

Research highlights issues for parents caring 24/7 for children with complex care needs

January 23 2017



Credit: University of Hertfordshire

A new research report has been published by the charity WellChild which explores parents' experiences of managing care for children with complex care needs throughout the 24-hour day.

The study 'Caring for Children '24-7' was undertaken by Mark Whiting, WellChild Professor of Community Children's Nursing at the University

of Hertfordshire. It provides significant new insights into this under-researched area of care and identifies the key drivers for parents when seeking out of hours support. It also makes a series of recommendations on the role that WellChild might play in influencing future provision of out of hours support for children with complex care needs.

Children with complex needs

Professor Whiting's study reported that data relating to the growing population of children with complex needs is not systematically collected across the NHS, and this presents significant challenges to the NHS in planning appropriate professional support to parents. The study shines a particular light on the difficulties which parents face out-of-hours when access to professional support can be a particular challenge.

Professor Whiting said: 'I believe that this study adds significantly to what we know about how caring for a child with complex health needs impacts upon the lives of families in the community. Through the expertise and experience of the WellChild Nurses Programme, WellChild is uniquely placed to influence the commissioning and provision of care for families of children with the most complex of health needs in the community. Services need to be planned so these families know they can always access support at times and of a nature suitable for their child's specific needs.'

Despite dramatic growth of Community Children's Nursing teams in the past 30 years, there is tremendous variability of service provision from one area of the UK to another. The study demonstrates how, since its introduction in 2006, the WellChild Nurse Programme has made a real difference for the families of children with complex care needs.

Dramatic growth of community care

WellChild Director of Programmes Linda Partridge said: 'Professor Whiting's study powerfully demonstrates the impact of someone like a WellChild Nurse in empowering parents to plan and be confident in their own instincts, so they can effectively manage their [children](#)'s care, even when the child's condition shows signs of deteriorating. However we cannot underestimate the importance of having recourse to the appropriate professional support at all times, even if it is only to provide reassurance that the parent is taking the correct measures.'

Provided by University of Hertfordshire

Citation: Research highlights issues for parents caring 24/7 for children with complex care needs (2017, January 23) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-01-highlights-issues-parents-children-complex.html>

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