

Creative Spaces information sheet - Sensory Trust

Care homes: helping communities

Misconceptions about life in care homes are widespread; often influenced by what the public reads and sees in the media. There are many care homes that provide excellent “person-centred” care, enabling residents to live happy, active lives but whose positive actions go largely un-noticed. Becoming more engaged with and active in your local community will go a long way to improving people’s perception of your care home and being acknowledged for the quality of care and life you are providing.

Community skills

Many care home residents, including people with dementia, have knowledge and skills that are beneficial to a community. As long-term memory is retained, skills-based knowledge is more accessible and sharing these assets helps increase people’s feelings of self-worth which has a positive effect on their mental health and wellbeing.

Explore ways to connect older residents with the community; find their interests/skills/knowledge and look for ways that they can use these to contribute to the local community (see our ‘Using Your Local Resources’ fact sheet).

For example, early in our Creative Spaces project, we ran a pumpkin-carving activity to engage care home residents with local young people. This culminated in a community pumpkin carving competition at the care home. We then entered the residents’ carved pumpkins into a local event which created an afternoon’s outing participating in a community event and discovering gardens at a local visitor attraction.

Outdoor environments

Many care homes have outdoor spaces that are suitable for social events. Involving residents, staff, relatives and people from the community in finding ways to make better use of them is a positive step towards increasing social interaction.

Whilst issues of security need to be addressed this should not instigate an instant dismissal



of community engagement nor detract from creating an environment that supports a more social atmosphere in and around the care home. Social opportunities, awareness-raising and addressing people’s wellbeing can all be achieved within a secure environment.

One way is to form a small group that is willing and able to take the time to plan and organise a few events/activities in the garden. By including staff, residents, relatives, young people and other community members in the group, the responsibility of this is shared by the community and not solely by the care home. These don’t need to be large events; it’s about building strong connections with the community not getting high numbers of people through...quality not quantity!

For example, perhaps an area of the garden could be given over as an allotment for local people on small incomes to grow healthy food; helping them to reduce cost of shopping but also giving the residents a chance to get involved or to watch the activities out the window.

Supporting home carers

Home carers often struggle to find help in their community. They feel frustrated, not knowing where to go for support and not knowing how best to support the person they care for. Care homes have links to both health and social care professionals and could become venues for drop-in sessions. This also creates an opportunity for carers to assess a care home environment for the future care of their loved one.



Top tips

- Forming an events group to run activities that include the community takes the pressure off the manager and other members of staff
- Involving young people in creative activities with people with dementia enables young people to grow up with a greater understanding of care homes
- Grab opportunities to build relationships with other service providers in the community such as the library, schools and community groups. Working in partnership gives access to more resources, knowledge and skills in the community.



Creative Spaces

This information sheet has been produced as part of the Creative Spaces project



Sensory Trust promotes and supports the creation and management of outdoor spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, regardless of age or ability.

www.sensorytrust.org.uk

Tel: +44 (0)1726 222900

Email: enquiries@sensorytrust.org.uk

Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
through the Big Lottery Fund

