Care sector crisis: is it safe to put loved ones in a care home?

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Lucky North

New research reveals 76% of adults don’t think it’s safe to put a loved one in a care home at the moment

-53% worry their loved one’s health would deteriorate if they were placed in a home
-40% would be apprehensive about not being able to visit them
-46% are worried about the pressure of visiting family members within care homes as lockdown eases
-45% are keen to see better technology rolled out across residential care to enable families to stay connected virtually
-70% say they now value social care staff as much as NHS workers in light of COVID-19
-37% agree that their overall impression of Care Homes is more negative than before COVID-19

A staggering 76% of UK adults don’t think it’s safe to put a loved one in a care home at the moment, according to new research from dementia care specialist Vida Healthcare.

The research highlights the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the population’s perception of social care. More than half (53%) of adults admit they would worry that their loved one’s health would deteriorate if they were to move into a care home, while 40 percent would be apprehensive about not being able to visit them.

However, 64 percent of adults are more aware of what is happening in the care industry with almost three quarters (70%) learning more about the sector from coverage in the news, and 29 percent from social media during the pandemic. In fact, 70% of Brits now value social care staff and the work done in the industry as much as NHS workers, highlighting that concerns over placing a loved one in care is no reflection of the social care workforce.

James Rycroft, Managing Director at Vida Healthcare, believes that it’s crucial the public are aware of the different types of care available across the country and the steps being taken to ensure the safety of staff and residents.

“Although more people than ever are aware of social care thanks to coverage in the mainstream press and on social media platforms, for nearly two in five (37%) people this is more negative than before the pandemic and almost half don’t know what specialist dementia care is. There are many types of dementia and people’s symptoms change over time, but at specialist dementia care homes like Vida Healthcare all the residents and service users have a formal dementia diagnosis. People living with a range of conditions, including Alzheimer’s disease, vascular dementia and dementia with Lewy bodies, are all supported.

“We need to work together to ensure that people seeking high quality care for their loved ones have confidence in the sector. The health and wellbeing of residents and staff is the first priority of care workers and providers, and here at Vida Healthcare we’ve introduced new initiatives during the pandemic in order to adapt and react to the virus and lockdown measures.

“Alongside weekly testing and adequate PPE, our homes use OZONE machines to sanitise each room in the building. This covers all surfaces with an OZONE mist and kills bacteria and viruses. Our laundry uses OZONE technology in all washes which assists with killing off any virus which has made its way onto clothing.

“In preparation of admissions picking back up, we’ve created a 10 bed isolation suite which allows us to admit residents and make sure they are clear of COVID before they join the wider Vida community. We’ve also invested in hiring an Admissions Manager who is working exclusively with families throughout the enquiry and admissions process to answer any questions and concerns they might have.”

The research found that connectivity in social care is also a significant area of concern for many, with just under half (45%) keen to see better technology rolled out across residential care to enable families to stay connected virtually. 46 percent of people are also worried about the pressure of visiting family members within care homes as we ease out of lockdown, and two in five (40%) are worried about feeling guilty for not visiting.

James Rycroft added: “Alongside protecting staff and residents, one of the main priorities at Vida Healthcare is to continue creating a sense of community and keeping residents connected with their loved ones. We’ve developed our very own app, Family Team Talk, which is updated frequently and allows families to see a daily snapshot inside our care homes. The app is user friendly and gives families instant access to catch up on the health and wellbeing of their loved one.

“The care sector is working together with vulnerable people, their families, the Clinical Commissioning Groups, Public Health England and GP surgeries to change public perceptions of social care, and ensure all aspects of care and comfort are met with dignity and meets the known preferences and wishes of everyone in social care and their loved ones.”

For more information, please visit www.vidahealthcare.co.uk

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