

Benefits of Decaffeination for Residents and Care Staff Alike

Improving staff wellbeing and retention, reducing the falls of residents and increasing quality



Acknowledgements

Bramley Court Care Home:

Bramley Court Care Home is a community focused, 72-bed care home in Histon, Cambridgeshire, offering high quality residential, nursing and specialist dementia care. They also deliver Namaste Care both 1-1 and in small groups. This is an important part of their dementia care which involves a range of holistic, sensory therapies including aromatherapy, hand massages and sound and light therapy, to promote deep rest and relaxation.

The home is rated 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission and they received Highly Commended for Dementia Care at the Great British Care Awards 2023.

The experienced team, often from the local area, offer exceptional care to their residents. They also support their residents' families and friends who play an active part in their loved one's life, becoming part of the 'Bramley family'. The family includes Pip, the home's affectionate therapy dog.

The wide range of facilities includes a lounge and dining room on every floor, salon, cinema room, gym, cafe and bar. The dedicated activities team tailor their timetable to suit the hobbies and interests of the residents and there is access to a mini bus for days out and trips to nearby places of interest.

The home's exercise team delivers tailored exercise routines in the gym, with 1-1 sessions and group exercise classes.

Bramley Court has strong links with local schools, colleges and charities and they pride themselves on keeping residents in touch with their community and bringing young people into the home.

About Care England:

Care England is the largest and most diverse representative body for independent providers of adult social care in England. It is a registered charity that works collaboratively with its members, stakeholders, and the Government to implement the foundations of a sustainable future for adult social care.

Care England represents small, medium, and large providers, including single care homes, small local groups, national providers, and not-for-profit voluntary organisations and aims to improve the quality of care and ensure the health and safety of both staff and residents in care settings and advocates for sustainable policies and practices that address the sector's workforce challenges.



Carol Morgan, Head of Quality & Compliance, Bramley Court



Craig Horner, Head of Customer Relations, Bramley Court



Jade Hackett, Deputy Manager, Bramley Court



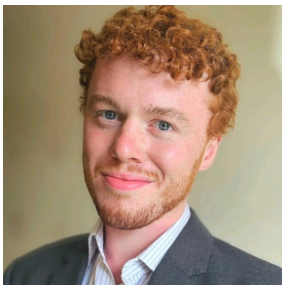
Judith Wroe, Home Manager, Bramley Court



Richard Ayres, Social Care Advisor, Care England



Maureen Hudson, Head of Dementia Care, Bramley Court



Tom Pisani, Policy Officer, Care England



Care England
2nd Floor
2 Devonshire Square
London EC2M 4UJ



Bramley Court Care Home
Chivers Way
Histon
Cambridgeshire CB24 9AH

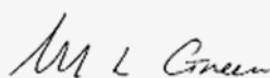
Foreword

In the pursuit of excellence within adult social care, it is essential to explore innovative approaches that enhance the well-being of residents. The Bramley Court Care Home's commitment to continuous improvement has led to the implementation of a 'decaf by default' approach, building upon previous studies that have demonstrated the potential benefits of caffeine reduction in care settings.

This study not only reinforces earlier findings on the positive impact of decaffeination on falls reduction but also reveals compelling evidence of improved sleep patterns, reduced falls, enhanced engagement among residents and an increase in meaningful activities particularly among those living with dementia. The results underscore the value of person-centred care and the importance of considering diet as part of a holistic approach to health and well-being. These stark results show that not only do residents benefit but our vital workforce in care do too.

Care providers must remain open to evidence-based innovations that foster a better quality of life for residents. The insights gained from this trial should encourage further discussions and implementations across the sector, not only for residents but also for staff alike, with nearly all of the staff choosing to switch to decaf as part of their healthy wellbeing.

By embracing proactive strategies such as this, we can collectively contribute to a more supportive, fulfilling, and health-conscious care environment.



Professor Martin Green OBE
Chief Executive, Care England



Executive Summary

The Decaffeination Trial at Bramley Court Care Home sought to evaluate the impact of a 'decaf by default' policy on resident wellbeing, with a particular focus on individuals living with dementia. Conducted in collaboration with Care England and based on methodologies previously used by Stow Healthcare and Cornerstone Healthcare, which found that there was a 35% reduction in falls associated with residents going to the toilet.

Bramley Court Care Home aimed to assess the effects of caffeine reduction on staff and residents. The areas monitored were sleep quality, behavioural incidents, staff attrition, wellbeing, overall health outcomes and cognitive lucidity were also considered on this occasion.

Key findings from the trial indicate:

- A **reduction in staff turnover**, from a **21% attrition rate pre-trial to just 9% post-trial** over a six-month period.
- A positive impact on staff wellbeing, with **97% of the team remaining caffeine-free** post-trial, reporting improved sleep and overall job satisfaction and **100% of the residents**.
- A marked improvement in **mood, engagement, and cognitive lucidity** among residents, with notable case studies highlighting significant behavioural change
- A complete elimination of resident-to-resident altercations within the dementia community, compared to four incidents in the prior six months.
- A **77% reduction in falls**, aligning with previously reported benefits in similar studies.
- A **62% increase in average sleep duration**, with some residents experiencing up to six additional hours of rest per night.

The study also observed that the care home environment became calmer and more restorative, allowing staff to focus on meaningful, quality interactions with residents. Staff noticed more time for residents to do holistic wellbeing, including Namaste sessions, group exercise, and musical interventions.

Given these compelling results, alongside the previous findings from Stow Healthcare and Cornerstone, this report strongly recommends wider adoption of a 'decaf by default' model across care settings. By prioritising proactive, evidence-based interventions, care homes can enhance both resident and staff wellbeing, ultimately fostering a more supportive and health-conscious environment for all.

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Introduction

Bramley Court Care Home offers a home to 72 residents and has an outstanding CQC rating and are constantly looking for ways to learn, innovate and improve the quality of lives of their residents, and participated in research with Anglia Ruskin University for the past two years.

Following research published by Care England and subsequent radio and television coverage highlighting the benefits of being caffeine-free to people in a care home setting, they decided to trial the initiative in one of their care homes. The Managing Director and Business Manager were very keen to pilot this concept and hopeful to put it out to the rest of the care home group given the results.

Already aware of the potential benefits to residents regarding associated falls reduction, they also saw a dramatic improvement in other areas, such as improved sleep, reduction in resident altercations and overall improvement in health and social wellbeing.

Methodology

Bramley Court followed the same methodology and assumptions for the trial used by Stow Health Care and Cornerstone according to Care England who learnt about the benefits of decaffeination from Sarah Coombes, a Continence Nurse at Leicestershire University Hospital after hearing her talk of the reduction of falls at an All-Party Parliamentary Group at Westminster.

They set about initiating the 'Taste the Difference challenge' blind taste testing which was completed on 13th May 2024 and secured consent from participants and/or their family members who were excited to participate in the trial.

Initially, no residents were eliminated due to comorbidities from the trial, although this did impact the data. Following advice from Care England Bramley Court decided to eliminate some residents with multiple co-morbidities which skewed the data although, those residents were free to continue with their decaffeination journey. There are a small number of residents with comorbidities who regardless of switching away from caffeinated drinks will continue to experience certain issues or symptoms, and it was felt necessary that they do not skew the findings of the overall report.

At the start of this trial, only four residents chose to opt out of the trial, which was later reduced to just two residents opting out. This delivered a 98% participation rate overall.

All residents entering the home are aware the service is caffeine-free by default but available upon request which forms part of the pre-assessment information, some families revealed that residents were caffeine-free prior to moving into the home, meaning there was an avoidance of caffeine spikes and associated health problems.

The Decaffeination trial went live 29th May 2024, and data collection is in line with monthly auditing.

Whilst the whole home approach was to switch to caffeine-free, the focus on reporting was toward the dementia community for data gathering and outcomes as the area where most dramatic improvement was noticed early on. This is not to say that the rest of the service failed to evidence the benefits in line with the previous Care England, Stow Healthcare and Cornerstone Care reports, but there was a significant and highly visible change noticed early on for the dementia community worthy of focussed reporting.

It was noted by the whole team, that in the approach to wellbeing for residents living within the dementia community, there was more time to offer Namaste and quality interactions throughout the day due to reduced need to manage irritability and perceived unmet needs.

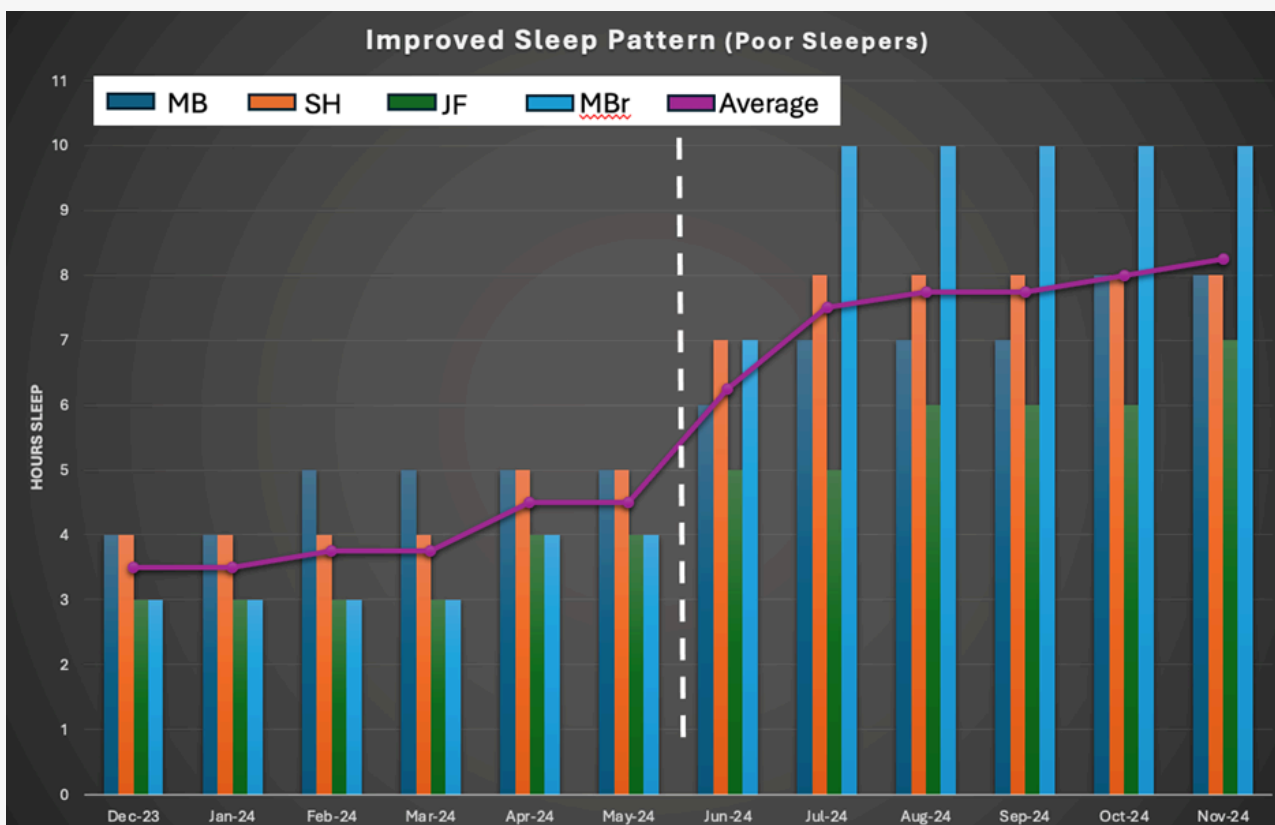
The whole team at Bramley Court offer a comprehensive programme of exercise six days a week including Zumba, line dancing, group exercises, Bramley Rambler's walking club, 1:1 gym session, trishaw rides and assisted bicycle rides in the local community. They also offer a variety of musical interventions including weekly music therapy and Namaste for wellbeing sessions daily for the dementia community.

Bramley Court has a positive risk-taking culture which could show an increase in falls due to residents' encouragement to be actively mobile and participate in walking, cycling and exercising. The home does not use restrictive measures; and actively focuses on supporting improved mobility and fitness levels to support feelings of wellbeing and associated self-worth. It also employs a holistic therapist and a dedicated wellbeing and exercise team.

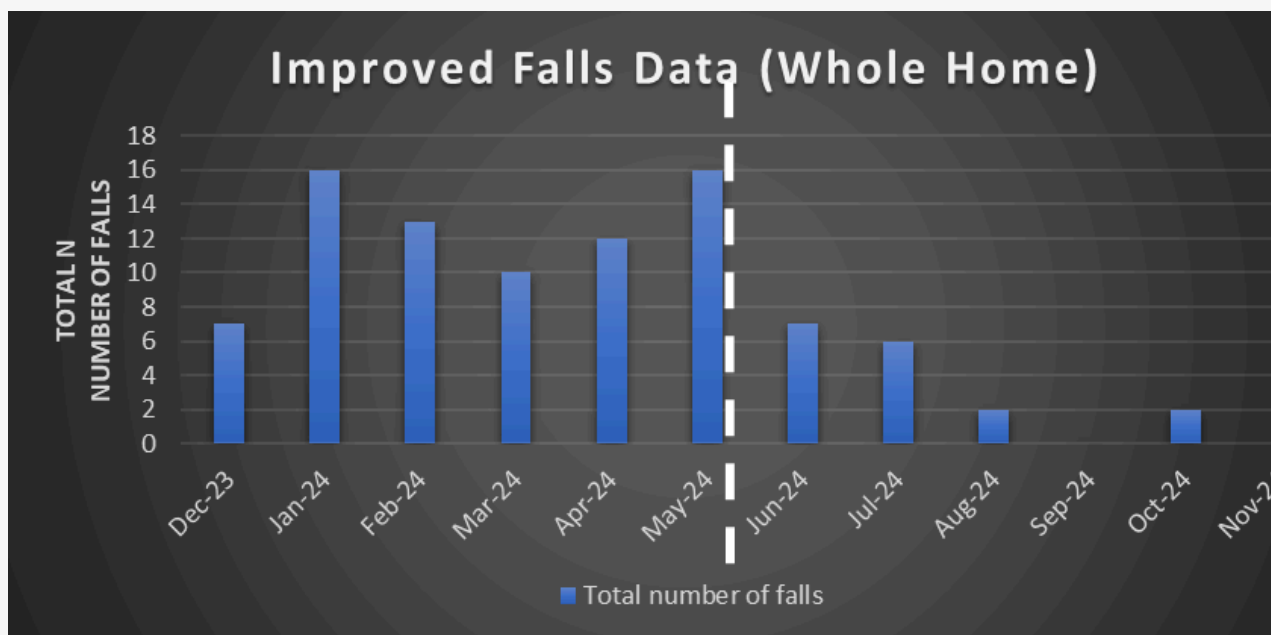
Outcomes from study

During the trial period, the team noted a reduction in resident altercations, irritability and 'sun downing' within the dementia community of 25 residents, with no resident-to-resident altercations since the trial commenced. Prior to the trial, in the previous six-month period there were four incidences. During the trial, there were no safeguarding referrals for behaviours and, unmet needs were radically reduced.

Sleep saw significant improvement with one resident increasing her sleep from just 3 hours per night to an average of 10 hours per night. Improvements ranged from 1-2 hours per night up to 6 hours per night of additional sleep with average sleep from just under 4 hours per night prior to the trial over a 6-month period to an average of 6.5 hours per night over a 6-month period, a 62% increase in the amount of sleep per night.



Falls as expected from previously reported trials by Stow Healthcare and Cornerstone Care reduced from a 6-month average of 12 per month across the whole care home to an average of under 3 per month for the 6 months following the trial, a staggering reduction of 77% across the whole care home.



Individual Case Studies

Feedback from Maureen, Director of Dementia Care, Jade, interim clinical lead and senior nurse on the dementia community and other team members:

Prior to the trial starting JF had funding for 1:1 support for 6 hours per day which was no longer needed and ceased after 3-months of being caffeine free.

Maureen the Director of Dementia care noted that whilst this lady's dementia journey had advanced there were noted improvements including improved appetite, with JF often choosing to eat two cooked breakfasts, and independently choosing to help herself to fresh fruit throughout the day. This lady now has an afternoon nap and her need for 1:1 support completely removed. She was a big coffee drinker and living with dementia meant that she was unable to self-regulate her coffee intake and would have been drinking many cups a day.

Anne, JF's daughter said, "Mum enjoys coming to the residential community and bistro and mostly enjoys eating fruit now instead of biscuits and a hot chocolate".

For resident JT, prior to the trial starting their day was often very tearful and she was unsettled throughout the day, choosing to spend more time in her room, and not engaging in meaningful and daily activities. She was previously walking with purpose and could not be distracted. Now rarely tearful, choosing to sit for long periods in the lounge with her friends, appears more relaxed and engaged in supported activity and more accepting of support for her personal care needs.

Resident BA saw improvements in mobility and was more accepting of her peers in her community, and evidenced more positive engagement in meaningful activity

Maureen noticed that JO had improved sleep, was more lucid in communication, appeared more relaxed in body and facial expression, and was notably more engaged in meaningful supported activity.

Resident AS also showed improved sleep, an increased ability to concentrate, and involvement in activities, with less calling out for help and expressing anxiety, resulting in more positive interactions.

One resident PK was visibly more relaxed, and no longer calls out for help, previously calling 'help me' whenever someone passed in her line of vision. Staff always responded to validate the feeling, however now PK attends more activities, she very rarely calls out for help and is having meaningful conversations with peers, team members, and her family have improved visits.

JC, whilst understandably still expressing some anxious thoughts around the loss of family, now sometimes chooses to sit with her peers, takes meals in the dining room, and benefits from improved sleep. Now not waking until 10 am, she is more settled in mood, choosing to sit and knit in her favourite areas enjoying reading stories and interacting with the nursery children who visit weekly.

Overall, there is evidence of residents living more fulfilled lives which has had a positive impact on team members who support residents in the dementia community, reflecting that they have more time to spend with residents supporting quality interactions.

Partnership working

The Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB) and Falls team work closely with the team and are proactive in minimising risk safely whilst promoting a positive risk-taking culture creating efficiencies for care homes and offering the opportunity to repurpose staff time for more quality interventions and removing no longer needed 1:1 support.

Report on improved working lives for team members

98% of the Bramley Court team also participated in the trial and remained caffeine-free, with some choosing to have one or two cups of coffee or tea before coming to work.

Team members continue to report improved sleep and more satisfaction in their working lives, due to no resident-to-resident altercations within the dementia community. The same staffing ratio has been retained, with teams able to better use their time to support quality interventions with residents focussing on their feelings of health and wellbeing. Bramley Court now offers a more structured routine of activities focussing on group music therapy, and singalongs, with exercise both inside the home being offered daily, as well as a rambling and an assisted cycling club alongside daily Namaste wellbeing sessions. These include a gentle sensory experience, hand massage, and general one-to-one quality time focussing on a deeply personal connection between residents and team members.

Another behavioural outcome has been the noticeable development of relationships with other residents, whether it be attending exercise classes in house, such as Pilates, Zumba, or group exercise, or a community activity such as the rambling club or cycling on trishaws or assisted cycles.

The atmosphere within the dementia community is calmer and restorative. Most therapeutic social interventions are offered late morning and early afternoon. One team member reflected recently that a recent visit from 'the banjo man' where a live musician visits regularly and is well known and enjoyed by the dementia community, was more like being in a night club than a care home., with all residents dancing and enjoying the music with peers, family and team members.

The team are skilled in supporting residents to have a nap prior to these events or after according to preference so they do not become overstimulated and agitated. Bramley Court does not use agency staff and teams tend to work on their preferred community to ensure continuity of care and sound relationships.

There has also been a noticeable reduction in attrition from May 2024 to January 2025 when compared to pre-trial. Attrition for 6 months prior to the trial averaged 21% of staff leaving whereas, post-trial this had significantly reduced to just 9% of staff leaving over a 6-month period.

Post trial 97% of the team and 100% of residents remained caffeine free.

Staff Wellbeing

Judith, the Home Manager prior to the trial was drinking over 20 cups of caffeinated coffee per day, and now has just one before work. Prior to the trial, her blood pressure (BP) was 150/85 and her pulse rate was 110, at the interim stage of three months, her BP was 113/73 with a pulse rate of 80. Judith noted no evening heart palpitations, better sleep and ability to concentrate.

Maureen, Director of Dementia care, was a long-term caffeine user of well over 20 cups of tea per day, whilst at work Maureen is now caffeine free and has noted improved sleep and better bowel function.

Iantha, a night carer, has eliminated caffeine infused fizzy drinks and has noted improved feelings of wellbeing.

Carol, Head of Quality, was drinking over 20 cups of caffeinated coffee at work prior to the trial commencing, Carol is now caffeine free and has noted marked improvement in quality of sleep. Prior to participating in the trial, she had a high BP of 171/95, and at the interim stage of three months, her BP was 127/83 pulse rate 69.

Conclusion

The introduction of a "decaf by default" approach at Bramley Court Care Home has led to significant improvements in resident well-being, particularly within the dementia community. The trial demonstrated measurable benefits, including a reduction in resident altercations, improved sleep patterns, and enhanced engagement in meaningful activities. Additionally, the study highlighted the impact of caffeine on behavioural health, emphasising the importance of a holistic approach to care that considers dietary factors alongside therapeutic and social interventions.

Beyond the residents, the trial also positively influenced staff well-being, with team members reporting better sleep, reduced stress, and an overall improvement in job satisfaction. Notably, the decrease in staff attrition and the elimination of the need for 1:1 support for some residents further underscores the far-reaching benefits of this initiative.

The success of this project was largely attributed to the collaborative effort of the Bramley Court team, who embraced a culture of positive risk-taking, holistic care, and proactive engagement. Given the compelling evidence presented, it is recommended that other care services adopt a similar "decaf by default" model to enhance resident and staff well-being while fostering a more restorative and supportive care environment.



CARE ENGLAND

The voice of care

For more information:



<https://www.careengland.org.uk/decaf/>



policy@careengland.org.uk



08450 577 677