Families impacted by spike in support for older loved ones in winter

Wednesday 17 January, 2024

- 62% are more concerned about the welfare of older relatives and friends in winter compared with other times of the year
- Nearly 1 in 2 give more assistance to older loved ones during winter, particularly with shopping, social visits and household tasks
- Free resources launched as care charity Greensleeves Care advises winter is opportunity to spot for growing care needs and explore longer-term solutions

Nearly 1 in 2 adults in England (47%) increase the assistance they provide their older relatives during the colder months, with around 14% of those saying their support 'significantly increases', new figures released by leading not-for-profit care provider Greensleeves Care show.

Help with shopping (50%), paying social visits (46%) and support with household tasks like cleaning (40%) top the list, followed by cooking and organising meals (35%), transport (32%), assisting with mobility (24%) and offering financial support (21%).

The extra support comes as 62% report feeling more concerned about the welfare of their older loved one in the colder months compared to other times of the year. This season, health issues (40%), loneliness (38%), mobility (35%), keeping warm (34%) and safety (33%) are cited as the top areas of care-related worries.

Worries about the wellbeing of older loved ones are having a significant impact on individuals and families, driving increases in stress and anxiety (35%), changes to routine (30%), limiting personal activities and leisure (25%) and affecting sleep (21%). Women also feel more of the emotional impact, with more women (41%) reporting increased stress and anxiety than men (28%).

The figures come at a time which often marks a spike in enquiries to adult care providers like Greensleeves Care. The not-for-profit provider, which operates 27 residential, dementia and nursing care homes across England, saw a 27% increase in enquiries in the colder months in 2023 compared with the preceding period.

Suzanne is the daughter of a Greensleeves Care resident. Her mum, who lives with dementia, moved into care after staying at home became increasingly difficult, particularly in the colder months. She said:

"Mum's health was a special concern during winter. We struggled to get her to attend medical and flu vaccination appointments. Healthcare professionals would ring her up and she'd cancel often as she didn't want to leave the house, or had forgotten. We were also concerned about the house. We've had to deal with burst pipes and heating issues in the past. It was quite stressful. Now I don't have to worry about any house issues, and Mum doesn't have to worry either. And I know that she's up to date with all her vaccinations and she's being kept safe and warm."

Greensleeves Care's latest campaign, Warmth of Care, offers free information and support for families worried about their older loved ones this season. It is designed to help them identify changing support needs, approach the subject of care with loved ones, and be able to make confident choices, whether now or in the future.

Paul Newman, Chief Executive of Greensleeves Care, said:

"These new figures show clearly that many families worry about their loved ones more in winter and often escalate their support, which can lead to them feeling stretched and overwhelmed.

"We see this often through our work, and our message to families feeling concerned is that they are not alone. At Greensleeves Care our goal is to ensure that more older people can access high-quality and person-centred care. This starts by helping them and their families identify the level of support they need, have successful conversations around care, and explore their options in good time. That is what our Warmth of Care campaign is all about.

"Winter is a prime opportunity to spot for changes in the care needs of our older relatives and friends. Organisations like us can help anyone feeling worried to start thinking about, and planning for, care

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support well before reaching crisis point.”

The Warmth of Care resources and support are available at: www.greensleeves.org.uk/WarmthOfCare

About the research

The research for Greensleeves Care was carried out online by Opinion Matters throughout 22.12.2023 - 02.01.2024 among a panel resulting in 1686 nat rep 18+ responding. All research conducted adheres to the MRS Codes of Conduct (2010) in the UK and ICC/ESOMAR World Research Guidelines. Opinion Matters is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office and is fully compliant with the Data Protection Act (1998).

About Greensleeves Care

Greensleeves Care is a leading UK not-for-profit care home organisation which offers, award-winning person-centred residential, dementia and nursing care across 27 care homes. Named in the Top 20 care home groups in the country for six consecutive years, the organisation is working to change the process of moving into a care home from a daunting decision to an empowering choice. This includes through its unique ‘Home for Life’ financial assurance and the satisfaction that care fees go in full towards delivering high-quality care and supporting a decades-long charitable mission.

Greensleeves Care family of homes

East of England

Bedfordshire

Sharnbrook House, Bedford

Cambridgeshire

Rose Cottage, Huntingdon

The Orchards, Ely

Hertfordshire

Clarendon Lodge, Rickmansworth

Norfolk

De Lucy House, Diss

Suffolk

Broadlands, Oulton Broad

Harleston House, Lowestoft

Henley House, Ipswich

Greater London

Queen Elizabeth House, Bromley

Speirs House, New Malden

The Meadowcroft, Tooting

Torkington House, Acton

Viera Gray House, Barnes

South East

Berkshire

Buckler's Lodge, Crowthorne

Glebelands, Wokingham

The Manor, Old Windsor

Buckinghamshire

Tickford Abbey, Newport Pagnell

East Sussex

Whitegates, Hastings

Hampshire

Borovere, Alton

Isle of Wight

The Briars, Sandown

Kent

Gloucester House, Sevenoaks

Lavender Fields, Sevenoaks

Mount Ephraim House, Tunbridge Wells

South West

Wiltshire

Kingston House, Calne

West Midlands

West Midlands County

Pelsall Hall, Walsall

Warwickshire

Arden House, Leamington Spa

East of England figures:

- 36% of adults in the East of England report that the level of assistance they give to older relatives and friends increases during winter, with 15.5% saying it 'significantly increases'
- Help with shopping, social visits and household tasks top the list in the East of England
- Worries about the welfare of older loved ones are driving increases in stress and anxiety (30%), changes to routine (22.5%) and affecting sleep patterns (18%)

More regional stats available on demand

Greater London figures:

- 49% of adults in Greater London report that the level of assistance they give to older relatives and friends increases during winter, with 21% saying it ‘significantly increases’
- Help with shopping, social visits and household tasks top the list in Greater London
- Worries about the welfare of older loved ones are driving increases in stress and anxiety (35%), changes to routine (34.5%) and affecting sleep patterns (19.5%)

More regional stats available on demand

West Midlands figures:

- 44% of adults in the West Midlands report that the level of assistance they give to older relatives and friends increases during winter, with 16% saying it ‘significantly increases’
- Help with shopping, household tasks and cooking top the list in the West Midlands
- Worries about the welfare of older loved ones are driving increases in stress and anxiety (36%), changes to routine (32%) and affecting sleep patterns (20%)

More regional stats available on demand

South East figures:

- 48% of adults in the South East report that the level of assistance they give to older relatives and friends increases during winter, with 10% saying it ‘significantly increases’
- Help with shopping, social visits and household tasks top the list in the South East
- Worries about the welfare of older loved ones are driving increases in stress and anxiety (35%), changes to routine (28%) and affecting sleep patterns (24%)

More regional stats available on demand

South West figures:

- 48% of adults in the South West report that the level of assistance they give to older relatives and friends increases during winter, with 14% saying it ‘significantly increases’
- Help with shopping, social visits and household tasks top the list in the South West
- Worries about the welfare of older loved ones are driving increases in stress and anxiety (37%), changes to routine (27%) and affecting sleep patterns (19%)

More regional stats available on demand

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