

Improving Hydration in Hampshire Care Homes: Executive Summary

Why did we implement the project?

- Care home residents are among the most frail and vulnerable individuals in our population
- Care home residents are at particular risk of dehydration due to a combination of age-related changes, reliance on others to support them to drink and behavioural and cognitive factors such as the presence of dementia
- We wanted to study the impact of the hydration project on the health outcomes for residents, its effectiveness in involving and engaging staff (e.g. improving hydration awareness and practice), and its acceptability to residents and staff

Why is good hydration important?

Good hydration helps keep the mind and body healthy and helps prevent someone becoming dehydrated. Dehydration is a common cause of hospital admission and can be life threatening.

It can cause a range of problems, such as slowing down recovery time, leading to infections (e.g. urinary tract infections), increasing risk of falls, increasing risk of developing pressure sores and making the symptoms of other illnesses worse.

As such, dehydration also conveys serious economic consequences.

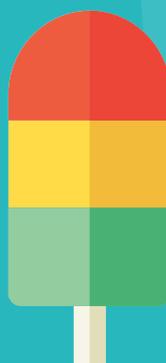
What did we do?

- In 2018-19, Hampshire County Council (HCC) and Wessex Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) worked together on improving hydration in 17 care homes (16 were owned by HCC, with one being managed by HCC). The approach was based on the previous 'Hydrate in Care Homes' work by Kent Surrey Sussex AHSN
- The project aimed to improve hydration awareness and practice among staff with a view to producing a more sustainable long-term model

- We adapted resources from previous projects, provided training to Hydration Champions and managers, hosted networking workshops to keep homes engaged, and evaluated the project using quantitative and qualitative data

What did we find?

- Quantitative data showed a small reduction in slips, trips, falls and injuries and fractures related to falls. However, this data is based on very low numbers of residents, and due to the baseline cohort used, probably involves a different population group, making it difficult to draw conclusions
- Wider benefits of improving hydration came from qualitative feedback and reporting from staff, residents and family members. Although it could not be clearly proven that these benefits were directly related to the project, the case studies showcased the positive perception of the project
- Both Hydration Champions and managers felt the project improved residents' well-being, alertness and communication
- The project was perceived by staff as having substantial positive benefits for the residents they cared for
- The project led to recommendations involving implementation, measurement and sustainability/spread applicable to future hydration projects, along with the need to develop a sustainable and practical E-learning training package



What were the key successes?

- The impact on individual residents: 82% of managers stated improved wellbeing
- Simple but effective project, and not costly to implement
- Increased awareness and shared learning around hydration in the homes, e.g. 90% of managers stated there was a significant improvement in attitudes and awareness around hydration
- More opportunities for engagement between staff and residents during the working day and better knowledge of residents' preferences and habits
- Creativity and innovation of staff to promote hydration
- Having regular workshops with a wide range of staff attending helped keep homes engaged and enabled learning and support between homes

What were the key challenges encountered?

- Ensuring consistent engagement from all care staff, including managers
- Ensuring good hydration practice is fully embedded into every home, and seen as a routine aspect of care for all care staff
- The difficulty in demonstrating impact on health outcomes and cost savings due to the very low number of residents for whom the data was available
- Initially, staff reported that they already knew about hydration, and were already doing things to improve hydration. However, training highlighted inconsistencies around how dehydration was identified, and showed them there were many other things they could do improve hydration

Why should other care homes follow this approach?

- Potential for significant impact on residents, especially in terms of wellbeing, alertness and communication
- Using the ROC Hydration Care Assessment Tool helps to identify the hydration needs of individual residents and sets out an action plan of how to address these needs
- Potential to improve the hydration of care staff themselves, leading to improved wellbeing. Whilst this was not measured or reported on in the main report, anecdotal reports suggested this
- It is a relatively simple and cheap intervention to try, and it is a project suitable for everyone to get involved in and show their creativity (including staff, residents, relatives and other visitors)
- It will provide staff with additional knowledge around hydration and supporting people with frailty
- Good hydration practice should be embedded into the induction of all care home staff. The recommendations from this project aim to address some of the challenges that all relevant organisations should urgently seek to respond to

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[Click here for the full 'Improving Hydration in Hampshire Care Homes' report](#) ►

Link to the full report: wessexahsn.org.uk/img/projects/HydrationCareHomesReport.pdf

