

Carer Support Nurse Study – End of Study Lay Summary



A research team, led by the School of Health Sciences at University of East Anglia, worked with carers and professionals from health, social care, and the voluntary sector to develop a new Carer Support Nurse role. This new role was designed to support unpaid/family carers who have their own health needs, or who need extra support for their caring role. The project has now completed, and the research team are pleased to share some of the findings and what they are doing next...

What did we do?

First, we worked with carers and professionals from health, social care, and the voluntary sector to develop this new Carer Support Nurse role. We then worked with East Coast Community Healthcare to set up the role – Karen Murphy was our Carer Support Nurse for the one-year project.

We collected information about the work that Karen did in the role, the number of carers referred to her, how she supported carers and how she worked with professionals from health, social care, and the voluntary sector. We asked carers who were in contact with her to complete a postal survey for us, and we invited them to be interviewed to share their experience with us. We also interviewed professionals from health, social care, and the voluntary sector who worked alongside her.

What did we find?

- The Carer Support Nurse provided support for carers with their health and wellbeing needs.
- She received 124 referrals from across health, social care, the voluntary sector, and from carers themselves in the 9 months that the service was open.
- Health, social care, and voluntary sector professionals felt there was a clear need for the role – because of its focus on health and wellbeing, the Carer Support Nurse provided support that was not provided by other services, and it was support that was needed.
- We found that it was important that the Carer Support Nurse service remained dedicated to carers and that an experienced registered nurse was in the role.
- The Carer Support Nurse was able to help carers share how they were feeling, what they were concerned about, and work with them to find ways to support them.
- She was described as a “super-connector”, linking carers to the information, resources, and services they need – she was also able to share her knowledge of resources and services for carers with other health care professionals, and they found this useful.
- For this one-year project there was just one Carer Support Nurse – stakeholders told us that a team of nurses could help support more carers and provide different sorts of support.
- The study’s findings suggested that the Carer Support Nurse may improve (or maintain) the quality of life of carers with complex needs.
- The Carer Support Nurse was shortlisted for two national awards and was regional winner for one. In 2023 it won the NHS Parliamentary Award for Nursing & Midwifery for the East of England, and was one of 75 projects shortlisted for a Royal College of Nursing Award from over 900 entries.
- Despite these positive findings and awards, further funding was not available for the Carer Support Nurse role after the end of the one-year project.

- Key recommendations from the study have been shared with health, social care and voluntary sector services who may be able to use them to set up similar services elsewhere.

What did we produce from the study?

We were able to produce and share widely...

- A clear description of the Carer Support Nurse role – *this will help other healthcare services who want to set up a Carer Support Nurse role.*
- A guide to local and national services who provide support for carers – *the Carer Support Nurse used this during the project and shared the information with other healthcare staff.*
- A final report and executive summary – *this will help other healthcare services who want to set up a Carer Support Nurse role.*

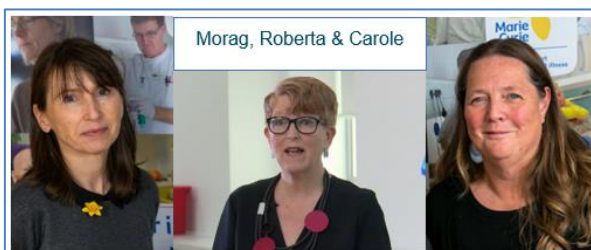
What are we doing next?

We are sharing the project findings with health, social care, and voluntary sector professionals and services, along with researchers who are working to improve carer support.

We are also working to gain funding to run a larger project to try out the Carer Support Nurse role in different areas of the country.

The Project Team:

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You can find out more about the project here: <https://arc-eoe.nihr.ac.uk/research-implementation/research-themes/palliative-and-end-life-care/carers-support-nurse-pilot>

You can contact the research team at: CSN.project@uea.ac.uk