

Poor homecare training putting elderly at risk, according survey.

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A survey conducted by UNISON of more than 1,000 care workers employed by councils and private firms across the UK, reveals that staff are receiving inadequate homecare training putting elderly and disabled at risk.

More than two thirds (69 per cent) said they cared for people with dementia. Despite this, more than a quarter (27 per cent) had received no training in how to work with people with this illness.

Additionally, homecare workers carry out many tasks such as; changing catheter bags, peg feeding, stoma care and administering medication for which they receive little or no training.

UNISON says that the survey suggests that homecare workers are feeling increasingly uncomfortable with a system that is sending them into the homes of people with complicated needs, with the bare minimum of training, or in some cases, no guidance at all. This lack of training is compounded by the fact that homecare workers are increasingly being forced to carry out their roles within shorter periods of time.

George McNamara, Head of Policy and Public Affairs at Alzheimer's Society said:

'Two thirds of people with dementia live in the community and it is a disgrace that these people are being let down so profoundly. We hear countless stories of people with dementia being denied care because a lack of understanding means their needs are not assessed properly. It can also have devastating consequences if care workers don't have enough training to be able to appropriately communicate, with people with dementia often ending up in hospital as a result.

'Home care should be about good quality care, designed to meet individual's needs. Pressure placed on staff to conduct shorter care visits, in order to meet budgetary targets is unacceptable. Visits lasting fifteen minutes or less cannot possibly provide people with the dignified good quality care and wider support they need and deserve. Care workers tell us that they want more training and it must be made mandatory that all staff are provided with the right support. That's why, as part of our Dementia Promise, Alzheimer's Society is calling on political parties to protect dementia training time for care workers.'

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