

Residential Care Transformed: Revisiting 'The Last Refuge'

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Residential care homes are an important resource for older people yet they remain stigmatized and under-valued. Drawing on data deposited at the University of Essex, UK this book revisits Peter Townsend's classic study of residential care in England and Wales, *The Last Refuge*, published in 1962. With the help of a hundred older volunteer researchers, the authors traced what happened to the 173 homes that Townsend visited. They also revisited 20 of the surviving local authority, voluntary and private homes so as to compare them then and now.

Written in an engaging and accessible style, the book straddles the boundary between history and sociology and reviews: the policy context and the history of research into residential care for older people over the last 50 years; provides new insights into the continuing history of residential care for older people about what kinds of homes have survived and why; makes comparisons between particular homes today and in the past demonstrating not only substantial changes but also strong continuities; reveals persisting inequalities in the standard of care home provision in the early 2000s in England and Wales and discusses the ethical and practical challenges involved in designing a revisiting study, reusing archived data and in engaging older people as 'volunteer' researchers.

The book includes some previously unpublished photographs from the Peter Townsend Collection which when set beside

those taken in the early 21st century illustrate not only continuity and change in residential care but also in visual representations of older people.

'Residential Care Transformed' has won the British Academy inaugural Peter Townsend Policy Press Prize.

ISBN: 9780230202429

