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Module Code: LCHS4003

Module Title: Introduction to Health and Social Care

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COMMUNITY ANTENATAL MIDWIFERY SERVICES

Supporting Women. Supporting families, Supporting communities

1. WHAT IS IT?

Community antenatal midwifery services provide care and support women during pregnancy in community settings such as clinics, health centres and in their own homes. The aim is to improve healthy pregnancies, identify and manage risks early, and prepare women and their families for childbirth and parenthood.

2. HISTORY OF THE SERVICE

Midwifery care has a long history dating back to ancient civilisations, where midwives were centeral to childbirth (Dunn, 2017)

In the UK, formal midwifery training began in the 18th and 19th centuries with pioneers such as Mary Seacole and Florance Nightgale improving standards of care (Gourley, 2006)

Community midwifery developed significantly in the 20th century, especially after the NHS was established in 1948, making antenatal care more accessible to all women (NHS Enland, 2023)

Today, services are woman-centered, evidence based and delivered in the community to reduce unnecessary hospital visits (RCM, 2022)

3. FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNITY ANTENATAL MIDWIFERY SERVICES

Community midwives provide holistic, personalised care to support the physical, emotional and social well-being of women.

Checking blood pressure, urine, medical history and identifying

Measuring fundal height, listening to the baby's heartbeat and monitor growth and wellbeing

Providing information on nutrition,exercise, mental health, breastfeeding, smoking cessation and preparing for birth

Offering reassurance and building relationships and supporting women's choices and preferanc

Working as a part of a team to provide consistent trusting care throughout pregnancy and beyond

4. CHALLENGES

Despite the vital role community antenatal midwifery services play, there are ongoing challanges

1- High Demand And Workforce Shortages

Increasing numbers of pregnancies alongside midwife shorftages lead to high caseloads, which can impact the continuety and the time widwives can spend with each woman (NHS Digital 2024; RCM 2022)

2- Acccessibility And Inequalities

Women in rural areas, from disadvantaged background or with additional needs may face barriers accessing services, leading to health inequalities (Public Health England, 2020; Marmot, 2010)

RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME

Residential Care Homes

Introduction

Residential care homes play a crucial role in the UK's health and social care services. They provide living arrangements and personal care to people who are unable to live independently due to age, disability, illness or fragility. Residential care homes are places that help people stay well, safe and dignified while they are getting help with daily tasks. This essay will discuss the history and function of residential care homes and two challenges the service currently faces.

History of Residential Care Facilities

The history of residential care homes originates in the workhouses and nonprofit organisations that cared for older and vulnerable people in the nineteenth century. Such facilities often provided basic accommodation and support to those unable to care for themselves. But conditions were often bad, and residents' rights were limited.

Care provision gradually improved with the creation of the NHS in 1948 and the expansion of social services. Residential care homes became a more specialist service to support people who needed help with daily living. Over the years regulations have been brought in to raise standards of care and to protect residents. Today residential care homes are regulated by the Care Quality Commission, which monitors the quality and safety of services.

The Role of Residential Care Homes

The primary purpose of a residential care home is to offer a secure living environment and personal care for those who require assistance with everyday activities. Staff assist residents with washing, dressing, eating, mobility and personal hygiene. Meals, housekeeping, laundry and social interaction are also provided by residential care homes.

Residential care homes are not normally equipped to provide twenty-four-hour

nursing care, unlike nursing homes. They assist people whose needs can be met by personal care and supervision, rather than in any other way. Care homes want to promote independence where they can but ensure that residents have support where they need it.

Residential care homes also have a part to play in addressing feeling alone and social isolation. Many homes have activities and events to encourage socialisation and activity among residents. Staff work closely with healthcare professionals such as GPs and community nurses to ensure the physical and mental health needs of residents are met.

Challenge 1: Employee shortage

One of the biggest problems that residential care homes face is a lack of staff. Low pay, challenging working conditions and limited career progression opportunities mean that many providers struggle to hire and keep care workers. This means many homes are understaffed and have to call on existing staff to work extra hours.

Shortages of staff can affect the standard of care provided to residents. When there is not as many staff, workers may have less time to spend with each individual, making it harder to provide personalised care. Heavy workloads can cause stress and burnout in employees, which only makes hiring and keeping employees problems worse.

Challenge 2: Financial Pressures

Another major issue is financial pressure. Residential care homes are facing increasing costs in wages, food, energy and building repair. At the same time, the UK's growing elderly population is increasing demand for care services.

Many care homes are funded by local authorities which may not cover the full cost of providing care. Financial problems may impose challenges on homes' ability to provide high-quality services and to invest in staff development. Sometimes care homes have had to close because they are not able to stay financially sustainable.

Conclusion For those who are incapable of living freely, residential care homes offer critical help. They assist residents in maintaining their well-being and standard of

living by providing accommodation, personal care, supervision, and socialising opportunities. Despite the service's rapid development over time, it nonetheless faces difficulties like staffing shortages and limited finances. For residential care facilities to continue to provide safe and efficient care to individuals in need, it is critical to address these problems.

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