

NIHR Greater Manchester PSTRC

Plain English Publication Summary

Publication: [Transitional Care Interventions for Older Residents of Long-term Care Facilities: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis](#)

Publication details (Vancouver format)

Birtwell K, Planner C, Hodkinson A, et al. Transitional Care Interventions for Older Residents of Long-term Care Facilities: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. JAMA Netw Open. 2022;5(5):e2210192.

What are the most important findings/conclusions in this paper? Why are they important?

In our study we discovered that older people living in care homes who are allocated to interventions that support the move between a care home and a hospital or emergency department are almost two times less likely to be readmitted. Their length of stay in the emergency department is also usually shorter.

However, we discovered that the content of the interventions varied. The studies didn't always measure the same outcomes, making it difficult to directly compare the results across studies. Therefore, a standardised set of outcomes that are agreed by patients, carers, staff and health and care systems would strengthen future research.

We also found that the following things influence how helpful interventions are during a care transition:

- quality of communication
- referral processes between care providers
- engagement with primary care

We have a growing population of older people and these findings are important because they will help us to improve healthcare for older people living in care homes.

What did you do?

Our study involved something called a systematic review which gathered together data from previous research. We then used a type of analysis known as meta-analysis to understand links between interventions that are used to support transitions between care settings, and various outcomes for care home residents and care home staff. Some examples of these interventions include post-discharge support and outreach services.

Why did you conduct this research?

Older people living in care homes have many long-term health conditions and are twice as likely to have unplanned hospital visits compared to older people who live in the community (for example, in their own homes or with family). The transition between hospital and care home is a challenging time for many older people and previous research has shown that patient safety issues are more common at points of transition. Previous studies have focused more on 'transitional care' for older people living in the community rather than people living in care homes. We did this research to address that gap in knowledge.

What was known before your paper was published?

Improving the quality of care at times of transition can be difficult. Before this paper was published, little was known about transitional care for older people living in care homes. Previous research had looked at certain kinds of transition, for example, from the care home to an emergency department, but hadn't included transitions to hospital. We also didn't know what helped the transitional care interventions to work.

What is next? What is the potential impact of the work in this paper? What will change as a result of this paper (or the study it describes)?

The findings from this study show that effective transitional care interventions can help prevent hospital readmissions for people living in care homes. Older people who are often admitted to hospitals have lower quality of life and are more likely to suffer infections and die. So preventing unnecessary hospital admissions can be life-saving for some vulnerable older people.

Our research also identified how important it is to develop a set of 'outcome measures'. These measure the quality of health care transitions based on the unique perspectives of older people living in care homes, as well as their carers and health care professionals. We look forward to seeing these findings and recommendations being acted upon.

Does this paper link in to a particular study / project? If so, please summarise the study and explain how this paper has improved understanding, or will move the study forward.

This study is one part of a larger piece of work that aims to make hospital transfers safer for older people living in care homes. This study has improved our understanding of what interventions are currently available to make hospital transfers safer for people that live in care homes. This understanding has helped us to design an intervention that will make hospital transfers safer and this will now be piloted.