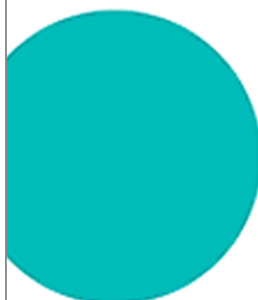


Social care in the community



Social care in the community



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Introduction

In this course you will explore social care, a major area of provision in health and social care. All societies face the challenge of supporting people who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to function without assistance or supervision.

It will focus on one important area of social care – home care for older people.

Core Questions

- How do people access social care services?
- What do home carers do?

This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course [K101 *An introduction to health and social care*](#).

Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand the variety of caring activity within the UK for older people in the home
- describe care situations for older people in the home objectively
- identify aspects of care relationships which conform to principles of good care practice.

1 Entering the world of social care

To give you an understanding of why people need social care and how it works, we begin with a case study. This is Ann and Angus's story:

Activity 1 Getting to know Ann, Angus and their family

Allow about 45 minutes

To bring the subject of family care to life, you are about to listen to a case study in the form of an audio drama. This will bring out issues vividly – you'll hear tensions mounting and be able to imagine the scenes for yourself. The people you will hear are actors but what happens is based on real lives.

Task 1 An incident on the stairs

The aim of this first part of the activity is to get yourself involved in the complexity of daily life in Ann and Angus's family. Families provide the setting for many key life processes, so people's experiences of caring and being cared for are always interwoven with other important strands of family life.

Listen to Audio 1. After listening, make notes in answer to the following questions:

- What are the needs of each family member during the audio clip?
- What is each family member feeling during the audio clip?
- Are they happy?



Audio content is not available in this format.

[Audio 1 Incident on the stairs](#)

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Provide your answer...

Discussion

- Angus needs to get to the toilet. Needs physical help getting upstairs. Needs understanding of the experiences and difficulties he faces. Needs moral support.

- Ann needs help with the physical task of supporting Angus. Needs moral support.
- Bob needs to be greeted, to relax after work, have his tea, then go off to play football.
- Zoe needs to be greeted – to talk about implications of failing English – have tea.
- Angus feels frightened by sudden loss of strength or control and by his fall. Bitter about Parkinson's. Anxious to get to the toilet. Seems hostile to Bob. Doesn't want help from him.
- Ann feels frightened about Angus's fall. Anxious not to be distracted from helping him. Cross that Bob prioritises football. Frustrated by Zoe's tantrum.
- Bob feels frustrated that Ann continues to run such risks helping Angus. Anxious about getting to football.
- Zoe feels anxious about failure and what her parents will think. Angry about being ignored.

It seems that no one in the family is happy, at least not at this point. This two minute insight into the family's life demonstrates both the responsibility of caring and the negative effects it can have on people's lives.

Now do Task 2.

Task 2 What is happening to Ann's life?

The next audio is in two parts. In the first, the family is in the living room. In the second part, Ann meets her friend Cheryl in a pub.

Listen to Audio 2 and make notes in answer to the following questions:

- What are the sources of tension between the family members?
- What is Cheryl trying to achieve?
- What is Ann's response to Cheryl?



Audio content is not available in this format.

[Audio 2 Tensions round the television – Cheryl makes Ann think](#)

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Provide your answer...

Discussion

Table 1

	Who and what is annoying them?	Underlying reasons
Zoe	Annoyed with Angus for having the television on so loud while she is doing homework – also irritated that his needs get priority.	Maybe she's worried about school failures and wants help with homework? Is she upset that Angus's needs seem to

		dominate family life, and that her mother seems preoccupied by caring duties?
Bob	Wants to watch football – growing irritation at Angus assuming control of television – annoyed at being expected to discipline Zoe – angered by Angus asserting ownership and suggesting he moves out.	Bob has to live in his father-in-law's house on Angus's terms because Ann is committed to caring for him. Does he feel that if he isn't allowed to be 'the man' in his own home, why take responsibility for Zoe's discipline?
Ann	The arguing gets to her – she turns on Zoe – then on Bob – then starts vacuum cleaning in frustration – annoyed with them all for not getting on together.	Does she feel guilty for spending less time with Zoe and Bob than she'd like – and responsible for their frustrations with Angus? Does she worry that things are falling apart?
Angus	Has few enough remaining pleasures – can't even watch his own television in peace – inadequate son-in-law always wants to watch football and tries to throw his weight around.	Is Angus in pain? Does he find company tiring and confusing – especially young people like Zoe? Is he worried Bob will lure Ann away and leave him helpless? Has he always thought Ann wasted herself on Bob?

These are only ideas – after all, it's a fictitious case study, so anything goes. The point is to think about how much goes on below the surface of family life.

Cheryl seems worried that Ann is letting herself be ground down by her sense of duty to Angus and her promise to her mother. Cheryl wants Ann to recognise that she is a carer and needs support.

Ann resists seeing herself as a carer. She sees what she is doing as fairly normal, and thinks she ought to be able to cope.

2 Home care: workers and users

Most often, family and friends provide much of the support older people require. However, some people don't have family and friends to draw on. And for those who do, sometimes there is a struggle to meet a person's full care needs – as was the case with Ann in the audio. This is where social care comes in and – in the following activity – you will find out how people access these services and what they might receive.



Figure 1 For several decades now, home care workers have been an important source of support

You now turn your attention to the people on the front line of social care: those who provide home care, and those who receive it. If people, like Angus, are to be able to stay in their own homes, despite significant health problems, the workers who support them become ever more important.

2.1 What is the job?

Going into someone else's home demands a range of skills in order to work with different people. Some home care clients are seriously ill and need skilled care, including the use of sophisticated equipment. Others need help only with personal care, such as washing, dressing or shopping. The needs of others may involve countering isolation by helping them to maintain social contact with people.

Underpinning these different tasks is the need to establish the right kind of relationships with the client. Home carers have to balance being friendly and providing company with professionalism and doing the job within the time allowed in the care plan.

This is a challenge for many people who work in health and social care, but it is particularly acute for people who work in home care, because their job involves going into

people's homes. They are not working in their own workplace where they can be in control. Rather, they have to adapt to each person in their home.

In the next activity, you will look at how this role plays out in practice.

A home carer's job

In this activity you explore what it's like to be a home care worker and a user of home care services. You will observe visits by home care workers to four clients of the Cardiff-based agency, Somebody Cares.

Activity 2 The home carer's job

Allow about 1 hour

Somebody Cares provided personal care, domestic help and support with the activities of daily life such as shopping. Since these videos were made, Somebody Cares was sold on to another company and then was shut down when the company reorganised

In this activity, think about the following questions.

1. What does the home carer's job involve?
2. What skills does it take to do the job and manage relationships?

Task 1 Getting to know the case study

Start by familiarising yourself with the Somebody Cares case study in Video 1. Watch the whole case study right through, so that you get to know the people involved, including their different:

- care needs
- forms of support provided
- domestic situations.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1 Somebody Cares case study](#)



Provide your answer...

Now that you have viewed the whole case study, it's time to focus in more closely.

Task 2 Focusing in on the job of home carer

Revisit each of the four cases in the video.

As you watch each one, ask yourself the following questions:

- What work does the home carer do for the client?
- What practical skills do they need?
- How would you describe their attitude to the job?

Use the text boxes below each video to record your answers. While you are working on a case, use the menu at the bottom of the screen to pause the video. You will probably need to watch each case through more than once.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 2 Case 1: Kevin and Elvis visit Brian](#)



Provide your answer...

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 3 Case 2: Liz visits Clarice](#)



Provide your answer...

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 4 Case 3: Elvis goes with Aerwyn to his class



Provide your answer...

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 5 Case 4: Maria goes shopping with Lyn



Provide your answer...

Discussion

Here are our thoughts. Again, don't worry if they are different from yours.

Table 2

	Elvis and Kevin with Brian	Liz with Clarice	Elvis with Aerwyn	Maria with Lyn
What work do they do for the client?	Move Brian with hoist, wash and dress him, prepare breakfast	Make bed, help wash and dress, bath twice a week, shopping	Accompany Aerwyn to computer class and snooker	Accompany Lyn and help with shopping as directed
What practical skills do they need?	Use hoist, help Brian to feel safe as they wash him, basic cooking, health and safety knowledge	Domestic skills, social skills	Social skills, keeping Aerwyn company, supporting him without taking over	Mainly social skills
How would you describe their attitude to the job?	Very professional, but also friendly, see themselves as supporting June's carer role, with defined roles and responsibilities	Ready to be flexible and friendly, but also very professional and clear about boundary between work and friendship	Ready to be flexible (e.g. abandons uniform at Aerwyn's request), but clear about boundary between work and friendship	Maria carefully follows Lyn's instructions, they have a cup of coffee together, but both know it is a working relationship

Boundaries

As you have seen, being a home care worker is not straightforward. It is not about being a friend, although it is about being friendly. Workers must respect health and safety requirements, they must be clear about their responsibilities, and they must be competent to carry out quite a range of tasks. They need to manage relationships so that they can do what they need to do in the time available. Clients cannot contact them individually outside the allocated working hours.



Figure 2 Preserving the boundaries between client and care worker

Marking out the boundaries between work and friendship is important. Uniforms help. As well as being practical, they indicate that this is a job, not just a casual helping-out arrangement. Despite these professional boundaries, home care workers can find the job quite upsetting. Liz Randall, whom you saw on the video working with Clarice, commented to the team who recorded the film how hard it could be:

I think it's hard keeping it so professional. A lot of them die in our job. The office can't contact us all, letting us know, and you might find out a couple of days later. I think regular carers obviously they're contacted. But it might be somebody who I only go to once a week, but I've been going there for twelve months or so. And you find out that they've suddenly gone into hospital, and when they come back out, well maybe in for a fortnight, two months, three months whatever ... they might not come back on my rota. And I think 'Oh I can't go' ... you can't go and see them. Unless it's down on your rota to go down and see them. So that's quite hard. Because you do get fond of them, you can't help it. Well you wouldn't be human I think, if you didn't.

Liz's reflection is a reminder that there is an emotional side to home care work for which workers may well need support.

2.2 The service user's perspective

We now switch from the care worker's perspective to that of the service user – or client as they are referred to in our case study. The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO, 2012) highlighted the following points from complaints it had handled:

- **Unreliability:** care workers did not always come when they were expected, or they were late.
- **Short visits:** some as brief as 15 minutes, which did not allow time to complete the tasks, or exchange pleasantries.
- **Frequent changes of staff:** this meant that service users did not get to know the workers.
- **Poorly trained staff:** staff did not always have the right skills or attitudes, or did not treat service users with respect.

This creates a pretty bleak picture of home care. The next activity provides a different perspective on it.

Activity 3 Home care: the client's perspective

Allow about 1 hour

For this activity, you go back to the scenes you viewed in Activity 2, but this time, you look at them from the client's perspective.

As you watch each case study again, consider the following questions.

- What are the client's reasons for having home care?
- Is there any choice of care worker?
- What does the client value about the care worker?

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 Case 1: Kevin and Elvis visit Brian



Provide your answer...

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3 Case 2: Liz visits Clarice



Provide your answer...

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 4 Case 3: Elvis goes with Aerwyn to his class



Provide your answer...

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 5 Case 4: Maria goes shopping with Lyn



Provide your answer...

Discussion

Here are our thoughts. Again, don't worry if they are different from yours.

Table 3

	Brian and June (Kevin and Elvis)	Clarice (Liz)	Aerwyn (Elvis)	Lyn (Maria)
What are the reasons for having home care?	Needed help at home to get out of hospital quickly after amputation	Keeps her out of a care home, allowing her to stay in her own home	To keep him company and attend classes, play snooker and have a laugh with him	Allows her to be a free agent and live her own life, despite disability
Is there any choice of care worker?	Brian does not always have the same care team (sometimes it's two men, sometimes two women)	Choice is important to Clarice, who complained when Liz was taken away, and got her back	Elvis says Aerwyn did not like the first worker he was offered, and asked for a change	Lyn has a variety of workers, and seems to like them all
What does the client value about the care worker?	Brian appreciates the work done for him, whoever does it, as it has got him out of hospital	Clarice values Liz's approach, and the fact Liz knows her so well, even down to the shopping list	Regards Elvis as a friend	Says: 'All my carers treat me as a human individual', and that Maria is kind, jolly, good company, and never rushes her

You have seen the value of home care as a way of enabling people to live in their own homes, with a reasonable quality of life, rather than in a residential home or, in Brian's case, a hospital.

These service users get a higher standard of care than those who complained to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). There is some choice of care worker, some flexibility, and the fact that no one comments on reliability suggests that they can indeed rely on people arriving when they are due. They value people who get to know how they like things done, who are friendly, who treat them as human beings.

Meeting people's needs in ways that are both professional and friendly, and flexible and reliable is not straightforward. It is, however, a very important responsibility. How would Clarice manage if for any reason Liz or another worker was unable to come? She might be in considerable difficulty and distress. To run a care agency that can provide the flexibility and, at the same time, the reliability of service that clients want is a significant challenge.

Conclusion

Access to social care starts with an assessment of need by the local authority. The benefits and barriers associated with accessing social care can shape how easily people adapt to this change in their circumstances. Having looked at access, you then considered what home care workers do in their provision of social care. Home carers help people to live independently in their own home. Flexibility and reliability, kindness and respect were seen as key personal qualities. Friendliness is important but care workers must maintain personal boundaries and not become friends.

- Home care workers provide a vital service in enabling people to stay in their own homes when they have care needs.
- Home care workers work to a care plan which determines what they do for each client.
- Home care workers need to manage relationships with clients so that there are clear boundaries between being friendly and being 'a friend'. At times this makes considerable emotional demands.
- Personal qualities are important, but not enough. Home carers need technical skills too.
- People value home care that is reliable and flexible, and which is delivered with kindness and with respect for them as individuals.

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