

# TWO STEPS FORWARD: NON-LINEAR PROGRESS LEADS TO BIGGER PICTURE LEARNING IN THE ASCOT AND ICECAP CARE HOMES PILOTS

## INTRODUCTION

Around 280,000 older adults (65+) live in care homes in England and Wales,<sup>1</sup> but there is no systematic way of measuring or reporting their Quality of Life (QoL). Yet validated QoL measures exist, including The Adult Social Care Outcomes Toolkit (ASCOT) and ICEpop CAPability measures for Older people (ICECAP-O) and those approaching end-of-life requiring Supported Care (ICECAP-SCM), all of which have been chosen for this feasibility study.

## OBJECTIVES/1

To pilot the ASCOT and ICECAP approaches to care planning in a small number of older adult care homes via:

- recruitment of 4 such homes willing to participate in the study (*completed*)
- working with the care homes to train staff about ASCOT and ICECAP theories and methods (*completed*)
- provision of in-person and online support, feedback and resources to enable staff to use the tools in their care planning processes (and understand the data generated) over 3-6 months (*ongoing*).

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- 7 older adult care homes (from 4 providers) have been enrolled in the pilots after recruitment delays
- ASCOT and ICECAP care planning tools are being and/or will be implemented into routine practice by care home staff and data collection and evaluation is underway
- Bigger picture learning from the pilots has led to team contributions to the debate about how to respond to the challenges of undertaking research in older adult care homes through conference participation and outputs.

## FELLOWSHIP LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Active participation in the ASCOT care homes pilots is core to my ARC KSS Social Care Themed Project Fellowship. This unique and valuable opportunity has:

- widened my knowledge and experience of social care research and practice, especially in older adult care homes
- expanded my understanding of the reality of doing research in complex care settings and the support, people skills, patience and flexibility required to achieve results
- supported my development as an applied social care researcher in numerous ways.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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## AIM

The final phase of the ARC NPP<sup>2</sup> Well-being in Care Homes: Implementation of (outcomes-based) care planning project<sup>3</sup> aimed to pilot ASCOT and ICECAP approaches to care planning in a number of older adult care homes in England, including one each in Kent and Surrey. The aim was to explore the feasibility of using both approaches by examining the effectiveness, acceptability and use of the tools by care home staff and residents, thus building and mobilising evidence of their impact for practice.

## OBJECTIVES/2

To undertake a process evaluation of the pilots to explore perceptions, understanding and experiences of the ASCOT and ICECAP care planning approaches, their implementation and operation via:

- surveys of staff participating in the ASCOT and ICECAP training and/or subsequent care planning conversations with residents
- interviews with care home residents, together with family members and staff who were involved.

## FUTURE IMPACT

- Through this cross-ARC evaluation of the use of ASCOT and ICECAP measures in a small number of older adult care homes, the team hope to shed new light on their applicability for residents and staff in such settings. If appropriate and with additional funding, study findings could lead to a larger, national roll-out and evaluation.
- Care home homes/providers choosing to continue using ASCOT and ICECAP tools after the project ends will be supported to do so. This would further embed approaches to person-centred care planning which focus on the QoL of older care home residents.

## FELLOWSHIP PROJECT OUTPUTS SO FAR ...

- Conference paper and Three Minute Thesis (3MT<sup>®</sup>) presentation
- Research posters.

(For details, please scan the code to view the project summary.)



## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2023, 9 October). Older people living in care homes in 2021 and changes since 2011. Office for National Statistics. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/olderpeoplelivingincarehomesin2021andchangesince2011/2023-10-09#data-sources-and-quality>

<sup>2</sup> NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex. (2025). National Priorities Programme Adult Social Care & Social Work. NIHR ARC KSS. <https://arc-kss.nihr.ac.uk/npp-adult-social-care-social-work/>

<sup>3</sup> NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex. (2025). Project summary: Well-being in Care Homes: Implementation of (outcomes-based) care planning. NIHR ARC KSS. <https://arc-kss.nihr.ac.uk/document/download/774-well-being-in-care-homes-summary/file>