

## Scandal of neglect in Britain's care homes: NHS survey of 63,000 elderly residents reveals one in three are living in fear of abuse

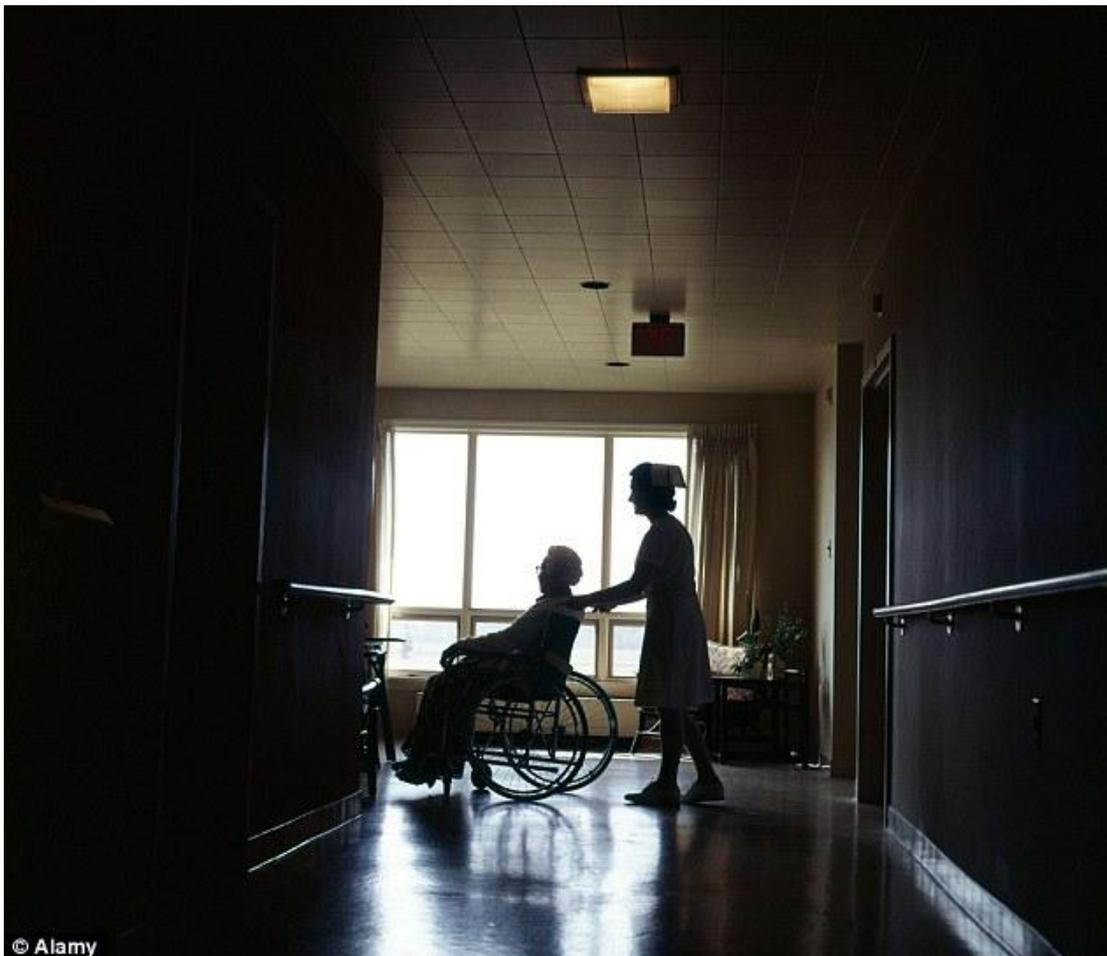
- Charities claim the Government survey shows 'massive crisis' in the system
- The NHS survey found that half of patients are not kept clean
- 63,000 people were surveyed and 1 in 10 don't get enough to eat or drink

By Jo Macfarlane

Tens of thousands of vulnerable care patients say they feel at risk from abuse, are allowed to go hungry and are often left unwashed, according to a shocking Government survey.

It found that one in three adults who are in residential care or receiving help at home fear abuse or physical harm – equivalent to about half a million people. Others complained they received so little food and drink that they believed their health could suffer.

Charities claimed last night that the survey showed the system was in 'massive crisis' and warned that the problems could get even worse as cash-strapped local authorities targeted care budgets for further cuts.



Revelations: Tens of thousands of vulnerable care patients say they feel at risk from abuse, are allowed to go hungry and are often left unwashed, according to a shocking Government survey

About 1.5 million people in England – most of whom are elderly or disabled – receive basic care funded wholly or in part by local authorities because they have issues with mobility, have ongoing health issues or are dependent on alcohol or drugs.

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The Adult Social Care Survey, which was carried out by the Department of Health, regulator the Care Quality Commission and the NHS's Health and Social Care Information Centre, found:

## CASE STUDY: 'THERE NEVER SEEM TO BE ENOUGH STAFF ON DUTY'



The care received by 89-year-old Ann Joyce in her residential home is 'woefully inadequate', according to her daughter Jacqueline Grattan.

Ann, from Essex, has bone cancer and dementia, and has been in the care system for three years.

Art gallery owner Jacqueline, who lives in Wormley, Hertfordshire, said: 'We keep being told the staffing levels comply with Government guidelines, but there are never enough people on duty to deal with basic needs like toileting.

'The staff are supposed to have dementia training but I have never seen any of them talk to my mother or try to keep her mind active.

'If she says no to a cup of tea or glass of water, they leave it at that, although she can't express her wishes.

As a result, she is constantly dehydrated and unable to fight off infections.

'In my mother's unit there are supposed to be five staff for 28 patients, but one or two care assistants are invariably off.

'My mother sometimes has to wait 40 minutes to be toileted and that can't be right, whatever the Government guidelines say.

'The staff work hard. They are on the go all the time but they are badly managed. If you asked me whether my mother feels safe and secure, I would say no.'

A spokesman for Barchester Care Homes, which runs the home where Ann lives, said:

'The safety, health and wellbeing of our residents is of the utmost importance. Our staff are highly qualified and dedicated, and residents are offered access to activities and excursions.'

- Up to 50 per cent of those questioned in some areas said they felt unsafe because they believed they were at risk of abuse or physical harm.
- Nearly one in ten in some areas claimed they did not get enough to eat or drink, while one in 100 across the country said they received so little nourishment they feared their health could be at risk.
- Nearly half of those relying on carers to perform basic washing duties said they did not feel as clean or presentable as they would like.
- Thousands said the way they were treated 'undermines' the way they feel about themselves.

England's 152 local authorities were each asked to send the survey to at least 300 people receiving social care, who were selected at random. Nearly 63,000 completed the poll between January and March last year. A third said they did not feel as safe as they would like, while two per cent said they did not feel safe at all. But in some areas, such as Brent, North-West London, more than 50 per cent claimed they did not feel safe, while in Hartlepool, Co Durham, St Helens, Merseyside, and Tameside, Greater Manchester, more than 40 per cent said social care services did not make them feel safe.

The report did not reveal why people felt unsafe or who they feared might cause them harm. At the same time, 2,500 people – four per cent of those surveyed – claimed that they did not get enough food and drink. This rose to 9.2 per cent in Westminster, Central London, and 8.8 per cent in Manchester. An additional one per cent – 630 people – said they got so little food and drink that they believed there was a risk to their health. And 44 per cent said they did not feel as clean and as well-presented as they would like, with six per cent claiming they felt less than adequately clean.

One per cent claimed the way they were treated 'completely undermines the way I think and feel about myself'.

Liz Kendall, Labour's care spokesman, said the study was a damning indictment of England's £17 billion-a-year care industry.

'These figures are deeply concerning but they represent only part of what's going on and that's not good enough,' she said.

'The Government must ask why people are not feeling safe, and this information should be fed back to providers, commissioners and families. We need to know what's going on here in depth. I suspect part of the problem is how isolated many elderly and disabled people feel while in care, separated from their families. But a lack of funding and the high turnover of carers also mean many receiving care in their own homes don't know the people who are coming to help them, and basic compassion is lacking.'



Worrying: Up to 50 per cent of those questioned in the NHS survey in some areas said they felt unsafe because they believed they were at risk of abuse or physical harm (file picture)

Michelle Mitchell, charity director general at Age UK, said: 'By neglecting the social care system for so long, governments have put the human rights, health and dignity of too many at risk. Many older people are worrying about having enough food to eat, and feel unsafe and unable to present themselves in a way that retains their dignity. How can this be acceptable in a civilised society?' Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said: 'The quality of care needs to be valued as highly as the quality of treatment. There can be no hiding place for those providing poor care. We have protected access to care by investing £7.2 billion over four years, but we also want to drive up standards so everyone gets the service they have the right to expect.'

### **CASE STUDY: 'WE'VE HAD 56 DIFFERENT CARERS IN JUST ONE YEAR'**

More than 50 different carers in a year have been sent to one 80-year-old stroke victim, who is looked after in his own home.

Retired accountant Richard has had two strokes in two years and is housebound.

He was offered a residential care place after his first stroke, but his wife Helen, 75, asked that he be allowed to continue living at their home in Darlington, Co Durham.

The couple now rely on a succession of young care assistants, part-funded by the local authority, who visit four times a day to help get Richard out of bed and dressed, feed him and put him to bed.

Helen said that while many of the carers were 'wonderful', she had been left frustrated by the lack of training and high turnover of staff. 'I keep a diary and in the past year we've had 56 different carers – only six of them men,' she said. 'Richard has a care plan but they don't read it so I'm on edge all the time, wondering what they are going to do next.'

'It can be very frustrating. One of the girls we had was a 17-year-old who went straight from working at Burger

King to looking after my husband. They don't get the training they need – it's not just a case of making a cup of tea and having a chat.

'Richard has to have everything done for him, including washing and toileting, because he can't get around on his own. They never call ahead if they're running late.

'Whoever runs the care system, I would like to go in there and shake them all up.'

Both the couple's real names have been withheld because Helen is worried about possible repercussions from the carers who visit their home.

'Some of the girls who come in to help can be slightly vindictive and I wouldn't want them to react badly to criticism,' she said.