

Care Home Nursing

Guidance for RCN members in a proposed care home closure

Care homes sometimes need to close or change ownership due to financial difficulties or challenges over standards of care.

When facing a change to working conditions RCN members have the right to full and meaningful consultation. RCN representatives and staff can assist and support. Often RCN members, reps or staff only receive notice of changes or closures late in the process. This means that there is little time to prepare support for RCN members or the business.

A business closure may take place for a variety of reasons. For example, a care home becomes unsustainable due to the relative cost of management and regulatory overheads. Another reason may be that the site landlord decides to find another business operator or sell/redevelop the building/land for other purposes. Other reasons for closure may be associated with the unsuitability of the building or unsustainable standards of care.

If other trade unions are organised in your care home you should still contact the RCN for advice and support when you need it. The RCN will join up with other unions, as necessary. RCN advice about your employment rights and the procedures your employer should follow can be viewed at the

RCN advice page [“Redundancy and reorganisation”](#).

During the closure of the care home your concerns may be as much about the future of the residents as they are for yourself or your colleagues. Working in a care home often feels like working as part of a family and the residents are central to that. Changes may feel very unsettling, with staff feeling the loss of working as part of a great team or a close family.

Moving frail older people with complex long term health conditions from their home can have detrimental effects on their health. Any change needs to be sensitively and properly managed as part of their individual care plan. This must include support for residents and their families' choices and their transition to an appropriate home. You must receive training to enable you to do this. During the time of transition it is important to have enough staff to cover training, daily care and the extra support needed. A senior nurse providing clinical support must also be available in the care home.

You and your colleagues will need to collaborate with the community care team, the regulator and families to secure the best outcome for your residents.

NHS England has produced good-practice guidance to support health systems to [manage home closures](#). COSLA has produced [good-practice guidance for Scotland](#). In Wales, the [Regulation and Inspection of Social Care \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) is changing the way care homes are being regulated and statutory guidance relating to care home closures will be issued in due course. Concerns can be raised directly with the Care Inspectorate Wales, see their [guidance on non-compliance and enforcement](#). Where a service is intending to close in Northern Ireland, Regulation 15 of the [Regulation and Improvement Authority \(Registration\) Regulations](#) apply.

RCN members have a key role in asking questions about the business and raising professional concerns on behalf of the residents.

Key questions and points

- What are the problems with the home that are affecting its future?
 - Can we work together with the owners and commissioners or campaign to save it?
 - Poor staffing; what would assist with local recruitment?
 - High lease/rents; can we join in lobbying the landlord over the lease?
 - Poor funding settlement; can we lobby local commissioners for improved funding?
 - Poor leadership; the RCN can provide leadership support.
- Poor standards; the RCN provides nursing expertise to help raise nursing standards.
 - If your home is to close, staff and residents need time for planned consultation to enable properly informed and supported moves: What are the arrangements for ensuring extra staffing to enable properly informed and supported moves?
 - Staff must have the knowledge and skills to assist residents and family with the extra challenges of the transition. What is the provision for specific additional staff training?
 - If the home is to transfer to another provider, will the new employer recognise an ongoing relationship with the RCN as a trade union?
 - During the closure process, if residents are to move to other homes, will the employer make an additional voluntary 'employment continuation payment' to encourage staff to stay until closure? This can ensure staff retention up to the final transfer of residents to other homes.
 - Staff accompanying residents on a 'settling in' period can be beneficial for resident's wellbeing. Check if this being considered and if so what payment you will receive?
 - Redundancy payment; check what your redundancy entitlement and payment will be, especially if you will accompany residents on a 'settling in' period.

When you are given details of any proposed changes likely to affect you please contact RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100 for support and advice with any of these matters.