

*Our vision is a world where all care homes are great places to live, die, visit and work.*

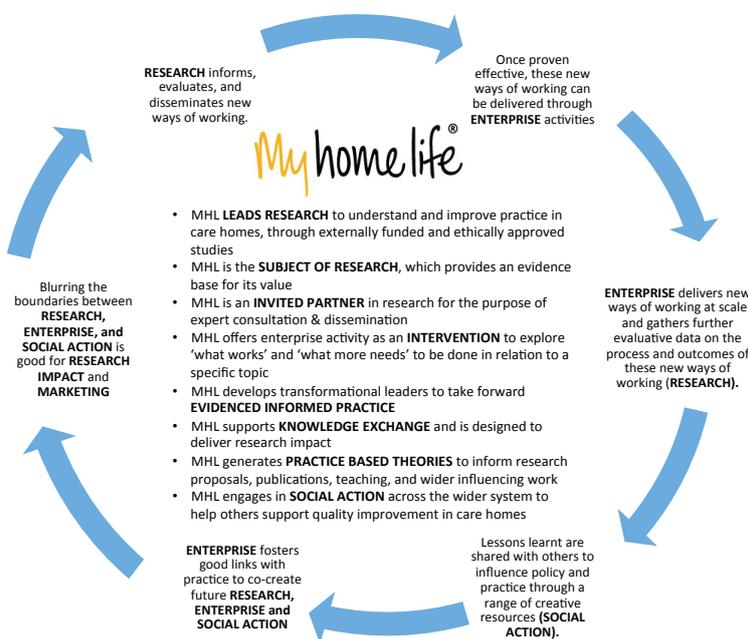
## Focusing on Research

### Introduction

This briefing describes steps taken by My Home Life (MHL) to contribute to the body of knowledge related to care homes. MHL is a social movement that brings together researchers across the UK, and internationally, to work collaboratively with providers to help support quality improvement in care homes. Across the UK, the work is supported by a network of researchers in each country led by: Professor Julienne Meyer CBE, City University of London; Professor Belinda Dewar, University of West of Scotland; Professor Assumpta Ryan, University of Ulster and Professor Vanessa Burholt and Professor Fiona Verity, University of Swansea in Wales. Their respective organisations host MHL in each of the four nations, working independently to promote the MHL vision (see Briefing paper 3), being preferred partners in cross-national research, and sharing the learning and evidence-based products with the care home sector through their linked websites, to avoid replication and duplication.

My Home Life seeks to share with others what is known about what matters to older people in care homes and what works, taking account of the additional views of those who visit and work there. It acknowledges the experience of residents and relatives, the expertise of practitioners, and the scientific knowledge generated by research. MHL recognises that older people, relatives and staff working in long term care do not always have easy access to the evidence base for best practice and tries to make this easier by producing user-friendly and creative resources (for example, films, bulletins, posters, briefing papers) to communicate its findings, using real stories from practice to illustrate how to act on this evidence. These resources are shared with the 18,000 care homes across the UK via the linked websites ([www.myhomelife.org.uk](http://www.myhomelife.org.uk)) and through Care Management Matters, a free social care magazine for executives and senior managers in health and social care. MHL engages in research, enterprise and social action to support quality improvement in care homes in a variety of different ways (see Table 1):

**Table 1: The relationship between Research, Enterprise and Social Action**



In contributing to the body of knowledge, MHL seeks to link with other researchers nationally and internationally. These research collaborations bring together academics with users, carers, and providers to reflect on what the research agenda in care homes should focus on and how to conduct research in ways that are meaningful and helpful for those in practice. It has particular links with the National Care Home Research and Development Forum, the International Consortium on Professional Nursing Practice in Long Term Care Homes, and the Global Ageing Network.

### Sharing what older people value and what matters to them in care homes

My Home Life began 10 years ago, when Help the Aged (later merged with Age Concern to become Age UK) commissioned Professor Julienne Meyer CBE to review the literature on quality of life in care homes (Phase 1: Vision). She did this collaboratively with over 60 academic researchers in the National Care Home R&D Forum<sup>1</sup>. Later BUPA Giving funded the sharing of these evidence based messages with the care home sector, all of which can be found on the MHL website (Phase 2: Dissemination). A variety of funders, including Joseph Rowntree Foundation, then funded MHL to co-create a leadership support programme to help care home managers take forward quality improvement (Phase 3: Implementation) in line with the evidence base for best practice<sup>2,3</sup>. Most recently, the Henry Smith Charity funded My Home Life to support its spread across the 4 nations and help local communities engage with care homes, so that residents, relatives and staff feel less isolated

(Phase 4: Sustainability). This work has been undertaken collaboratively across the 4 nations, but other linked research has been independently funded and published in each of the four nations (see MHL website or contact [mhl@city.ac.uk](mailto:mhl@city.ac.uk) for further details). The strength of My Home Life is its collaborative ways of working to strengthen and disseminate the evidence base for best practice in care homes. It does this through relational, appreciative and dialogic methods that mirror and role model the evidence-base for best practice in care homes<sup>4</sup>. By blurring the boundaries between research, practice and education, My Home Life seeks to have maximum research impact and truly make a difference to the quality of life of those who live, die, visit and work in care homes for older people.

### Adding to body of knowledge on quality of life in care homes

My Home Life engages in research in a variety of different ways. It leads research to understand and improve practice in care homes (e.g.<sup>5</sup>), is the subject of research, which provides an evidence base for its value (e.g.<sup>6</sup>), is an invited partner in research, for the purpose of expert consultation and dissemination (e.g.<sup>7</sup>), acts as an intervention to explore 'what works' and 'what more needs to be done', in relation to a specific topic (e.g.<sup>8</sup>), develops transformational leaders to take forward evidence informed practice (e.g.<sup>9</sup>), supports knowledge exchange (e.g.<sup>10</sup>), generates practice based theories (e.g.<sup>11</sup>) and engages in social action across the wider system to help others support quality improvement in care homes (e.g.<sup>12</sup>). All driven by a desire to promote quality of life in care homes.

<sup>1</sup>NCHR&D Forum (2007) *My Home Life: Quality of life in care homes – Literature review*, London: Help the Aged (available at: [www.myhomelife.org.uk](http://www.myhomelife.org.uk))

<sup>2</sup>Owen T and Meyer J (2012) *My Home Life: Promoting quality of life in care homes*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation (available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/my-home-life>)

<sup>3</sup>Dewar, B. and Nolan, M. (2013) Caring about caring: Developing a model to implement compassionate relationship centred care in an older people care setting, *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 50, 9, 1247-1258 DOI: 10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2013.01.008

<sup>4</sup>Sharp C., Dewar B., and Barrie K. (2016) Forming new futures through appreciative Inquiry, IRISS insight number 33.

<sup>5</sup>Dewar, B., Barrie, K., Sharp, C., Meyer, J. (in press) Implementation of a complex intervention to support leadership development in nursing homes: a multi-method participatory study *Journal of Applied Gerontology*.

<sup>6</sup>Granville G, Carrier J, Patel M and Barker S (2014) *Commissioning relationship-centred care in Essex: An evaluation*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation (available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/commissioning-relationship-centred-care-essex-evaluation>)

<sup>7</sup>Goodman C, (2015) Provision of NHS generalist and specialist services to care homes in England: review of surveys *Primary Health Care Research & Development* 05/2015; FirstView: 1-16. DOI:10.1017/S1463423615000250

<sup>8</sup>Dewar B, and MacBride T (2017) Developing Caring Conversations in care homes: an appreciative inquiry, *Health and Social Care in the Community*, DOI: 10.1111/hsc.12436

<sup>9</sup>Sharp, C., Dewar, B., Barrie, K., Meyer, J (accepted, 2016) How being appreciative creates change – theory in practice from health and social care in Scotland, *Educational Action Research*

<sup>10</sup>Meyer, J. & Owen, T. (2008). Calling for an international dialogue on quality of life in care homes. *International Journal of Older People Nursing*, 3(4), 291-294.

<sup>11</sup>Dewar B and Sharp C (2013) Appreciative dialogue for co-facilitation in action research and practice development, *International Practice Development journal*, 3,12, 1-7.

<sup>12</sup>Burstow P, Patel C, Geller G, Meyer J, Kelly D, Arnold S, Jones R, Ashcroft J, Pelham C (Commissioners) (2014) *Demos Commission on Residential Care*, (Available at: <http://www.demos.co.uk/project/the-commission-on-residential-care/>)

