



What makes life good in care homes?

In 2012, My Home Life held 'The Big Care Home Conversation', where we asked residents, relatives, staff, and the wider public: "What makes life good in care homes, and what could be better?" Below are the main themes emerging out of 3,434 responses across 90 events in England. The quotes on the postcards are all taken from real people who were part of The Big Care Home Conversation.

1. Love, kindness and reassurance

"[They] reassure me if I am scared, listen and show me I am a valued human being." (Resident)

Good care is most often associated with care staff having qualities such as being **caring, friendly, warm, loving, offering kindness and reassurance** and with residents feeling **safe and secure** in an environment that values the **older person as an individual**.

2. Positive relationships and companionship

"They love us and I love them. It's the little things that matter." (Resident)

"We are all like family; we laugh with them and we cry when they are down, but we are always here for our residents." (Staff)

Building **positive relationships** not only between staff, residents and relatives but also with other professionals' regulators and the public was deemed to be at the heart of quality. A feeling of **companionship and social interaction** was associated with providing good care.

3. Good food

"Being warm, clean, loved, and well fed" (resident)

Good food was mentioned regularly and often associated with the importance of 'having choice'.

4. Strong leadership and good team work

"Leadership that creates a supportive environment for all - residents and staff" (other)

There was recognition that **strong leadership** and **good team work** would improve care homes' ability to provide person-centred care.

5. 'More time' and higher staffing levels

"The gift of time would be a wonderful thing! A smile sometimes does the trick but a conversation would be better without having to hurry." (Staff)

Higher staffing levels would reduce the pressure of work, enabling staff to have more time to interact with residents and provide the attention to detail necessary for **individualised care**.

6. Good communication

“Communication is a key element in making residents feel they are cared for and loved.” (Staff)

Associated with the above, the need for **good communication** both between residents, relatives, staff and with external professionals, was considered to be hugely important.

7. Opportunities for learning and reflection

“Training is all very well, but the time to implement these new skills is not there.” (Staff)

Offering staff more time to **reflect** upon their complex role and help them understand the lived experience of older people.

8. Valued staff who are better paid

“We need better pay for carers as they work hard and are very kind.” (Resident)

Across all groups, there were comments about the need to **“care for the staff”** and **“improve staff pay”**. A link was made between ‘staff feeling valued and supported’ and their ability to offer good care to residents. Better recruitment was also mentioned.

9. More purposeful activities and connections to the community

“I think residents should have access to the kitchen. I would love to cook for myself, or make a cup of tea for myself.” (Resident)

The provision of **activities** to help older people feel a part of things, that suited their individual capabilities and preferences; **being connected to the outside community**, was considered important.

10. Improved funding

“Caring for residents is hard work and long hours.” (Relative)

Funding to improve **staff pay, for training, for improving the level of choice** available were all mentioned. Across all groups, there was a perception that input of funding would result in the improved quality of life for all (residents, relatives and staff).



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