Charity Calls on Government to Increase Funding for End of Life Care

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A charity that provides training in end of life care is calling on the Government to make more resources and training available for generalist frontline staff who care for people in the last years of life.

The Gold Standards Framework Centre (GSF) says the provision of high-quality end of life care must become a national priority as the trend towards people living and dying at home rather than in hospitals is likely to continue.

According to research commissioned by GSF, two thirds of people who expressed a preference say they would like to die at home or in a care home (67%).

But, the charity points out, unless more frontline health and care professionals receive specific end of life training and support to provide improved care - either at home, in care homes or retirement villages - the decline in hospital deaths will start to reverse.

This would lead to increased emergency admissions and hospital deaths, meaning people will be denied the chance to die at home or in their usual place of care.

Unlike some developed countries where the majority of people die in hospital, the UK has seen a gradual reduction in hospital death rates – a positive trend that over the last 25 years GSF has contributed to through its end of life care training and accreditation programmes.

Keri Thomas, founder and Chair of GSF, said: “If current trends continue, home and care home death rates are set to almost double by 2040 as hospital death rates decline further.

“But if end of life training and support for staff in the community does not increase, we are likely to see poorer quality of care for the dying in the community along with increased numbers of hospital admissions and hospital deaths . This leads to increased hospitalisation and reduced access for acutely unwell patients, with the consequent clogging up of emergency departments and long ambulance waits seen in many hospitals last winter.

“Research confirms that over 40% of emergency hospital admissions of people from care homes are potentially preventable, and more could be enabled to die at home with better staff training and stronger support .

“Over 650,000 people died in the UK in 2022 including a 9% rise due to post-Covid excess deaths, with numbers set to rise further in the next 25 years.S o failure to provide staff with adequate end of life care training will result in many more people experiencing poor care at the end of their lives, greater distress for their families and excessive hospitalisation.Investment in prevention through proactive training can therefore reap benefits at practical, economic and humanitarian levels.

“This overuse of hospitals is not what we or the public wants to see happen. It’s imperative that the Government takes action now to ensure adequate resources are made available to ensure all frontline staff in any setting receive end of life care training, so that more people can live well and die well in a place and manner of their choosing.”

The charity says they have widespread public support with two thirds of people (67%) surveyed backing their call for the Government to provide more resources and training for end of life care as a national priority.

The research also highlighted a concerning lack of public awareness around end of life care with half those surveyed (50%) admitting they had scant knowledge of the care and support available to them in the last years of life. More significantly almost two thirds (61%) said they would appreciate a discussion with professionals about end of life care options available.

To mark their 25th anniversary on June 22nd, GSF hosted an online celebration event focusing on the impact, reach and influence of GSF over the last 25 years, showcasing of examples of excellence from frontline GSF Accredited teams.

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With contributions from leading experts, professionals, and thought leaders in the health and care sector, the event included keynote presentations and an interactive panel debate on the future of end of life care.

The event fostered a dialogue around various topics such as the vital importance of social care provision (in particular domiciliary care) , rebalancing care between family, community and health system, the bigger picture of population-based end of life care facing Integrated Care Boards in England and the offering of advance care planning as a human right to all.

In the last 25 years the GSF Centre has trained over 5,000 teams, about half a million staff and accredited over 2,000 organisations or teams, affirming its position as the UK’s leading and most experienced training provider in end of life care for generalist frontline staff across all settings.

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