

New good practice guide emphasises importance of time in care home closures

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Continued reductions in social care funding will create changes in care - with councils seeking to reduce costs by closing remaining in-house provision, while some independent care homes will continue to close as their owners leave the sector

Meanwhile some independent sector care home providers (like all businesses) are facing increased financial pressure as a result of the current economic situation.

Commissioned by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, the University of Birmingham's Health Services Management Centre (HSMC) has produced a good practice guide aimed at helping local councils re-assess and resettle older people in care homes when they close. The guide stresses the importance of not making rushed decisions, offering practical advice on managing closures and providing a series of helpful checklists.

A pdf of the [report \(/Documents/news/BirminghamBrief/AchievingClosureReport.pdf\)](#) (PDF - 518KB) is available.

Closures can cause major stress to residents, families, care home staff and assessors and so it is important that they are handled in an appropriate way. The guide highlights the difficulty in emergency closures where local authorities may lack access to relevant information at short notice, making it difficult to provide the right support for those in need at such a time of uncertainty.

Drawing on existing literature and good practice from local councils, the guide is designed to cover planned closure programmes and emergency unplanned closures. Emerging results from a detailed study in Birmingham – believed to be one of the largest care home closure programmes in the UK – informed the guide and provides direct data on outcomes for older people over time as care homes close.

Lead author, Professor Jon Glasby, Professor of Health and Social Care and Director of HSMC at the University of Birmingham, commented:

"For many years we have used markets to help deliver care services. While this can have real advantages, the use of markets also means that we have to be ready for market failure. Our good practice guide is designed to help local authorities by summarising what works in this complex area of policy and practice.

"We know that care home closures can have a negative impact on older residents, but that this can be minimised if good practice is followed. In some circumstances we can even improve outcomes for people.

"Overall, the key message from the guide is that good practice takes time. Although this isn't an exact science, my own view from looking at the evidence and at local practice to date is that local authorities need at least six months to be able to do this well."

According to Peter Hay, President of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, the guide *"will provide a purposeful clarity over what constitutes good practice in this complicated area, and will also enhance the way we manage situations that inevitably carry high anxiety for all."*

As well as the importance of time, the other emerging themes are:

- The role of assessment
- The impact of closures
- Communication and information
- Barriers and success factors

'Achieving closure': good practice in supporting older people during residential care closures is a joint publication by the Health Services Management Centre (HSMC), University of Birmingham and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), published in association with the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE).

The guide is accompanied by a prior literature review on care home closures from the Institute of Applied Social Studies at the University of Birmingham, previously commissioned by Birmingham City Council and now republished by the University and ADASS in association with SCIE.

The [full literature review \(/Documents/news/BirminghamBrief/LiteratureReview.docx\)](#) (MSWord - 99KB) is available online.

Notes to Newsdesks

This guide has been commissioned by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS). The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) plans to follow up this report, in conjunction with ADASS and HSMC, with practical implementation tools.

For further media information, please contact Ben Hill, PR Manager, University of Birmingham, Tel 0121 4145143, 07789921163

Drew Clode, ADASS Policy/Press Adviser, 07976 837755 04 drew.clode@adass.org.uk (<mailto:drew.clode@adass.org.uk>)