

Promoting a positive culture

Good practice guide no. 7



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 are fostering and developing a positive culture within the care home.

In particular we would like you to ask yourself:

How do you keep the home atmosphere positive despite demanding circumstances?

How do you lead the workforce forward towards the goal of achieving good quality of life for all?

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 promote the development of a positive culture, successfully leading the staff team to focus on developing a good quality of life for residents in the home as well as their families.



Turning negative into positive



Many people have a negative view of care homes, seeing them as a place where people go to die. Their view is also often influenced by stories in the media which highlight poor practice and cases of abuse. While applauding the bringing to light of these examples, it is important to note that we very rarely see the positive aspects of care homes mentioned.

When a new resident moves into a home and also brings their family into contact with the home, or when a staff member starts work in the home, they are likely to be bringing with them a negative view of care homes. Also staff who have been working in the home for some time may get into a rut with their work, viewing the tasks as tedious and not rewarding. How can you change these negatives into positives?

These issues affect the atmosphere in the home and the morale of the staff and residents. Although you may be in the habit of constantly looking to see how you can develop the service in the home, you need to be alert to changes in the three groups of individuals that make up the care home; residents, relatives and visitors, and staff.

Residents:

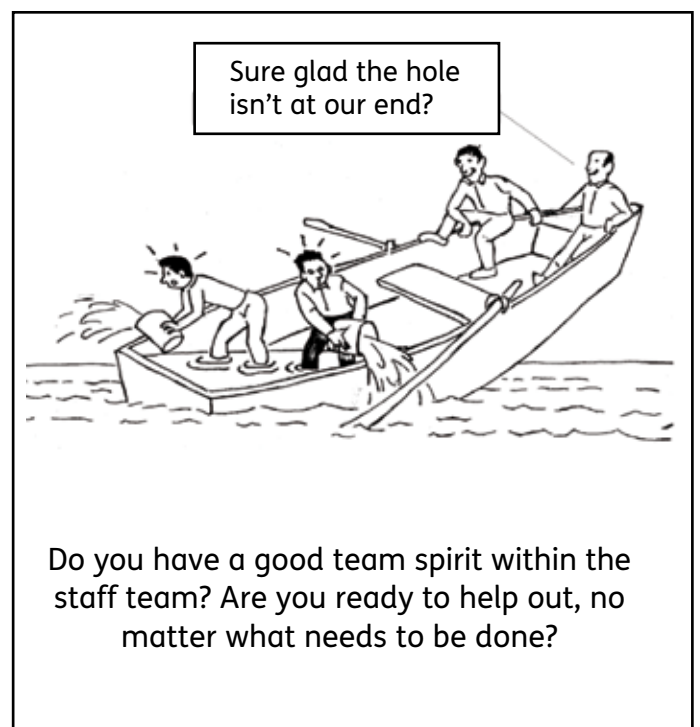
Your resident community is constantly changing. Residents may move out or pass away, and new residents will join the home. These changes mean that the personality of the home will alter. Are you and staff aware of any changes that have occurred within the resident community e.g. personality clashes, continued grief over the death of an old friend?

Relatives and visitors:

As your resident community changes, then so do the people who visit the home. Once again, are you alert to signs of negativity? Do staff strive to get families and friends actively involved in the life of the home as soon as possible?

Staff:

As members of staff, yours is a difficult job. No matter what your role is within the home, it can be a challenging atmosphere to work in. Do you do your best to keep any negativity that may be around away from the residents? For example, staff morale may be low due to a change in working practices, discontent with the rotas, personality clashes with colleagues. How do you address these?



What staff told us:

***'Our job isn't about tasks, it's about people'
(Sam, Activities Coordinator)***

'Whatever we're doing, we can talk to the residents while doing it. Chatting is the best activity there is.'

'We're never going to get a lot more staff on the ground in the home to free some time up for us, so we need to use the time we've got.'

'If we think of our jobs as just 'doing to' people, we're never going to enjoy it. I can't wait to start my shift; I view it as going to spend the day with friends who have a lot to offer.'

'You've got to care about people; you can't care if you don't care.'

'Qualities such as kindness, compassion, empathy are essential in showing that we care. Anyone can do a task and tick the box to say it's done, but how did the resident feel about how we did it, not just what we did?'

'If we don't make our job and role personal to us, what we do won't matter to anyone.'

'If we don't think that care homes are a good place for people to live, then we need to change the way we do things. As the saying goes, 'if you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got'. If we think that things need to change, then we are the ones who need to do it.'



The Senses Framework

Researchers at Sheffield University identified that residents, relatives and staff all need to feel a sense of:

- security
- belonging
- continuity
- purpose
- achievement
- significance.

The 'Senses Framework' can be a helpful tool to open up a dialogue across the care home about what these senses actually mean for us, and, in so doing, help to build a culture of improved communication and relationships.

For more information about the Senses Framework, go to: www.sheffield.ac.uk

Top Tips on promoting a positive culture

- Recognise what the home does well. Don't take your good practice for granted. Good results don't happen by accident. What is it about your practice that is good? Learn from it, share it and transfer the learning to other areas of work.
- Encourage staff to try new things and approaches. As long as these are in line with current guidelines and legislation, try a different way of doing something that you may have done routinely for years. Does this enhance the outcome/quality of your work?
- How do staff view their work? Is it more about 'doing to' residents rather than 'supporting' or 'enabling'? What you get out of your job depends to a large degree to what you put into it.
- Developing quality of life in the home requires positive leadership. The best leaders are trustworthy, enthusiastic, inspiring, confident, tolerant, calm, committed, motivating, influential and good communicators.
- Develop a shared vision. Step back and consider along with residents, relatives and staff, what you are trying to achieve. Look at your collective values and aspirations and make this vision visible and applicable to the wider community.



- Good leadership is not about simply getting staff to follow your instruction; it is about supporting and inspiring them to do things willingly and to take the initiative.
- Be open to how people experience the home. Create a safe, open environment for staff, residents and relatives to express how they feel.
- Use the My Home Life best practice themes and the Senses Framework to articulate what you want to achieve for the residents, relatives and members of staff.
- Developing and changing the culture can take time. Care homes can be busy and have a stressful environment. Acknowledge that change can add to the stress unless managed sensitively. Be aware of and use change management processes.
- Involve the residents, relatives and staff in every aspect of home life. Ask for their opinions and advice regularly and take their views seriously.

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.

- Do you need to change the way you think about what you do?
 - When it comes to your job, do you 'do to' the residents, or 'do with' supporting and enabling them where possible?
 - Do you concentrate on what the residents can't do, rather than working with what can still be achieved?
 - Do you value different perspectives on what you do and how you do it? What would it be like to receive the service that you are giving?
 - Make the job personal to you. Would you be happy for a member of your family to be cared for/supported in the way that you work?
 - Can staff build strong relationships within the care home with fellow workers, residents and relatives/visitors?
- Are staff open to doing things in different ways? Are you performing the tasks in the way that suits you, or in the way that is best for the individual resident?
 - When conversing with a resident about their life and experiences, do you use negative words or a negative tone of voice when discussing their life now? How can this be changed?
 - Do you take a personal interest in the residents? Older people may think they have nothing to offer now that they live in a care home. Do you show genuine interest in their life, experiences and look for ways to use these things in the day to day life of the home?

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 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 and 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.

If you would like to support our vital work and make a difference to the lives of older people in Wales please contact the fundraising team at Age Cymru on 029 2043 1555 or donate at www.agecymru.org.uk/donate



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