



# Why research matters

DAY CENTRE RESOURCES HUB - SECTION 2

These resources are for older people's day centres and organisations who may work with them. They aim to support day centre sustainability by improving knowledge about them, supporting their operation and encouraging joint working.



**NIHR** | Applied Research Collaboration  
South London



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# About this document

This document forms part of the Day Centre Resources Hub which can be found at <https://arc-sl.nihr.ac.uk/day-centre-resources-hub>. These resources are for older people's day centres and organisations who might work with them. They aim to support day centre sustainability by raising awareness and improving knowledge about them, supporting their operation, and encouraging joint working.

People who might be interested are those whose roles involve planning, funding, evaluating and referring or signposting to day centres. They might be people working in community organisations or considering partnership working with day centres. Others might work or volunteer in day centres or support other stakeholders, research service provision, or be carers of people who attend day centres.

**This Resources Hub contains seven sections.**

**Each section is available as a downloadable Adobe Acrobat document. Alternatively, you can download one document that includes all seven sections. There are also Word or Excel templates that can be downloaded and used locally.**

Documents can be printed in black and white by selecting 'printer properties' and 'print in grayscale'.

Each section is a compilation of useful material. We hope people will dip in to find specific resources relevant to their work and appropriate to their needs. A broad range of day centre stakeholders were involved in developing these resources. They address priority support needs identified by day centres and their stakeholders in various roles. They were created because a survey found that day centres felt unsupported and under-prepared for current and future environments. Day centre providers, professional decision-makers and community groups felt there needed to be more supportive and informative resources, and they had an appetite for joint working.

This work was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research Applied Research Collaboration (NIHR ARC) South London, which brings together researchers, health and social care practitioners, and local people under different themes. It focuses on 'applied' research designed to solve practical problems faced by local people and their health and social care services. This work falls within the Social Care theme, which aims to support the sustainability of social care services.

- About this Resources Hub
- **Why research matters**
- Research evidence on day centres for older people
- Understanding outcomes and measuring impact
- A guide to marketing communications
- Workforce: staff and volunteer recruitment
- Case studies and inspiration

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**People who 'road-tested' the Day Centre Resources Hub said:**

*My overall reflection is that this is the type of resource I wish I had when I first started commissioning day services 7 years ago. I can see this being like a 'one stop shop' resource that collates examples of what good looks like and valuable hints and tips that can be considered by professionals from different sectors, whether it's policy makers, commissioners, or providers.*

Commissioner

*I found the resources really helpful and have already shared some with my team.*

Assistant Locality Team Manager (adult social care social work team)

*I found it very useful and I am sure that it will be used to enhance understanding and joint working.*

Senior Social Worker

*I would direct "commissioners" or those looking at local health and social care spending to see these pages and find the evidence to inform their plans for local services.*

GP

*The website is well structured and offers detailed information. The presentation is clean and easy to read. The content is right to the point on the topics. I particularly like the links to research and marketing.*

South Croydon Day Centre for the Retired Co-ordinator

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**Disclaimer and approvals**

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Ethical approval was awarded by King's College London (ref: LRS/DP-21/22-27013).

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# Why research matters

This document explains why becoming aware of the research evidence should be of interest to day centre providers and their external stakeholders, the value of academic research and how to find it.

## 1. Why is being aware of research evidence about day centres important?

**Commissioning/funding decision-makers.** People involved in decisions about commissioning or funding services (in both health and social care) are expected to make evidence-based decisions to ensure that public resources are being used as effectively as possible. Commissioning is the process by which health and care services are planned, purchased and monitored. It involves assessing local needs, planning services, procuring services and monitoring quality. People involved in commissioning and funding decisions include local policymakers, commissioners, members of committees such as Health and Wellbeing Boards or Integrated Care Systems (ICS), people on funding panels, local councillors, or local grant-giving bodies that may be charitable. Service user expertise should, but does not always, play a significant role in the decision-making process. [1]

**People working directly with older people and carers.** Being aware of day centre research may help professionals working in health or social care and others who have direct contact with older people and carers. It may help them to feel more confident about suggesting day centre attendance.

[!\[\]\(74d4806277d7e73349d8e8c0897931e9\_img.jpg\) See the two-page information sheet for professionals to give to older people and carers: \*Day centres for older people: what do people say about them?\* in section 2.4.](#)

It summarises some of the main messages coming from six recent UK research studies and illustrates these with quotes from some of the older people and family carers interviewed for these studies. It can be downloaded as a separate pdf from the Resources Hub website.

**Day centre providers.** Knowledge of the evidence about day centres may strengthen day centre providers' messaging (i.e. how they present the service) about what their services offer. They can be clearer about how their service benefits potential service users, their carers or volunteers as well as staff and others they work with, including social care and the NHS.

**Relevance to local/national policy or strategies.** Important insights into day centres for older people, ‘interventions’ that take place at them (e.g. exercise classes) and their relevance to policy or strategies can be gained by reading relevant research. Research articles summarise the background to the particular research study being presented. For example, prevention and encouraging people to be more proactive about their health and wellbeing are central to the vision of the NHS Long Term Plan [2] and in social care [3]. People involved in local strategies to tackle loneliness may be interested in knowing the research about how day centre attendance impacts on loneliness (in individuals and what this means for the NHS, for example).

## 2. Locating academic evidence can be tricky but it is worth finding

There are different types of evidence used in commissioning decisions. Academic research evidence might be formal research or performance data (e.g. about what works), the lived experience of people using services and their families, or the experience of front-line staff. Barriers in accessing academic research means that relevant research articles may not be consulted.

Research with LA and NHS commissioners found that they tend to use easily accessible and trusted publications from a variety of sources. These include national policy guidance, reports of government-funded pilots, quangos, industry advice, voluntary sector best practice reports, professional or sector publications, experiences of people using services (‘case studies’ or ‘stories’), local knowledge or local service evaluations. They may also undertake pilots to create evidence.

Academic research evidence is an overlooked yet important source of evidence. [1, 4]

Commissioners working in the NHS have said that it is difficult for them to find, review, interpret and make useful conclusions from relevant academic research because they lack the time and skills to do so, and also because articles are often not accessible to them. [4]


## 3. How to find academic research

Carrying out a search on Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com>) is a good way to start looking for research articles about day centres because it saves looking at the contents pages of multiple journals.

Findings of research studies are often published in ‘peer reviewed journals’ which means that other experts working in similar fields in the academic world (universities) have thoroughly checked them before they are published. Articles in these journals report and interpret findings of different types of research study.

Articles covering '**primary research**' - which involves gathering data that has not been collected before - involves reporting themes and data collected that illustrate these (e.g. statistics or representative quotations from people who were interviewed), so that readers know the findings are genuine. They also provide contextual information to help readers understand the findings better (for example an overview of reasons why the research was undertaken, other relevant research, policy, theories).

Articles may also report '**secondary research**' which uses already existing data. One form of secondary research is the 'literature review'. A literature review aims to answer a specific question, and involves subject specialists searching for, evaluating and examining published research (UK and international) and explaining how the body of literature found addresses the question.

Research published in journals usually includes a short summary at the start. This is called the 'abstract'. The abstract is always available to read free of charge. Many journals charge to read research articles in full. However, some articles in these journals are openly accessible which means that readers don't need pay a fee to access them. These 'open access' articles are usually flagged with an open padlock . Some journals never charge fees to read published articles (e.g. BMC Geriatrics, Health and Social Care in the Community, Journal of Long-Term Care).

Overviews of research findings are sometimes also published in professional/sector press (e.g. Community Care, Health Service Journal).

People unfamiliar with day centres may wish to read a report that gives in-depth details of four day centres, ***What happens in English generalist day centres for older people? Findings from case study research***, published by King's College London [5]. It aims to further the understanding of these diverse services.

## 4. Two-page information sheet about UK research: *Day centres for older people: what do older people say about them?*

(downloadable in pdf format)



### Day centres for older people: what do people say about them?

May 2024

There have been six recent UK research studies about day centres. In the studies, older people and family carers were asked about their experience of day centres and we have used their quotes here to talk about the main messages from the studies.

**Going to a day centre helps maintain quality of life. Many people can find it helpful and enjoyable, and it helps to provide structure to their week.**

Many people who go to day centres have long-term conditions and many are unable to go out without support. Some will also have experienced loss (e.g. bereavement, retirement, declining health) and may have very little social contact. People often start going to their day centre for social contact. It gives them something to do, to get out of the house, it adds structure to their week and improves their mental or physical health.

Any initial reluctance to use a day centre can often turn to enjoyment and enthusiasm.

*I didn't want to come (laughing)...I said what down there, it's for old people and I'm not old. So, anyway, when I did come down, I enjoyed it". (Ruth)*

*I'm nearly 92 but I don't feel 92 and I thought what are you on about you're an old woman yourself (laughter). And after I gave myself a talking to, I sort of warmed to it, and I like coming now. (Joan)*

*I didn't like it to begin with, I have to say, but I got to like it very much. (Megan)*

Going to a day centre can improve a person's quality of life, reducing loneliness and improving their feelings of self-worth. For many people day centres offer companionship and something different to do, in the outside world. Importantly, they also offer practical support, information about other help available and, often, a great deal of fun.

*I just enjoy it there. Because I am alone. I am on my own. Sometimes I feel sad. I feel better when I go to the centre I have a little bit of talking, conversation and some socialising. (...)*  
*I enjoy it very much. To tell you the truth, before Monday I had been waiting for Monday to come. (...) I feel happy and it helps my depression. (Miguel)*

*Oh, the companionship, definitely everyone is just lovely. (Val)*

*I'm coming out now, meeting people, and it's wonderful to be able to come [to Site 5]. It's like joining the world again, you know? (Site 5 member, S05OP02 aged 74)*

*I was in a bad place as far as loneliness is concerned... but it was an experience to sit with people and socialise with people. People who were friendly and we had a laugh. (Cedar, client).*



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The welcoming, safe and supportive atmosphere and the opportunity to build genuine relationships are important.

*Well, it is the fact that everybody says, hello and you are welcomed; when you arrive, you see familiar faces even if you don't talk to everybody. (Ruth)*

*I find the whole atmosphere here is very comforting, you sense it as you walk through the door. (Anne)*

*If they're doing well-er than you, they seem to come and help you. They don't have to. But they did come and help. (William)*

Most people have good experiences. Older people's overall feelings about their day centres:

*All I can say is that anyone who doesn't go there is missing out on something. (Kathleen)*

*It changes your life. (Wilma)*

*Oh, I love going. Oh yes. Yes. (Kenneth).*

*Yes, it's good value for money. (Miguel)*

People running the service are supportive.

*They care, and they understand why I am here... (Mariana)*

*They come around asking "Are you alright? What's the matter?"(Thomasina).*

*Everything is done for you, you know. It's great to think now you can be looked after like this, you know. (SAM).*

*I don't know what I'd do without them. (Site 3, S03OP01 aged 73)*

### Day centres provide reassurance and a break for family carers.

Having a regular extended break is beneficial for carers' mental and physical health and helps them to sustain their caring role. Knowing their family member is enjoying themselves enables them to have a relaxing break.

*"That amount of time [husband] is at [Site 4] is my little core of being normal [...] I know he's safe and he's enjoying himself"(Site 4 Carer, S04C02)*

*She gets a lunch and she gets a social engagement. It gets her out of her flat and (...) that's money well spent (...) it is good value for her, because it does all those things about keeping her mentally and socially active. (Family carer Evelyn)*

*I can sit in my living room on my own. It's one thing I really like doing (...) It relaxes me.*

*Otherwise I'm just highly stressed. I'm like, you know when you're highly strung, you're ready to bum (...) Just to be alone in my own house is just the best feeling. (Family carer Linda)*

*It gives him a break from me and it gives me a break from him. Then when he comes home I'm saying, have you had a good day? It gives you something else to talk about to each other. (SCF)*

Download this document from the Day Centre Resources Hub <https://arc-sl.nihr.ac.uk/day-centre-resources-hub>.

Research quoted here: Bennett et al (2023), Hagan & Manktelow (2021), Lunt (2018); Lunt et al (2021); Noone (2023); Orellana et al (2020), Orellana et al (2021) Rokstad et al (2019). Names are not participants' real names.

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