

Experiences of Home Care Workers from Domiciliary Services in Dublin

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Abstract

The research explores home care workers from their perspective.

The findings indicated that the motivation for caring for HCWs is 80% money. The services were not well organised and this challenged caregivers. Their work days were extended by the travel time from client to client. Additionally, home care workers pay the travel expenses for every visit and this reduces their wage under the national minimum standard. The jobs demands for HCWs means less private and family time, but increases their health issues. The study gave recommendations for further research and organisational reform.

Introduction

In the last two decades the Irish home care industry expanded rapidly attracting many private agencies to share the state's care for aged, sick and disabled people (Doyle & Timonen, 2007). The 2015 statistics showed that the HSE budget was €655.1 million for Services for Older People. "Of the 549,300 persons aged 65 and over, 95% live at home, approximately 30% live alone, and 10% have a disability" (MRCI, 2015). The home care industry is providing care in communities, fact that allows the older people or those with disability to stay at home and live independent as long as they can with an additional help (Care Alliance, 2014). Further, the lack of political attention to the Home care sector left this fast growing industry unregulated and uncontrolled leaving the employees of the agencies and clients at risks (Doyle & Timonen, 2007)



Method

The conducted research was qualitative. It was interested in exploring textual data that allows the researcher to see the world through the eyes of the interviewed (Holoway, 2005, p.5). The study had an aim to explore home care workforce. The general research question was: What are challenges home care workers experience in providing care for people in their homes?

The method was in-depth interviews. The questions were semi-structured and open ended.

For the purpose of the research five home care workers from four care companies for domiciliary services which operate in Dublin were interviewed. The interviewees had to answer eight main questions. Every participant signed informed consent form before the interview.

The interviews were transcribed and findings were entered in NVIVO and were interpreted and analysed using thematic analysis tool in the program. Four themes were notified: Paid care challenges, Home care organisational challenges, Home care workforce challenges and Work-life challenges.

The research obeyed all ethical rules. An informal consent form (Appendix 2) was obtained before the interviews. This form is designed to give evidence that the participants know what they are involved in. It ensured participants that the interviews were confidential, they do not harm anybody and that interviewee voluntarily participates. The participants were respected and valued.

Findings

Paid care in home settings involves much more responsibility, skills and personality than the care in institutional or family settings, because the HCW works alone with the client. Young people found this job overwhelming.

Better organisation of the services can increase client's satisfaction and can make HCWs job much easier and safer. Instead it is challenging caregivers' everyday performance, alongside with occupational constrains

The working conditions and the demands of the job make HCWs feel that equality in society does not apply to them. Mostly of caregivers worked 6 days per week. Work intensity affects their health.

All of the participants declared that their personal life changed after they started working as a HCW: they have less private and family time. It is a result of the intensity and demands of the job and lack of organisational strategy of the agencies

Discussion

Caring as a paid job is as demanding as caring for a family member.

In the home care industry it is not necessary to have emotional bonds between both sides of the care: the home service can be just "an economic exchange"

The research found that without regulations agencies overuse the HCWs leading to excessive working hours but in the same time not always gave them time for breaks.

HCWs are not overloaded with work; they are overloaded with traveling between clients and unlimited obligation to the agencies.

The research was open to surprises and found that workers and especially young people in the home care industry need in work training.

Home care industry needs urgent political attention and reforms in organisation of the services and staff management and training.