

## ***Creating community***

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### ***Good practice guide no.3***

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# My Home Life Cymru

My Home Life aims to promote quality of life for those who are living, dying, visiting or working in care homes for older people through relationship-centred practice.

My Home Life Cymru celebrates and shares existing best practice in care homes and promotes care homes as a positive option for older people. This is one of a series of eight good practice guides that follow the evidence-based My Home Life themes.



## There are eight evidence-based themes for My Home Life:

- Maintaining identity
- Sharing decision making
- **Creating community**
- Managing transitions
- Improving health and healthcare
- Supporting good end of life
- Promoting a positive culture
- Keeping workforce fit for purpose

These themes provide a framework that care homes can use to develop their services and help staff focus on quality of life issues rather than being led by the care tasks that are needed to care for the residents.

## Good practice guides

This guide will hopefully inspire discussion about how to make sure that we don't isolate residents of care homes from the wider community.

In particular we would like you to ask yourself:

**How do you develop a sense of 'community' within the care home?**

**How can you engage the wider community in promoting quality of life in your care home?**

As care home staff, your skills and expertise in engaging with and supporting residents can make all the difference. This guide includes some ideas, tips and practice examples to help you to develop a sense of community within your home.



# What is a community?



*'I used to enjoy watching the schoolchildren in my street as they made their way to school in the morning. I miss that.'*

*'I used to have a good nose at the comings and goings in my neighbourhood.'*

*'I don't know how my old neighbours are getting on, or what's been going on in my old street.'*

A community has been described as, 'not just a group of people bound by a geographical links, such as a village, settlement or district, but also includes those brought together by lifestyle, religion, hobby, interest, etc.' A care home is a community in its own way but is also part of the wider community. How do you develop your care home as a community? How do you integrate your home into the wider community?

We're all interested in the outside world. Especially in the world that is directly around us. How do you keep residents in touch with that world? Are they fully involved in the life of the home and can you keep them in touch with the things that are important to them?

In our wider communities where we live, garden fences and corner shops play a crucial role in our lives. What purpose and role do those two things play?

**When an older person moves into a care home, what are they leaving behind? Not just the bricks and mortar of a house, but key parts of their life and experience. Can you identify the elements of their life that have changed and seek to keep a sense of continuity by finding new ways to enable these elements to carry on as before?**



In years gone by and even now, garden fences and corner shops have served many purposes. They serve as a boundary for properties, provide a safe area for children and a local resource to get needed supplies, but also they've been used as a tool for neighbours to talk, chat, gossip over and catch up with what's going on in the community. These things fill a need in people that we all have, a need to know what's going on in the community around us.

How do you replace what your residents have lost as represented by garden fences and corner shops? Can you keep them in touch with old friends and neighbours? Could you take them out to visit their old neighbourhood?

In getting to know the residents, you need to ask them a great number of questions about many aspects of their lives. What do they know about the others in the community that is the care home? Do they know about the lives of their fellow residents? What do they know about you, the people who support them? Yes, we know that there are boundaries around what is proper and appropriate information to share, but do you let them into your life to an extent that gains their interest e.g. do they know you have a family, a certain hobby, where you went to school, etc.

In sharing information with others, you need to make sure that you are doing it in an appropriate manner and are conscious that not every aspect of our lives and those of others is made for sharing.



***As Kevin was supporting Mr Jones in getting ready to go down for breakfast, he commented, 'it took me ages to get in to work this morning, that new one way system is causing havoc in the town. They've closed off the High Street and you now have to drive on to the new bypass to get here.'***

***'Before that bypass was there, the town used to get really busy but it wasn't like that years ago. We didn't even need traffic lights on the High Street', commented Mr Jones. 'Is the Rose and Crown still at the top of the town? I used to enjoy going there for a meal.'***

***'Yes, its still there, but it changed hands a few years ago and they changed it all around. I'll ask the landlord if I can take a few photos of the place for you', replied Kevin.***

# Top Tips to support practice in creating communities

- The quality of relationships between and across residents, staff, relatives, friends and the wider community is closely linked to quality of life. Every opportunity should be taken to engage relatives and members of the local community in the life of the home, for the benefit of all.
- The most important factor for residents' quality of life is their relationship with the staff who work with them. Consistent staff assignment helps relationships to flourish, leading to improved quality of life and lower levels of staff burnout and turnover.
- Look for opportunities to engage with the wider community. Could groups/clubs use your facilities?
- Older people often want to engage with and support fellow residents but hearing loss or poor eyesight can inhibit normal conversation. Supporting such interaction, introducing residents to each other, finding common interests or simply reducing external noise can make all the difference.
- Relatives and friends can be a real resource on a number of levels, from providing direct care to supporting staff with additional information to meet the needs of the resident.
- Older people have a right to engage with and be a part of the community outside the home– services, family, friends, and the local community. Everyone coming into contact with the care home can play an important contribution to the care home 'community'.
- Meaningful activities that engage staff and relatives, as well as residents, can create fun, humour and interest, helping to bring people together.
- Pets have been found to enhance quality of life among residents, particularly those with dementia.



- How well do you know the visitors to the home? What skills and knowledge could they contribute to activities? Do they play a musical instrument, have gardening or craft skills? Would they be willing to give some of their time to lead or take part in activities? Can any of your residents lead activities or share their knowledge and skills?
- Involving local schools generates opportunities for intergenerational work, which can be as positive for the children as it is for residents themselves.
- The way that communal areas, individual rooms and outside areas are laid out can impact on privacy and on opportunities for people to interact. Staff should consider how the care home layout can be changed to better support relationships.
- A positive care home community requires energy and enthusiasm from every part of the care home. Mutual support across the 'team' of residents, staff, managers and relatives can make a real difference.

# How well are you doing? Rating your practice:

Make time to stop and think about what you do as part of your role in the care home. Here are some things to think about.

- What do you know about the relationships residents have with their family and friends?
- How do you support residents to maintain good relations with others outside the home?
- How are residents encouraged and supported to make friends within the wider community?
- Are families and friends of residents able to visit freely and, where appropriate, participate in the care of the resident?
- How are visitors made to feel welcome in the care home and put at ease?
- What contribution do relatives make to life in the home and how is this communicated to others?
- If a resident wanted to buy a present for their friend, how would they be supported to do this?

- How are residents given opportunities to contribute to the wider community?
- Can we use the facilities in the home for the wider community e.g. hosting meetings of community groups?
- In helping a new resident to settle into home life, could you 'buddy' them up with another resident(s), to help them settle in and become part of the community in the home?

Lots of questions are asked about residents' lives, but could you share appropriate personal information about yourselves? This will help in building good relationships.

Are there opportunities for some residents to help support others in the home? For example, support a fellow resident at mealtimes, etc.

## How does your practice rate?

Sometimes there are no easy answers to these questions. So much depends on individual circumstances. Try asking your colleagues what they think and share what you find.

Please visit [agecymru.org.uk/mhlc](http://agecymru.org.uk/mhlc) to view other resources to help in developing the eight My Home Life best practice themes. Presentations from previous My Home Life Cymru events are also available to download.

In addition to this, the other My Home Life web sites – [myhomelifemovement.org](http://myhomelifemovement.org) and [myhomelifedvd.org.uk](http://myhomelifedvd.org.uk) give detailed information on the work of My Home Life and are full of case studies and examples of good practice in action.

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