people coming back into borough. I think also we had spent a lot of time with architects on the sensory environment, and creating a sensory environment which was suitable for this group of people [with autism].”

Interview with MM, 14 May 2024

We can see that many local residents have been affected by the relocation of service users from care homes in Haringey to those in neighbouring boroughs. While there has been planned work that helps to target those who were affected most predominantly by recent care home closures in Haringey, residents have not been sufficiently updated and informed about this proposed work.

Conclusion

The older people's housing market in the UK is experiencing a prolonged period of increasing demand. As the population ages, the demand for all types of older people's housing will only increase. With the industry currently only holding 772,000 units, we can see that the sector will struggle to meet the needs of the population. This is emphasised further considering that there could be a shortage of up to 46,000 units over the next five years.

With Haringey's population of residents over the age of 75 increasing at an accelerated rate, it becomes clear that the number of people who will be requiring adult social care is also steadily rising.

While this may ordinarily present a significant 'market potential' for both new and existing operators, many local residents have lost trust in the service delivery of adult social care to meet the needs of their elderly loved ones.

As this research has clearly shown, the rise of family members adopting caregiver roles for their loved ones to have greater autonomy and peace of mind, demonstrates that there is a transformative shift taking place in adult social care delivery. Rebuilding community trust and supporting unpaid carers and caring staff will be important.

In terms of the closure of care homes, the reasons for this have varied: policy shifting towards ageing in place; community care; the ending of guaranteed state support for residential care in the early 1990s; poor planning; lack of urgency and inadequate distribution of local government resources. There is also competition among care homes to gain a small pool of means-tested clients funded by limited local authority budgets.

Some care homes have also closed due to increased state regulation of residential care related to space and environmental standards. Hence, some care home owners simply felt that they could not keep up with the new standards being set and the increased regulation.

The rising costs of residential care, particularly now when families are already struggling in the post-pandemic landscape, has meant that residential care is simply inaccessible for less affluent individuals. There is a double-whammy of inequity when we add the factor of a socially deprived neighbourhood, which then has the knock-on effect of creating socio-spatial inequity of provision as private residential care providers locate to affluent locations. Private residential care home providers tend to prefer residents who are both low-dependency and low-cost so that they can increase their profits.

Within Haringey, local residents have taken a very active approach towards caring for elderly loved ones. Here, they have provided us with invaluable insight into what services have been working well, the improvements that service users would like to see and the difficulties that different members of the community have faced when caring for the elderly.

One of the concerns raised was that further isolation of a vulnerable person can potentially lead to poor care being ignored. Hence, any changes in a person's behaviour or presentation may be overlooked. This is of particular concern when there is a lack of continuous contact with family members or close friends who know the person better.

From this, we can see clearly that residents are concerned about the quality of care that their elderly loved ones are receiving, to the extent that some have taken care plans into their own hands.

Recommendations

Our findings have shown that many members of the local community are dissatisfied with current adult social care provision. The impact of care home closures in Haringey has had a stark effect on all who interact with the service, including elderly people, people who are learning disabled, carers, and relatives.

Therefore, Healthwatch Haringey proposes the following seven recommendations which are aimed at supporting, representing, and including local residents in improvements to Haringey's adult social care service.

1. Increase financial support for unpaid carers in Haringey

From the interviews that we conducted, it became clear that many residents across Haringey are caring for their loved ones in the home. This has created strain for some families in Haringey who are also working full-time jobs and looking after their children. Additionally, interviewees mentioned the lack of help that they had received from the local authority in terms of personal budgets, maintenance costs and built-in equipment needed to facilitate domiciliary care. This recommendation therefore would be for there to be increased financial support for unpaid carers in Haringey to relieve some of the current pressures on families who are caring for their loved ones in the home.

2. Raise greater awareness of pathways for caring for the elderly in Haringey

After hearing from different residents, but also care providers in Haringey, we found that residents are not provided with adequate information detailing the different options and pathways for caring for the elderly in Haringey. Based on the feedback we heard from service users, the promotion of the various options, including 'sheltered housing', 'assisted living' and 'supported living', would ensure that residents are fully informed about all the residential options available. This would be especially important for those residents who told us that they do not feel that they really have a choice in where they can go.

3. Facilitate community building through increased service-user engagement

Based on our engagement with the local community, we recommend that the local authority engage more with local residents about care home provision in Haringey. Within this type of consultation, there would be increased transparency from the local authority about its plans so that Haringey residents can have realistic expectations, receive feedback about future work and give feedback on current services to co-produce solutions.

4. Increase joint working between care service providers and families

Based on the insights from the residents in relation to care home provision in Haringey, we found that there were many families concerned by the quality of care that their loved ones receive. Whilst different families are opting for varying models of care, some of them noted that they benefitted from joint working with care providers where they had input on their loved ones' care packages and plans that were regularly reviewed. Therefore, we believe that a consistent model of joint-working between the different care providers and families would help to bridge gaps in service delivery.

Further to this, council and care providers should collaborate to devise a comprehensive set of the range of care options for different types of service-users who can then be referred into these care options. Council and care providers can engage with people and then provide information and raise awareness. Hence, some sort of awareness campaign is required in Haringey.

5. Enhance holistic support services in Haringey aligned with care services

Within Haringey, there are many holistic support networks for elderly residents, including Community Connectors at Haringey Reach and Connect. Activities available in the borough range from creative dance, yoga, free fitness and workout sessions, to Caribbean dance, walking football, chair-based exercise, walking groups, line dancing and gardening. Such holistic and intergenerational initiatives promote independence and regeneration for Haringey's residents over 50. It is our recommendation that care home services are more closely aligned with these holistic support networks.

6. Provide tailored support for vulnerable service users in Haringey

The service-user feedback we received also highlighted that many residents value tailored support for vulnerable service users in Haringey who struggle to get out to access health and social care services. The participants who spoke with us about caring for their loved ones from the home stated that this would have been helped by a visiting or in-house carer and some mentioned that they would have valued the addition of a district nurse/health professional to perform health checks, check-ups after an accident/fall and for the prevention of infection. This recommendation therefore includes that the local authority should support families to access these tailored support services for vulnerable service users in Haringey.

7. Improve current care home services based on feedback

The insights that we received from Haringey residents revealed many of the negative concerns and experiences that people have had in relation to current care home services. This helps to explain why many families have turned to caring for their loved ones in the home. With participants noting the expensive costs of putting their loved ones in care, they also noted that the quality of care provided did not match these exuberant costs. We therefore recommend that the current care homes are improved based on the service-user feedback that we have highlighted in this report.

All the listed recommendations above should consider the everyday challenges that many different service users of adult social care face.

Adjusting to any type of care model can be a lifechanging transition, and service users may experience severe loneliness, bereavement and nostalgia for their old way of life.

These recommendations come with the acknowledgement that care provision can and will affect everyone in the borough, as we will all get to this stage of life where such support is crucial to our wellbeing.

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