



ARC East of England Carer Support Nurse Pilot

Family and unpaid carers play a crucial, but largely unsupported, role caring, which can damage their own health and wellbeing.

Unpaid carers can often feel unprepared for their role, and they may lack the confidence and healthcare knowledge needed to provide support to the person they are caring for. Healthcare teams also tend to focus on the patient and do not always recognise carers' needs, leading to missed signs of anxiety, tiredness, or depression. This can be detrimental to the carer's health and wellbeing, which also impacts their ability to provide care and support. To address this, we worked with carers and professionals from the health,

social, and voluntary sectors to develop a new Carer Support Nurse role.

What was the aim of the project?

This project has developed a pilot community-based role to support carers in Great Yarmouth and Waveney whose needs cannot be met by their usual healthcare team. The nurse also works with other healthcare providers to raise awareness of the carers' needs and how to support them. This pilot is being evaluated to explore the role's value and impact.

What did we do?

A three-stage study has co-developed the pilot role and is evaluating it. Stage 1 co-developed the role's operational model; Stage 2 is evaluating the role (gathering activity data and stakeholder views); and Stage 3 will co-develop recommendations.

How did we involve people?

We engaged with over 70 East of England stakeholders and groups across health, social care and the voluntary sector, over 100 carers and patients, and regional and national cross-sector leads in carer support who have endorsed the need for the Carer Support Nurse role. Cross-sector stakeholders and carers across our region co-developed the role's operational model and are contributing to its evaluation.

What is the impact so far?

The level of stakeholder enthusiasm has been remarkable; they've called the role "the missing piece of the puzzle". Carers said it would increase the likelihood of carers' health-related support needs being identified and addressed by giving carers "permission" to express them. Just knowing

there was a professional dedicated to supporting them was supportive: its very existence has had an impact. The pilot won a 2023 NHS Parliamentary Award for the East and has been shortlisted for a 2023 Royal College of Nursing award.

What next?

Data collection and analysis for the evaluation completes in Autumn 2023. It is assessing role activity through a reflective diary, interviews with the nurse and other stakeholders, role activity analysis, and gathering the experiences of carers who have interacted with the nurse. Stage 3 will then develop recommendations on whether and how the role could be introduced more widely.

For more information about this project

Scan the QR code or contact the Principal investigator, Professor Morag Farquhar (M.Farquhar@uea.ac.uk).



What is NIHR ARC East of England?

The National Institute for Health and Care Research Applied Research Collaboration East of England is one of the 15 NIHR ARCs. NIHR ARC East of England collaborates with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, and the Universities of Cambridge, East Anglia, Hertfordshire and Essex along with other NHS Trusts, Local Authorities, Integrated Care Systems, patient-led organisations, charities, and industry partners.

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