

Reimagined day care for older people: supporting older people and caregivers to age in place

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Background

There is a widespread view that day care for older people is outdated and not aligned with wider policy ambitions. However, there is growing recognition that many older people and their caregivers would welcome the opportunity to attend collective day care services, as well as growing interest amongst service providers and older people themselves about the need to transform provision.

For this research, day care is defined as community building-based services that provide care and/or health related services and/or clubs and activities specifically for older people (65+) with care and support needs.

Methods

This poster outlines findings from case studies in England visited in 2021/22 as part of a National Institute for Health Research, School for Social Care Research study exploring the experiences of and aspirations for collective day care for older people, from the perspectives of members, carers, staff, and local stakeholders from the health and care system. Case study sites:

	DESCRIPTION
1	Day centre for older people living with dementia in re-purposed house
2	Adapted farm for men living with parkinsons and dementia
3	Lunch club and activities as part of community loneliness network
4	Small groups based at hosts' home
5	Club providing activities and health & education programmes
6	Community café providing lunch club & activities
7	Faith-based day centre
8	Peripatetic day clubs

Key findings

Day care settings have the potential to play a key role in local place-based partnerships and are well-placed to support preventative policy ambitions. Day care settings have a distinct offer underpinned by their central and trusted position within community networks, including local health partners, as well as their in-depth knowledge of members, carers and community organisations.

Our findings challenge the view that day care is outdated and undesirable. We found creative, agile and responsive services that older people who attend and their carers consider a vital lifeline in:

- **supporting physical and mental wellbeing and health of older people**—e.g. education, delivering falls prevention and post-discharge long-term rehabilitation support
- **providing opportunities for joy, connection and friendship for older people who attend** – e.g. non-traditional and purposeful activity, opportunities to build relationships with peers
- **supporting caregivers to sustain their caring role** – distinct, trusted support including regular, whole-day break

The distinct potential of day care was illustrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, when sites closed but continued to provide support in creative ways. Our sites worked with community and health partners to respond rapidly and innovatively, enabled by their trusted nature, and informed by their in-depth knowledge of local communities, older people who attend and their carers.



Conclusions

As health and social care commissioners in England develop Integrated Care Systems, there is potential for reimagined day care for older people to play an important role in delivering person-centred, preventative and place-based care for older people and their caregivers including: supporting carers to sustain their caring role; enabling older people to live at home for longer; as well as addressing wellbeing, loneliness and social isolation for older people and carers.