



Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-informed policy and law-making within Northern Ireland



Beyond Numbers: What Evidence from 'My Home Life NI' Reveals about Safe and Effective Staffing in Care Homes

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Safe Effective Staffing Legislation

- A wider workforce is being considered in comparison to other UK countries
- Includes services commissioned by the Department of Health.
- Care homes
- Inclusion of leadership development and the impact this can have on staffing morale and workplace culture
- Directly impact on care delivery.

Safe staffing is not solely determined by how many staff are present, but by how effectively staff are supported, led and enabled to deliver care within complex health and social care environments.



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A leadership development programme called 'My Home Life'.

- Safe effective staffing in care homes is influenced by leadership capability, workforce culture and staff empowerment, not staffing numbers alone.
- Evidence from My Home Life NI suggests leadership development can improve workforce stability, morale and care delivery.
- Leadership skills influence whether staffing requirements translate into meaningful improvements in care.
- Workforce wellbeing and leadership support may strengthen implementation and sustainability of staffing legislation.



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Background – Different Approaches

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- NI – wider disciplines included also commissioned services which would include care homes



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Care Homes & Long-term Care

Care homes are essential for providing specialised support to individuals who are no longer able to live independently due to physical, cognitive, or mental health conditions.

Having skilled care staff who can address both the physical and psychological needs of these individuals is essential

Care homes offer a safe environment, tailored care plans, and social opportunities, ensuring that residents receive the necessary support for their well-being.

This is a unique care setting and we must consider those who
Live, Work and Visit here

Culture in this setting is paramount



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Strong leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring that care homes have skilled staff and that care delivery is of high quality.

Effective leaders in care settings provide direction, set clear expectations, and foster an environment where staff feel supported, motivated, and well-trained.

Strong leadership encourages a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement, where staff are encouraged to share ideas, address challenges, and learn from each other. This leads to more efficient and compassionate care delivery.

Presence drives standards: show up, model well, and act on what you observe.



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My Home Life - International research generation and translation programme to improve quality of life for people who live (residents), visit (families) and work (staff) in care homes.

Work with care home leaders/managers to enhance their leadership skills and drive change through workshops and action learning sets.

12 yrs helping translate recommendations into practice

2020 DoH funded 6 year plan to implement MHL in care homes across NI

To date, **365** participants have completed MHL programme in



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What is My Home Life ?

An international initiative that promotes quality of life for people living, dying, visiting and working in care homes.

Recognises the uniqueness of care homes 1) as 'home' and as regulated environments and 2) the unique and diverse role of care home managers.

A bespoke Leadership programme - focus on empowering, supporting and connecting Leaders to facilitate change.

Achieved by supporting participants to enhance their leadership skills through a programme of action learning and quality improvement.

Department of Health (2025) found that

- 98.1% of programme participants advised the quality of their management & leadership has increased
- 84.6% of participants seen an increase in the overall level of quality of practice in their care setting



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How “safe and effective staffing” might be understood in complex care home environments.

Care home environments have increasing complexity, with residents frequently requiring support for a combination of physical, psychological, and social care needs

- Cognitive impairment and dementia
- Frailty
- Multimorbidity, with multiple chronic conditions that complicate care planning, require additional treatment and increase the risk of adverse events

Effective staffing within care homes involves not only sufficient staffing levels but **leadership capability, communication, continuity, and workforce** support necessary to **respond safely and compassionately to highly complex care needs.**



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What conditions enable staffing requirements to improve care outcomes?

- Staff working in care homes often possess unique insights into the medical, health, and social care needs of those in their care
- Balance their knowledge and responsibility with an emotional connection
- Strong leadership with the ability to manage a multitude of roles, regulatory requirements, resident and relative expectations, staffing allocations
- Direct impact on the staff, residents, and families

Leadership development focused on self-awareness, reflection, and relational practice may influence not only leadership behaviours but also the broader workplace culture and care experience.
(Penney et al. 2026)

Leadership style, - empowering staff and thereby influencing care home culture and care delivery.



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How can leadership capability and workforce culture interact with statutory staffing requirements?

- Safe and Effective Staffing legislation offers valuable guidance and structure for patient and resident acuity and workforce composition, it is crucial to align this with structures and processes that facilitate staff development and foster a workplace culture conducive to person-centred care
- The legislation could be complemented by mechanisms that actively support continuous staff development, such as ongoing development programmes, mentorship, and career progression pathways. Embedding these into organisational processes ensures that workforce competencies evolve alongside patient acuity needs.
- Fostering a workplace culture conducive to person-centred care requires deliberate leadership commitment to values such as respect, empathy, and collaboration.

The establishment of safe and effective staffing legislation presents an opportunity to incorporate meaningful strategies for recognising the development of leadership skills and enhancing leadership behaviour, thereby ensuring that leadership functions as a stabilising force within the workforce



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By aligning policy with continuous staff development, a person-centred care culture, and an adaptive safety framework we can effectively meet the complex healthcare needs.

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Considerations for Legislation

- How should “safe and effective staffing” be interpreted in long-term care settings?
- How will leadership capability and workforce wellbeing be supported alongside statutory staffing requirements?
- How will staffing effectiveness be measured beyond numerical compliance alone?



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