

The future of patient protection – cameras in care homes?



All of us who work in the sector were deeply upset by the appalling behaviour of care home staff featured in a recent BBC Panorama programme. The only comfort is that those cases are extremely rare, though even one incident is too many. We all know the vast

majority of highly skilled and dedicated employees deliver fantastic care, day in, day out. So how do we stop those rare examples of cruelty or wilful neglect of duty? Even with rigorous recruitment checks, and the highest levels of training, it seems bad care slips through the net. What more can be done?

One care provider has announced a new approach to the problem. HC-One, the UK's third largest care provider, has launched a consultation with residents, relatives and employees about the possibility of installing visible, 'opt in' cameras in their care homes.

The use of cameras is by no means a new debate in the sector,

and people from all quarters – whether independent, public or third sector providers, regulators, or relatives' associations – have long discussed the potential for filming in homes. The purpose of these cameras would be twofold. Firstly, to act as a deterrent against abuse, and secondly, to provide evidence that can be used to support punitive action against anyone found to have acted inappropriately. When a complaint is made, it would help residents, service users, their families or employees to uncover the truth of a situation. They say the camera never lies.

But let's be clear. No one is saying cameras would provide a quick fix to the problem. Nor that should they be seen as an alternative to the foundations of good care, such as high levels of training and strong recruitment policies. Similarly, there is widespread consensus across the sector that we do not want someone sitting in an office monitoring a bank of screens. The provision of personal, professional, high-quality care remains the top priority.

It also worth reiterating two key principles of this new proposal –

the cameras would be 'opt in', and all parties in the home would be made aware of them. This is not secret filming, trying to catch someone out. These are, crucially, people's homes.

More widely, the Metropolitan Police has just begun a trial of cameras worn on officers' uniforms, after a similar scheme in Southern California. The use of force by officers there who wore cameras went down by 60%. Complaints against police fell by 80%.

There has been criticism of surveillance cameras as intrusive, infringing civil liberties, but these complaints were often aimed at secret cameras; a different proposition. If the introduction of cameras is made with the consent of residents, their families, and employees, it is worthy of further investigation. Anything that helps to root out or prevent abuse has to be considered.

Tim Knight is an Account Manager at PLMR, who provide communications support to a range of clients in the Health and Social Care sector, including HC-One.

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PEC completes fit-out of new urgent primary care centre in Bracknell

Fit-out and finishing specialist PEC has completed a six-week transformation of an unused area at the Royal Berkshire Bracknell Healthspace into a new Urgent Care Centre. The modern clinic was handed over to specialist provider OneMedical Care at the start of April.

PEC's dedicated team remodelled the existing space to create a large office area and waiting room, four treatment rooms, a plaster room, clean and dirty utility areas and a Patient Education Centre. One treatment room is dedicated for use by young patients and has been designed to be child-friendly with colourful screens and wipe down toys.

PEC managing director Sohan Panesar said: "The client was keen for the new clinic to be welcoming for patients who may be nervous about their visit. The centre is bright and colourful, and equipped with the latest in medical technology."

"This was a high profile project for PEC and we are delighted that from day one of opening the centre has been running smoothly."

Rachel Beverley-Stevenson, chief



executive of OneMedical Care said: "We were very pleased with the results of PEC's work. The team worked well and overcame the challenges of fitting out a new space within a live environment to deliver a fantastic centre which patients have been overwhelmingly positive about."

The centre was assessed by health watchdog the Care Quality Commission during the building and remodelling and registered as fully compliant. The opening was covered by local and national media, featuring in local news bulletins including ITV Meridian.