

Covid19 Care Home Recovery ECHO Network



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St Columba's Hospice Care uses the virtual education model ECHO to widen access to palliative care, by supporting people who deliver palliative care in other settings. We recognised a need to support care homes following Covid19. In collaboration with Marie Curie Hospice, we used ECHO to create a virtual network of care home and hospice staff to discuss, share and learn together about the impact of Covid19 on themselves and people they care for.

Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership (2019) Long Term Conditions Programme: Anticipatory Care Planning Improvement Programme, Learning Report Phase 3: 2018-2019

<https://ihub.scot/media/6553/acp-improvement-programme-learning-report-phase-3-2018-19-revised-190819.pdf> (Last accessed: 28 Sep2020)

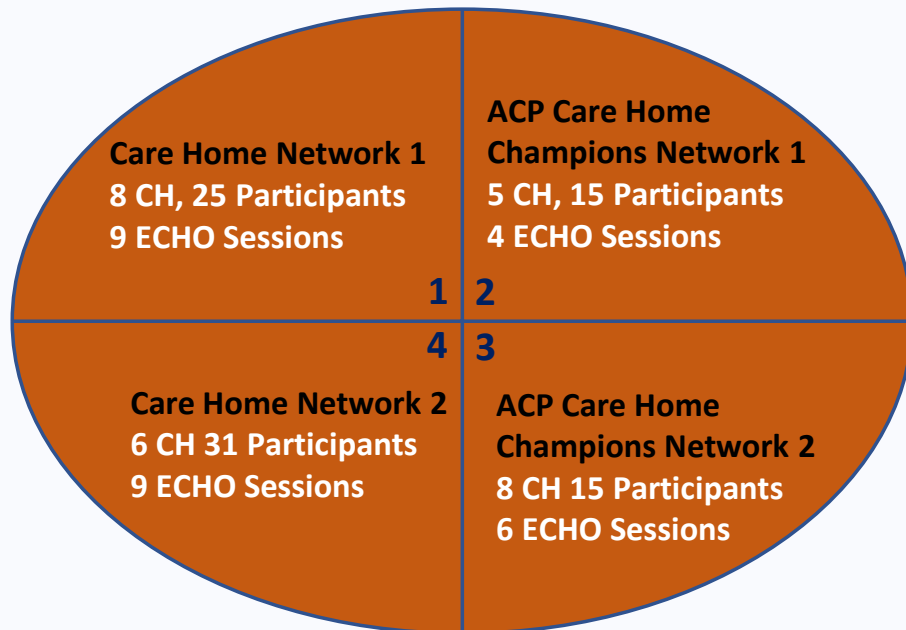


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Previous ECHO Care Home Networks

ECHO is based on **collaboration, inclusion and participation**. We aim to create a safe environment for sharing of good practice and where **meaningful and sustainable learning and support** occurs. Learning needs are identified by participants and achieved using **proven facilitation and support systems and ZOOM technology**. St Columba's Hospice Care is an ECHO Hub and has developed **four** Care Home ECHO Networks with Edinburgh care homes between August 2018-March 2020. Two networks **focussed on ACP in care homes** and were developed in **collaboration with the Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership, Long Term Conditions Programme ACP Team**.



'Collaboration with St. Columba's Hospice and Project ECHO enabled shared learning, reflective practice and peer support, which would otherwise not have been possible given the demands on care home staff and was a critical factor in the success of the ACP improvement programme' (Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership, Long Term Conditions Programme, ACP Team 2019).

Feedback from care home staff

"The reflection on practice was very beneficial in generating discussion with staff on how we can improve things and resulted in several chats afterwards"

"I found out more information about delirium. It was good to hear other care homes stories, and it gave us time to reflection and think what we would do in similar situation."

"For less experienced staff it gave them the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others whom they probably would not normally encounter."

Covid19 Care Home Recovery ECHO Network - July-Aug 20

Through our previous relationships with care homes and the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership ACP Team we created an ECHO network where care home and hospice staff could reflect on and share their experiences. We aimed to develop a supportive network providing peer support and learning.

- 8 Care Homes, all nursing homes (17 RN & HCW)
- 7 Hospice Staff (2 CNS, chaplain, counsellor, 2 OT, social worker)
- 4 x Hourly ECHO sessions - Short didactic presentation followed by facilitated discussion on experiences brought from care home staff.
- Sessions were recorded (with prior consent) and available on Vimeo for participants to watch again and also used for evaluation and identifying themes.

ECHO Session Topics and Presenter

- Impact of grief, loss and anxiety in the current crisis - Hospice counsellor
- Resilience and self-care - Hospice Chaplin
- How do we support families with deterioration, dying and death in the context of Covid? - GP from ACP team
- Impact of isolation for people with dementia - Hospice OT

Questions used to structure discussions

- What have been the most difficult things to deal with recently?
- How are you, staff and colleagues feeling at the moment?
- How well are you able to support each other at the moment?
- Have ACP conversations with residents/families changed since Covid?
- How have you supported residents and families with the no visiting policy?

Impact and outcomes for Care Home Staff

Impact on staff

- Described experiencing layer upon layer of difficult emotions and responsibilities. The unpredictability and constant changes caused a sense of 'survival mode' with high levels of anxiety, compounded by not being able to decompress and get support from families due to restrictions.
- The no visiting rule caused significant distress and added burden of responsibility, with the need to constantly reassure residents and families.
- PPE is a huge barrier to communication.
- Described having to 'hold' families' and residents' distress while "putting on a brave face" for colleagues, families and residents.

Exhausted/overwhelmed/feels surreal/guilty".

"Didn't realise until after difficult few weeks that I was/am grieving"

"One of the scariest times in my life"

"Saw some terrible distressing deaths"

"Did everything right but still had cases"

"You thought a resident was recovering, then they suddenly died"

Positive Outcomes

- Individual staff and teams felt they are stronger and have 'come through something really tough together'.
- Care homes that planned regular reflective sessions felt this gave a positive structure to the day and supported team resilience.
- Although fearful about a 'second wave' they feel better prepared and 'expert' with PPE and infection control procedures.
- The homes using the "7 Steps to ACP Planning" * described being more proactive and prepared with ACP processes than before Covid and that families are more receptive to ACP conversations.
- Several staff felt that using technology/iPad improved communication. ACP conversations occurred during these informal conversations which increased a sense of teamwork and connection with families. Staff feel they got to know family members better and vice versa.
- Each home had different challenges with managing residents' daily routine, hand hygiene and social distancing. All demonstrated commitment to following guidance and finding creative ways to keep routine as normal as possible for residents. *Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership ACP Team

"Lots of new learning together".

"Hope is what gets you through"

"Being more supportive and mindful of each other"

Through a ZOOM Poll at the end of each session all care home staff reported the main benefit of being part of this network was meeting peers and colleagues and hearing about the similar experiences of others.

