

How Can Psychological First Aid Support Care workers in UK Care Homes?

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What is the problem?

Care homes have been dramatically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff working in these settings have been affected by increased workload, resident deaths, and negative publicity. It is therefore important that we understand the best ways to help care home staff deal with traumatic events.

Psychological First Aid (PFA) is an intervention used to reduce the impact of trauma. PFA aims to increase feelings of safety, hopefulness and connectedness, and has been shown to be useful for reducing stress and improving coping. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Public Health England suggested PFA should be available to all front-line staff, and it was made free through the government website. However, little is known about how useful PFA is for care home staff.

What we did

We used an online survey to understand how many people working in UK nursing and care homes have had PFA training, how PFA may affect stress and coping abilities compared to staff who have not had the training, and what their experiences of the training was like.

PFA "has helped me cope better, I was thinking of giving up at one time now I have the strength to carry on".

"I think it's useful for anyone suffering mental distress despite profession or grade."

What we found

388 staff members from care homes across the UK took part in the survey, 37 (9.5%) had done PFA training. Staff who had PFA training said they coped better, felt safer and more hopeful compared to staff who had not had the training. They also told us they found it useful for increasing their self-awareness, improving their relationships with others, and helped them to overcome stress.

Staff members also shared that a lack of awareness of PFA made accessing the training challenging but believed the benefits of the training mean it should be mandatory for everyone working in a nursing or care home.

Personal factors

- ❖ Staff with a disability or long-term health condition had higher stress, lower coping, and lower feelings of safety, hopefulness and connectedness than those without a health condition.
- ❖ Managers and nurses said they felt safer and more connected than senior carers and carers
- ❖ Coping and hopefulness was higher for BAME staff than white staff.
- ❖ Male staff said they felt safer than female staff did.
- ❖ Staff educated to degree level or higher scored better for coping than those educated to diploma or lower.

"Training allowed myself to notice my own limits and seek advice when I felt I was heading for burnout."

"After training I now look at everything with a different perspective, more relaxed and supportive of others"

What next?

Findings suggest PFA training is useful for supporting care home staff facing traumatic events. More research is needed with larger groups of health / social care working doing PFA training to understand how it may help well-being over longer periods of time. Work is also needed to see how the training can be tailored to meet the specific needs of staff in these settings as they continue to deal with the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Find out how to access free PFA training here

<https://tinyurl.com/yckpv7b3>