



Model protocol for researchers encountering 'bad practice'

Changing practice in dementia care in care homes: developing and testing evidence-based interventions towards the end of life

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Source: adapted with permission from a protocol developed by Hall and Higginson for the study: *Towards facilitating implementation of the gold standards framework for care homes*, Kings College London

Who is this protocol aimed at?

Research staff involved in data collection in care homes.

What is the purpose of this document?

The aim of this document is to rationalise a procedure for dealing effectively and sensitively with bad practice uncovered in care homes during the research procedure.

What constitutes bad practice?

Any concerns a researcher has relating to a care home that could impact on the well-being of care home residents or staff. The research team will be concerned with issues of a serious nature, more specifically issues of abuse, unethical practice and serious misconduct. It is essential for the research team to focus on factual information, refraining from becoming emotionally involved in a given situation.

What action should be taken when bad practice is observed and identified?

For those issues considered by the research team as bad practice, initial discussions will take place with the Principle Investigator, Professor Claire Goodman. Together a judgement can be made about whether an issue constitutes bad practice and whether action to pursue the issue further is necessary.

Informal Complaints Procedure

- If after careful consideration it is established that bad practice has taken place, an informal complaint to the care home manager will be made. The complaint can be issued in either of the following ways:
- A letter to the care home manager (for which a copy will be retained).

Delivered verbally by the research team either in person or over the phone to the care home manager. In this case it must be requested the care home manager formally writes to the research team acknowledging the complaint has been verbally received, and providing information concerning who is investigating the matter.

The research team must also request that the care home manager provides feedback, stipulating how the issue has been resolved. However the research team



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should not allow the organisation to delay or detract them from making a formal complaint if necessary.

Formal Complaints Procedure

●If the research team are dissatisfied with the way that their concerns have been dealt with they should move to a formal stage. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) handles formal complaints concerning national minimum standard issues. If the complaint concerns abuse (for example, theft, negligence, physical or emotional abuse) the local adult social services protection of vulnerable adults co-ordinator should be informed. In this case CQC should again be contacted initially to ascertain the contact details of the appointed co-ordinator in social services.

●A record of telephone conversations must be kept concerning formal complaints, and information provided to the researcher verbally should also be requested in a written format.