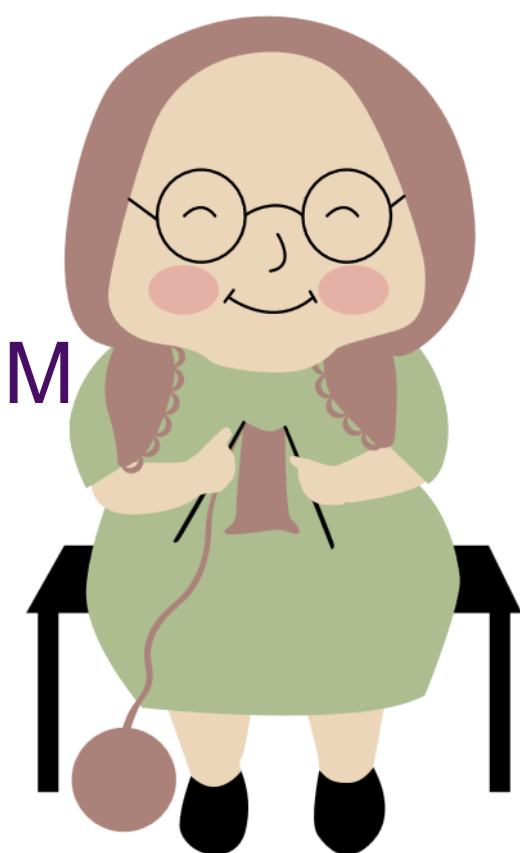


FREEDEM- How Do Care Staff Balance Safety And Freedom For People Living With Dementia Who Frequently Walk?

P2-12

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Wandering in care homes can be a beneficial and meaningful activity for people with dementia to participate in if the right strategies and support are in place to ensure that the resident is safe without restricting their independence. Walking is one of the few independent choices a resident with dementia can make.

INTRODUCTION	METHODS	How Homes successfully enabled walking		CONCLUSIONS	REFERENCES
Up to 60% of care home residents with dementia experience wandering. It is often a meaningful activity driven by enjoyment, lifelong habits and a need for independence. Perceived risk (falls, elopement, fatigue) frequently leads staff to restrict movement The FREEDEM project explored how care homes can balance safety with freedom to support well-being 	Design: Focused ethnography across 6 care homes in England Data Collection: 64 days (172 hours) of observations, 56 interviews, and 32 care plan reviews. Participants: 36 residents with dementia, 126 care staff, 14 managers, 9 relatives	Personalised care: Using life histories, walking with residents to understand motivations, engagement in household tasks and tailoring care plans. Monitoring: Using non-restrictive visual and technological (pressure mats, sensors) monitoring and providing support as needed, the physical ability to walk is assessed daily Navigation: physical support for staff, designing high-contrast signage, colours used for different areas and clear, clutter-free pathways Access to spaces: Locking unsafe areas while maximising safe independent unrestricted access to areas in the care home and garden, rest stops along routes Food and drink: Accessible snacks and drink stations available on walking routes, offering foods that can be eaten on the go, monitoring fluid intake and weight loss and managing appropriately		Enabling safe wandering requires moving away from restriction and actively embracing positive risk-taking. Success requires organisational support and practical staff training. Resources and individualised strategies	Graham, M. (2017). From wandering to wayfaring: Reconsidering movement in people with dementia in long-term care. <i>Dementia</i>. 16(6). 732-749. Jayasekara, R. (2009). <i>Dementia: Wandering</i>. Evidence-based summaries. Joanna Briggs Institute Adekoya, A. & Guse, L (2019). Wandering Behavior From the Perspectives of older Adults with Mild to Moderate Dementia in Long-Term Care. <i>Empirical Research</i>. 12 (5). Pp. 239-247. Hock ES, Waters-Harvey B, Griffiths, AW et al. (2026) Strategies to support safe wandering in care homes for older adults – what works, for whom, and in which circumstances? A realist synthesis. <i>International Journal of Nursing studies</i>. 176, PP1-20
	Results			The data directly informed the co-produced FREEDEM resources (Checklists, case studies and staff handbooks) designed to help care homes implement these practices 	CONTACT
	Variable support- freedom to walk varied significantly between homes, heavily dictated by staff-resident ratios The whole-home effect- training non-care staff significantly improved the overall support system			 Resources available here Contact us at B.waters-harvey@sheffield.ac.uk E.Fisher@sheffield.ac.uk	 