



Course: BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care

Module: Independent Project (BMHP6020_LON)

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Date of submission: 11.06.2026

Project Proposal

The Cost of Care: Exploring the Impact of Dementia on Older Partners in Uk

1) Aim:

This study looks closely at what happens inside British homes when an older person becomes the full-time, unpaid carer for a partner with dementia. The main goal is to measure the heavy, often hidden price these elderly spouses pay—not just financially, but in terms of their own failing physical health and emotional exhaustion within the current UK social care system.

2) Objectives:

- To review UK qualitative literature on old-age informal care published between 2020 and 2026.
- To identify NHS barriers that leave older couples without timely post-diagnostic support.
- To explore how watching a partner fade causes grief and marital identity breakdown.
- To provide practical recommendations protecting the health and savings of vulnerable carers.

3) Background

The UK social care system is facing severe funding shortages, and the uncomfortable truth is that it survives because of a massive, unpaid workforce. Without older spouses stepping in to provide round-the-clock care, state services would simply collapse overnight. Yet, when you look at how the National Health Service (NHS) operates, the system remains completely patient centric. Medical professionals look right past the older carer, treating them merely as a functional tool to keep the patient safe, rather than an individual with their own acute health issues and emotional needs (Collins et al., 2022). British society tends to romanticise this sacrifice as a beautiful marital duty. This cultural expectation hides a dark cycle of caregiver burnout, deep isolation, and chronic grief. This project challenges the institutional gaps that leave older British partners carrying this immense burden entirely on their own.

4) Methods:

I will conduct a structured review of UK qualitative literature using **PubMed**, **Google Scholar**, and **ProQuest**, alongside **NHS** archives, focusing on the unpolished human voices of carers. Data will be decoded using thematic analysis to identify shared patterns of strain. To ensure transparency, screening will align with the PRISMA workflow, and study quality will be rigorously checked using qualitative CASP guidelines.

Inclusion criteria:

- Only peer-reviewed studies to keep the academic quality high.
- Primary empirical research that used direct interviews or focus groups to listen to real people.
- Studies based entirely within the UK, matching the specific rules of the NHS and British welfare.
- Research tracking older spousal or partner care dynamics where dementia is present.
- Papers published from 2020 to 2026, capturing the harsh realities of the post pandemic care crisis.

Exclusion criteria:

- Opinion pieces, commentaries, or literature reviews lacking original data.
- Studies conducted outside the UK, where healthcare systems and state funding are different.
- Anything published before 2020, as it does not reflect the current pressures on the social care sector.
- Research focused on younger caregivers, professional nurses, or adult children rather than elderly spouses.

5) Resources:

This study utilizes university library access to search digital repositories, including PubMed, ProQuest, and **Google Scholar**, alongside open-access policy databases from **NHS England** and **Age UK**.

6) Timescale:

Chapter	29/07/2026	20/08/2026	01/10/2026	01/11/2026	01/12/2026
Chapter: 1 Introduction					
Chapter 2: Background					
Chapter 3: Methods					
Chapter 4: Results and Discussion					
Chapter: 5 Recommendations and Conclusions					

7) Self-reflection

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES
Compassionate Academic Writing: I balanced strict academic requirements with genuine empathy, ensuring the authentic voices of suffering older couples came through clearly without losing scientific objectivity	Managing Emotional Bias: Reading heartbreaking accounts of isolation and neglect was emotionally challenging, requiring constant positional checks to keep my critiques grounded in facts rather than pure anger.
Critical Policy Analysis: I moved beyond a simple summary of dementia to build a sharp, evidence-based critique of the structural gaps within the NHS and UK social care systems.	Navigating Bureaucratic Complexity: Deciphering the shifting, highly fragmented realities of UK social care caps and local authority funding criteria within the literature was difficult and required meticulous cross-referencing.

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