



Public Health  
Agency

# Care Homes in Northern Ireland-

Summary of Feedback on Care Opinion Platform

(Aug 2020-May 2022)



Health and  
Social Care



Care  
Opinion



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte  
Mánnystrie O Poustie  
[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

# BRIEFING PAPER

The following information reflects the stories published in relation to experience of Care Homes on Care Opinion from 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020 to 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022. The purpose of this report is to inform key stakeholders of the key messages shared by residents, families and carers on the platform since the launch of the online user feedback service.

## 1.0 CONTEXT

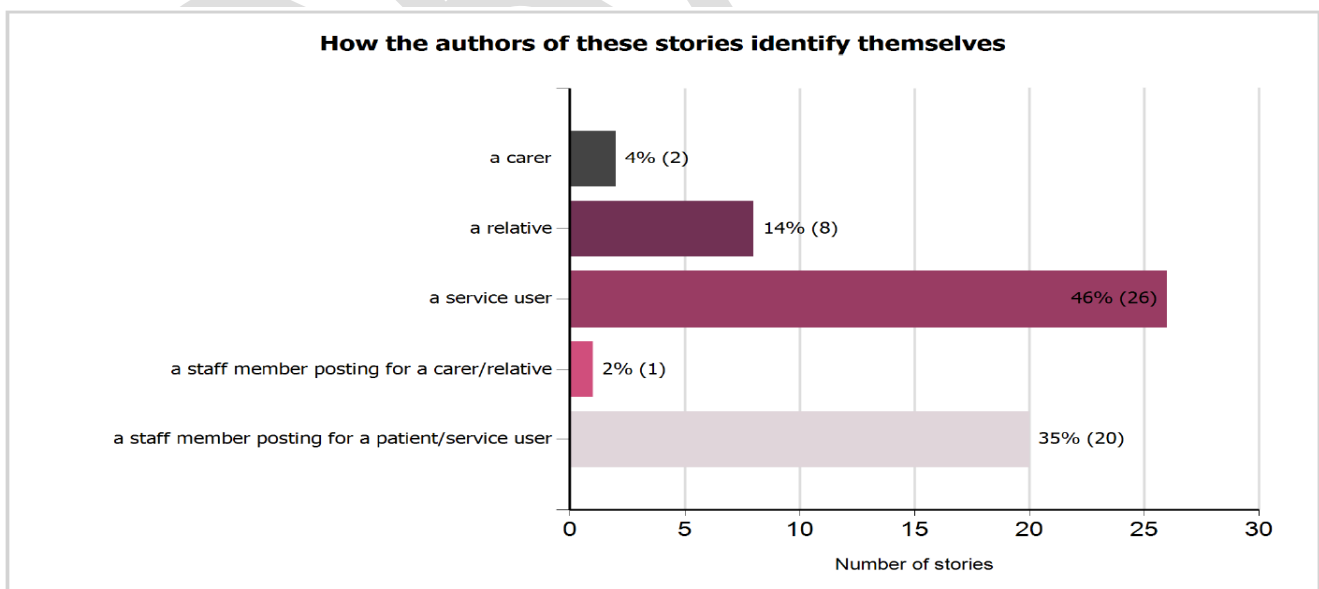
There have been **56** stories published on Care Opinion which have been tagged to the experience of Care Homes. It is important to note the stories have been generated from a number of sources, mainly through engagement by Trust Patient Client Experience Teams and promotion through the Enhanced Clinical Care Framework led by the Department of Health. Table 1 summarises the Trust location of the Care Homes represented by the stories.

Table 1. Trust location of Care Homes represented by stories shared on Care Opinion.

Trust	Number of stories
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	5
Northern Health and Social Care Trust	12
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	3
Southern Health and Social Care Trust	30
Western Health and Social Care Trust	7
Not recorded	0

Chart 1 illustrates the authors of the stories. The majority of stories (n=26) is recorded in the first person by the resident, however it is recognised the role of staff to support residents to share their stories on the online platform (n=20); There have been a number of resources developed to support the resident in relation to information leaflets (included in Appendix 1) and also the support of the Project Lead (PHA) and the PCE facilitators across the trusts

Chart 1. Authors of feedback shared on Care Opinion as recorded on the platform



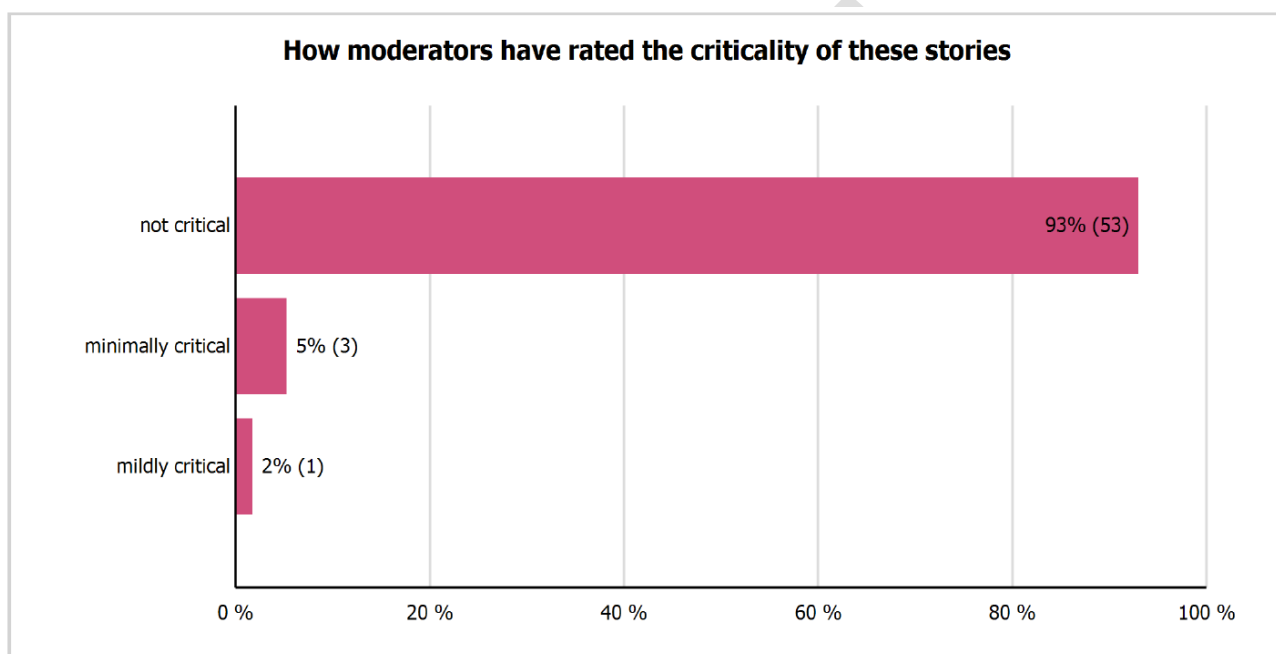
In line with the regional priority to implement a two way feedback mechanism for feedback in Northern Ireland, all stories relating to Care Homes have been read and responded to at a service level. This is important for local learning

and service development within an organisation. The following section explores the learning within each area identified and is further illustrated using quotes from the stories shared.

## 2.0 Summary of Feedback

Feedback in relation to living in a Care Home has been positive. This is demonstrated in Chart 3 reporting upon criticality scores of each story (refer to Appendix 2). It is important to note the criticality score relates to the entire story. Stories with a criticality score of 1 or 2 do not refer directly to the experience within the Care Home; they make reference to lack of communication/involvement regarding movement to the Care Home from the hospital setting and cost of telephone line to District Nursing Services.

Chart 3. Criticality Scores assigned to feedback by Care Opinion Moderators\*



NB: criticality scores are assigned by moderators (not the public) to stories to support our alerting service. They are assigned *per story* not *per service*, so may reflect criticism of services other than your own. We provide them here purely for information, with these caveats in mind.

Figure 1 illustrates feelings and emotions tagged by the authors of the stories which are further explored in the following summary of what matters most to the residents and family stories.

Figure 1. Word Cloud of responses to the question “What are your feeling and emotions to your story?”



## 2.1 Admission

Reflecting upon the words shared through Care Opinion it is evident the process of admission to a Care Home is both a difficult and emotional one. It is difficult also with a lack of choice/options due to current pressures. Families and residents express the importance of seeing the home and having information of the Care Home.

*"...My mum has dementia and we kept her at home for as long as we could cope. We then had to put her into residential care. I felt very concerned due to placing my trust in other people to care for my loved one it was a very emotional time for our family... My mum got a place in XXXXXX. I had never seen the Care Home but due to high demand we did not get a choice. However I was assured that it was a decent place and that the staff was very good with a low turnover of staff throughout the years... It was a very sad and trying time as we had lost a number of family in a short space of time and now mum also I felt. To make a decision to put a parent into care so soon after losing our other parent was very difficult but we as a family could no longer cope at home due to our own family commitments and our daily jobs..."*

*"...I wasn't that happy coming because I didn't know much about the place, but once I arrived I felt safe and at home..."*

*"...On admission to XXXXX I was unsure of what my experience would be like. When staying in XXXX, I really enjoyed being here.*

Authors of the stories also reflect upon the importance of feeling welcomed into the Care Home setting, often referring to approach of the staff as being an important part of the experience.

*"...When I first came here I was nervous and scared. All staff reassured me, made me feel welcome, listened and they were very helpful..."*

*"...Upon arrival at XXXXXX I was met by staff and made very welcome..."*

*"...Mum was admitted to XXXXX in Jan 19 following a hip replacement. Mum was immediately welcomed by her extended family of residents and staff alike..."*

*"...There is a very warm and welcoming atmosphere in the home with nothing being too much trouble, if it is at all possible. Mum's final months were spend in a professionally run, welcoming, caring and laughter filled environment..."*

## 2.2 Staff

On Care Opinion authors of stories took the opportunity to highlight positive approach of staff in getting to know residents and their families and delivery of high standard of care. There is particular reference to the importance of the staff during the COVID pandemic and reflections of being part of a family and feeling "at home"

*"...The staff from the Head of XXXXX, down through all the grades have been especially kind to me when I have wanted to know anything about my mum and her general health and wellbeing during this time of covid pandemic..."*

*"...Our family feel that our mother, who is currently a resident at XXXXX, has received outstanding care and support by the fantastic staff at this Home...Always attentive, kind and caring, the staff always have a smile on their faces, even throughout a very turbulent and stressful year, due to covid..."*

*"...She is very happy and I cannot praise the staff in XXXX enough for their help, compassion and practical help towards my aunt during this transition..."*

*"...No visitors were permitted when she was hospitalised and with the transfer happening without me being there to offer her reassurance, this fell to XXXXX, the Manager, and the staff... It was a difficult task as Mum, who also had difficulty hearing, had become very disorientated. Every measure was taken, with such patience and understanding, to support and comfort her over the required period of Covid isolation..."*

*"...Right up until Mum took very ill, she (and they) enjoyed the good humour I noted was part of daily life in Slieve Roe House. The care and attention Mum received there was extended to me, during her final days..."*

*"...[End of Life Care] during this extremely difficult time, the staff took such good care of Mum. She was never alone and all her needs were attended to. She was treated as though she was awake and aware of all that was going on. Her hair was tonged and a little makeup put on - this would have pleased Mum so much! I appreciated all that was done for Mum during that time - especially the little things. They ensured a very difficult time was bearable..."*

*"...Thank you so much for all your attention and friendship which made my stay at XXXXX a 'Home from Home'..."*

*"...XXXXX Home are a second family to me. They helped me when I lost my mammy..."*

### 2.3 Involving Families

Stories in relation to Care Homes gives insight into the importance of keeping families involved in the delivery of care and two way communication with the Care Home.

*"...Mum was diagnosed with a terminal illness, and immediately I was contacted to arrange to be set up as her care partner. I was grateful that, as a result of this and as restrictions eased, I was able to have the opportunity to take Mum out for short drives to her favourite places..."*

*"...I have been kept well informed by XXXXX of all the changes recently and this is important as I am my mum's advocate because she has MH [mental health] issues..."*

*"...Prior to the pandemic we as a family were welcomed during visits, the staff were always accommodating and friendly they always had time for a chat and an update with us, we were always kept abreast of any health, medicinal, treatments needed..."*

### 2.4 Activities and Stimulation

Residents and families also made reference to the value to activities and stimulation within the Care Home environment; this also gives insight into person centred care, recognising what individual residents value and enjoy.

*"...This homely feeling is enhanced by the range of activities provided, musical interludes, parties and an excellent provision of pastoral care..."*

*"...The staff catered not only to her physical needs but to her emotional health also, mums opinions and ideas were sought allowing her to feel that she mattered and was an important part of XXXXXXXX. Mum thoroughly enjoyed the many activities on offer with garden parties, jigsaws and musical evenings being among her favourites. The staff were tuned in to recognise also when a quiet day was needed..."*

*"...My daily paper is brought to me and I have a television in my room. I am glad to hear that internet is now available to me..."*

*"...I love the staff here as they always do my hair and nails. I have made lots of friends in XXXXX and enjoy the fun and games. The staff would do anything to make you happy and I enjoy having chats with them. When I miss my friends the staff let them know and arrange visits for me, this means the world to me..."*

*"... I enjoy it here.... I like it. I play my harmonica, or the 'mouth organ', as they used to call it... the singalong is such good craic..."*

*"...I like ....singing in the choir, I enjoy the singalongs. He's good. I like drawing and painting, and games. I love it here..."*

## 2.5 Provisions within the Care Home

There were two elements which residents and families reflected upon as being important in the experience within the Care Home:

### 2.5.1 Catering

24 stories (46%) make reference to food in their feedback, reflecting upon both choice and quality.

*"...Food was very nice with a good choice every day. Nothing was too much trouble for anyone..."*

*"...My aunt is very impressed with the food provided, the variety and the presentation. She is very happy and I cannot praise the staff in XXXXXX enough for their help, compassion and practical help towards my aunt during this transition..."*

*"...Her dietary requirements were always catered to with any requests for alternatives well managed, her no doubt numerous requests for a "wee cuppa" were never refused with often a tray bake or biscuit included..."*

*"...I am treated well. I enjoy my food and my choices are catered for..."*

*"...I like it here. There's one thing you'll never starve, you get plenty to eat and I like the food..."*

*"...The food was lovely, the cooks in the kitchen are great, they don't miss a thing, and the breakfast in particular was lovely. It's good to get a choice of menu..."*

### 2.5.2 Management of laundry

References to laundry is mentioned in 6 stories. Reflection include an efficient service and knowing the staff involved in the laundry process.

*"...The laundry is excellent and look after my clothes..."*

*"...all the staff are friendly – XXXXX who works in the laundry runs a very good service..."*

*"...Great staff, great cooks, great laundry staff... The girl from laundry comes in bright and cheerful and brings me my laundry..."*

## 2.5 Positive Outcomes

Included in the stories is a series of reflections specifying the positive impact of the time within the Care Home, with reference to feeling safe, confidence and input from allied health professionals,

*"...Staying here has improved my confidence in my ability to move about..."*

*"...If it hadn't have been for the staff in the XXXXX my head would have been turned..."*

*"...I came from hospital for two weeks to help me get back on my feet. I don't have a bad word to say very thankful..."*

*"...a stepping stone to regain my strength and to achieve the wellness and confidence I feel now. I have had every possible assistance from physiotherapists, occupational therapists and care staff, all of which helped me to regain my confidence in walking and all movements..."*

### 3.0 Next Steps

Section 2 reflects key messages on what matters most to residents and families of stories shared on Care Opinion platform. The small number of stories within Care Homes is a limitation as it is not possible to conclude this is the experience of the wider population within Care Home; however this does not make them any less important. The stories demonstrate the key elements in positive experiences of care homes and the expectations of the authors of the stories. It is therefore important to continue to integrate Care Opinion into the Care Homes across Northern Ireland and remains a priority within the Patient Experience Programme 2022/2023. The follow steps will support to embed the system into the Care Homes

- 1- Identification of Project Lead for Care Homes within the Regional Patient Client Experience Team
- 2- Embed Care Opinion as a mechanism for experience in Quality Improvement initiatives, including all Care Homes engaged through the Enhanced Clinical Care Framework
- 3- Distribution of information leaflets and design of processes to support residents in Care Homes to share reflection on wider Health and Social Care system (for example inreach services, primary care)
- 4- Collaborate with key stakeholders to support the words of authors to shape Care Home sector; This includes Patient Client Council, Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and Trust Care Home leads
- 5- Identify connectivity and triangulate learning with Regional Care Home initiatives including Visiting Guidance, Care Partners



## APPENDIX 1. INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR CARE HOMES

(Designed support by Association for Real Change "Tell It Like It Is" initiative)



# Tell us your story

about the health and social care services you use



What happened?  
What was good?  
What could have  
been better?

Examples of health and social care services are



Hospitals  
and  
Ambulances



GP  
Surgeries



Care Homes  
and  
Day Centres



Care Opinion is a website.  
It has stories on it from people  
who have used health and social  
care services.



# Your story could help make things better



We do not use your name or any of your personal information when we share your story.

We share your story with staff so they know what is working well and what needs to change.



We share your story on our website so people can see

- your story
- and what changes staff have made to make things better.

## Share your story



Go to our Website  
[careopinion.org.uk](http://careopinion.org.uk)



Fill in the  
**Care Opinion**  
feedback card



Phone us on  
**0800 122 31 35**

**Staff, friends and family can help you to tell your story.**


## APPENDIX 2 DEFINITION OF CRITICALITY SCORES

Score	Definition
0	<b>No Critical Content</b> : Entirely positive or neutral postings with no hint of criticality.
1	<b>Minimally Critical:</b> Mention of dissatisfaction with non-clinical non-personal aspects of care, typically “facilities” issues such as food, parking, or waiting.
2	<b>Mildly Critical:</b> More specific but still mild criticism, which may also include non-clinical but interpersonal issues such as attitude of staff, compassion, politeness. This might include the timely nature of the service whether in hospital or in the community where it has caused distress, e.g. carers not turning up on time
3	<b>Moderately Critical:</b> Criticism which may include alleged shortcomings in clinical or non clinical aspects of care, the author may not say what the effect of these are. Also includes serious comments about facilities: ‘never cleaned’; and where people’s essential basic care needs are not being met, e.g. inadequate nutrition and hydration, development of bedsores
4	<b>Strongly Critical:</b> Serious criticisms of specific unnamed staff or groups of staff, or of clinical or other care or facilities. This might have had very serious consequences for physical or emotional health. These will be described by the author. There might also have been social consequences that have increased the risk or vulnerability of an individual
5	<b>Severely Critical:</b> Posting alleges or describes actions or events which may be illegal, grossly negligent, or allege serious misconduct by named members of staff or organisations.

For further information and support contact:-


**Regional Lead for Patient Client Experience: - Linda Craig.**

 linda.craig3@hscni.net

 07803133421

**Care Home Project Lead: - Dalrene Masson**

 Dalrene.masson2@hscni.net

 07818533993

Care Opinion Initiative is managed by-  
Regional Lead for Patient Client Experience (PCE): Mrs Linda Craig: linda.craig3@hscni.net  
Assistant Director for AHP, PPI and PCE: Mrs Michelle Tennyson: michelle.tennyson@hscni.net



Public Health  
Agency

Produced by the Public Health Agency,  
4th Floor, 12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS. Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate)  
www.publichealth.hscni.net