

# Care homes could overtake hospitals as the most common place to die

## Key findings

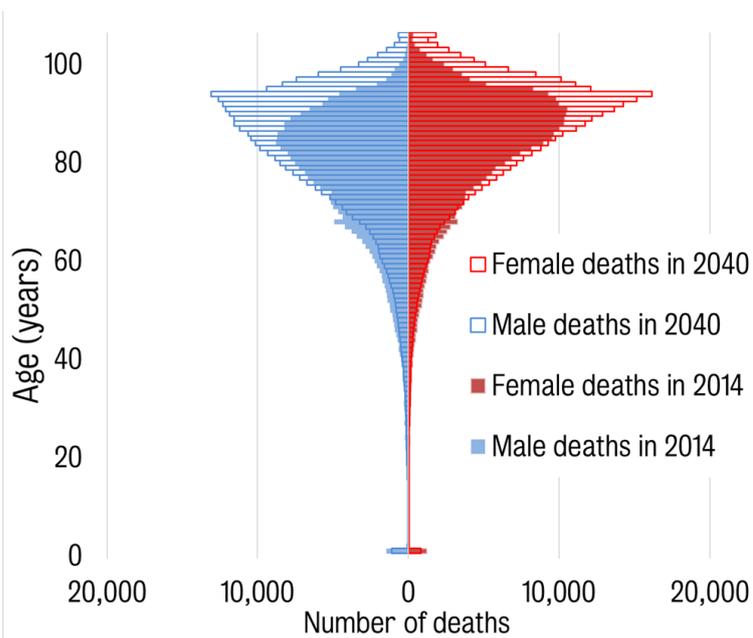
- If the recent decline in hospital deaths is sustained, by 2040 deaths in care homes and at home will double, and care homes will become the most common place to die.
- If there is no expansion of bed-capacity and end-of-life care training for staff in care homes and in home care services, people are likely to seek help from hospitals, putting pressure on an already strained system.

## Policy recommendations

- We urgently need a policy response that strategically plans for the future increased need for end-of-life care across all care settings.
- If we are to continue enabling people to die in their preferred place, it is essential to invest more in care homes and community health services.
- The development of innovative models of care to support increasing numbers of people in their preferred setting at the end of life is imperative.

## Why is this research important?

Due to population ageing, the numbers of deaths worldwide are set to rise from 57 million in 2015 to 70 million in the next 15 years. Understanding where people die is vital to support health policies, resource allocation and service delivery. There is an urgent need to plan-ahead to ensure we meet the healthcare needs of our future population.



## What did we aim to find out?

We aimed to project where people will die in the future, across all care settings in England and Wales.

## What did we do?

Using official mortality data on over 5,500,000 people and population forecasts, we quantified future changes in the number of people dying in different settings, to help guide planning of health and social care. We applied age- and gender-specific proportions of deaths in hospital, care home, home, hospice and 'other' to numbers of expected future deaths.

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## What did we find?

Annual deaths are projected to increase from 501,424 in 2014 (38.8% aged 85 years and over) to 635,814 in 2040 (53.6% aged 85 years and over). Between 2004 and 2014, proportions of home and care home deaths increased (18% to 23% and 17% to 21%) while hospital deaths declined (58% to 48%). If these trends continue, the number of people dying in care homes and at home will double by 2040 to over 220,000 deaths per year. In this scenario, care homes will overtake hospitals as the most common place to die. If care home capacity does not expand and additional deaths occur in hospital, hospital deaths will start rising by 2023.

## What did we conclude?

- If we are to continue enabling people to die in their preferred place, it is essential to invest more in care homes and community health services. Without this investment, people are likely to seek help from hospitals, which puts pressure on an already strained system and is not where people would rather be at the end of their lives
- This study provides a clear analysis model for projecting place of death that can be replicated internationally.

## Please reference as

Bone AE, Gomes B, Etkind SN, Verne J, Murtagh FEM, Evans CJ, and Higginson IJ. What is the impact of population ageing on the future provision of end-of-life care? Population-based projections of place of death. *Palliative Medicine* 2017 doi: [10.1177/0269216317734435](https://doi.org/10.1177/0269216317734435).

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