

100 elderly people a day badly hurt in care homes

As the watchdog reveals a list of broken bones, pressure sores and burns, families call for better protection for loved ones

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More than 100 vulnerable and elderly people are suffering serious injuries in care homes every day, new figures reveal. Reports of serious injuries collated by the regulator, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), show a rise of 40% in five years. The injuries include broken bones, infected pressure sores and burns.

Serious injury notifications for every care home in England rose from 26,779 in 2012 to 38,676 in 2016. The CQC has prosecuted homes with the most serious failings, including a £190,000 fine for a provider in West Yorkshire last year after a resident broke his neck and died in a fall from a shower chair, and a £24,600 fine for a residential home last February after a woman fell against an uncovered radiator and suffered serious burns.

Relatives of residents who have suf-

fered avoidable deaths or serious injury called for care homes to protect people properly, train staff to respond better to emergencies, and to investigate quickly when things go wrong.

Brian Wright, 81, who worked for the BBC for more than 20 years, building sets for shows such as Top of the Pops, died in October 2015 after a fall from the third floor of the Victoria Care Centre in Acton, west London. The home agreed this year to pay compensation to his family.

Staff knew that Wright, who suffered from dementia, was at risk of trying to jump from the building yet he was able to open a restraining device on one of the windows. He died five days later. A safeguarding report by the local council found that he was the victim of neglect, inadequate risk management and poor communication among staff.

Robert Davidson, 79, who suffered from Alzheimer's, choked to death on a plastic glove at Aran Court Care Home in Birmingham in January 2016. Staff were not trained to call an ambulance, and an inquest heard that the carer involved did not realise it was necessary to dial 9 for an outside line – and had received no training on when to start cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Sharon Bysephippis, Davidson's niece, said: "I think he would have had a better

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Care homes are accused of not looking after the elderly properly. Right, Robert Davidson choked to death on a glove while in care

chance of survival if he had choked in the street. The staff didn't have the proper training and they didn't know what to do. They were just panicking."

One of the most shocking cases was the death in 2015 of Norman Beard, 87, at the Daisy Bank Nursing Home in Cheadle, Staffordshire. He lost three stones during a seven-week stay and died from infected pressure sores, which were partly caused by neglect. An inquest was told that the

home, which has since shut, had a shortage of staff, food and equipment.

Cold Springs Park care home in Penrith, Cumbria, is one of the homes with a high number of serious injury notifications: 40 in the first nine months of this year. A CQC report in August said care at the home was inadequate and "people who used this service were placed at risk of receiving unsafe care".

Andrea Sutcliffe, the CQC's chief inspector of adult care, said: "People living in care homes and their families want to be reassured that those in charge are doing everything they can to support their health and wellbeing, including making sure their services are as safe as possible.

"I am glad that care home providers are notifying us of serious injuries that occur within their services, as this openness and transparency encourages their own learning and drives improvement in quality and safety.

"Our analysis continues to show that most care homes in England are providing good, safe care and we are seeing some improvements in quality. Good care providers are those that learn from and minimise the risk of serious injuries. Safe, high-quality care is what everyone living in a care home has every right to expect."

The CQC said it had encouraged care homes to ensure accurate serious injury notifications were filed, which was a key factor in the rise.

The notifications cover injuries that lead to damage likely to last more than 28 days, including to bones, any major organ of the body, including the brain and skin, and damage to muscles, tendons, joints or vessels. The data shared with The Sunday Times show the number of notifications for each home, but not the specific injuries.

Avery Healthcare Group, operator of the home where Davidson choked, said it had acquired it shortly before his death and acted swiftly to raise standards. The CQC inspected the home in March 2016 and found risks were being identified and management plans put in place.

Joan Elliott, general manager for Bupa Care Homes, which operates Cold Spring Park, said: "The vast majority of our homes are rated 'good' by the CQC. When we fall short of the high standards our residents expect and deserve, we work hard to make long-term improvements."

The operator of Victoria Care Centre care home did not respond. Daisy Bank Nursing Home is no longer registered with the CQC and the operator could not be contacted for comment.

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