

# My home life

The bulletin for care home staff

Issue# 10



Special issue for Care Home Managers

## Promoting a positive culture - leadership

Things to consider in taking forward change in your care home

# This is My home life



## The keys to good leadership

In contrast to the horror stories we read about in the press, **'My Home Life'** knows there are some wonderful examples of good practice in promoting quality of life in care homes across the UK. The question is what makes a good care home?

We believe the answer lies with the care home manager working within a supportive environment. A good manager is able to drive forward a positive vision in a home, working in partnership with staff, residents and relatives.

In this bulletin care home managers share their secrets to good leadership and the keys to creating a positive culture in a care home.

My Home Life is a UK-wide initiative that promotes quality of life and delivers positive change in care homes for older people. We work with care homes, statutory bodies, community organisations and others to co-create new ways of working to better meet the needs of older people, their relatives and staff. Our vision is a world where care homes are great places to live, die, visit and work; where care homes are:

- Supported to deliver to their potential
- Valued and trusted by those who work with them
- Cherished by their local communities

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# Just let me get through the day!

*Manager Donna Malone talks frankly about the pressures and how to cope.*



Quality of life in care homes starts with the manager. If you are feeling stressed and unable to give your staff, residents and relatives the proper attention, that will create an unwelcome atmosphere in your home.

It has taken me a while to recognise that if I am calm, able to attend to staff, and focused in my communication, things just feel calmer in the home. But it isn't always easy. As managers, we're constantly juggling demands from residents, staff and relatives, not to mention the endless paperwork.

We're afraid of things going wrong in the home, and the implications that might have. We're anxious about our work, and we feel there simply aren't enough hours in the day. It's a wonder we cope at all with everything we have to do.

It can be easy to feel like we're losing direction, when we spend so much time attending to commissioners, regulators, health and safety. What exactly are we here

for? Are we simply reacting to problems or is our role more strategic?

As managers, our primary aim is to promote the quality of life of our residents. Our job, therefore, is to develop a shared vision for best practice in our homes, working with staff, residents and relatives to take this forward.

It may feel like we're wearing several different hats at times, and the tasks may seem endless – keeping the business going, staying up to date to the latest research, responding to the increasing complexity of our residents, developing partnerships with outside agencies – it is no wonder so many of us experience stress.

Perhaps, however, we need to start with ourselves and think very seriously about the support that we might need from others to undertake this huge role, often in isolation. Our quality of life must come first if we are to lead successfully.



Bringing the vision  
to life

**How well do your staff, residents and relatives share a collective vision for the home? Amanda Leitch explains how she worked to unite her team.**

From the beginning, I realised it was my staff who had the power to create a sense of community and quality of life at Sunnymead. I wanted them to be competent in empowering residents to have voice, choice and control within their own home. I wanted them to appreciate the importance of their role and the impact their care had on residents.

I wanted my staff to speak openly about their work and what was important to them, based on the themes and values of My Home Life. So I held a meeting with all staff and asked them, “Why do you come to work?”

I anticipated that their response was likely to be that of bewilderment, and the confused faces that stared back at me confirmed this. However I had gained their attention, so I followed it up with, “Why do you choose to work in the care sector?” This seemed to give them the confidence to express themselves.

We decided that our shared vision for the home was to ‘empower residents to live happy, fulfilled and purposeful lives.’ This gave us a common goal: to improve quality of life. As a team we could easily connect with the desire to have a voice and to experience happiness, fulfilment and purpose.

Our agreed vision has given us a sense of purpose and has become the foundation upon which our training, care and community has developed. It has structured our thinking and helped us challenge the ‘status quo’. It has allowed us to measure our daily successes and to celebrate those moments when we have made a positive impact on residents’ lives.



Care staff are special and dedicated individuals who may not always receive the respect they deserve. Since developing our vision, I have seen my staff’s professional confidence and practice improve. I believe that opening a dialogue with them, and agreeing a shared vision has encouraged them to talk about their work and their values in a new way.

It has stimulated them to think, not only about what they do, but also how they do it. Staff now consider what it would be like to experience the care they give. They reflect upon their contact with residents, and openly share their ideas about improving care.

# Using the My Home Life evidence base to support your vision

{LHS} 'My Home Life' has worked with care home practitioners and academic researchers from universities across the UK to develop an evidence base for quality of life in care homes. This review of research explored what residents wanted from a care home and what practices worked. This is the evidence base that care home managers

- across the UK are using to demonstrate how to promote quality of life to staff, residents and relatives.

## • **My Home Life and Regulation**

- Across the UK, regulators and inspectors are increasingly recognising the relevance of the My Home Life evidence base and its value in helping care homes demonstrate compliance with the various standards and outcomes across the four nations.

## The *My Home Life* Evidence base

**A) personalisation:** Support residents, relatives and staff to negotiate their own individual needs and aspirations

### **1. Maintaining identity**

Working creatively with residents to maintain their sense of personal identity and engage in meaningful activity.

### **2. Creating community**

Optimising relationships between staff, residents, family, friends and the wider local community. Encouraging a sense of security, continuity, belonging, purpose, achievement and significance for all.

### **3. Sharing decision-making**

Facilitating informed risk-taking and the involvement of residents, relatives and staff in shared decision-making in all aspects of home life.

**B) Navigation:** Support residents, relatives and staff through the journey of health and social care

### **4. Managing transitions**

Supporting people to manage the loss & upheaval associated with going into a home and to move forward.

### **5. Improving health & healthcare**

Ensuring adequate access to healthcare services and promoting health to optimise residents' quality of life.

### **6. Supporting good end of life**

Valuing the living and dying in care homes and helping residents to prepare for a 'good death' with the support of their families.

**C) Transformation:** Support staff to deliver the best practice themes above (Personalisation and Navigation)

### 7. Keeping workforce fit for purpose

Identifying and meeting ever-changing training needs within the care home workforce.

### 8. Promoting a positive culture

Developing leadership, management and expertise to deliver a culture of care where care homes are seen as a positive option.

## Relationships are at the heart of everything we do

**Relationship-centred care, which lies at the core of the My Home Life programme, makes a real difference to residents' lives says Julia Matthews of Brookside Care Home**

For a long time, I felt frustrated by my staff's lack of engagement with the residents. They simply focused on their tasks, expecting praise for getting residents up in the morning as quickly as possible, instead of taking time to do so.

My Home Life has reminded me of the reasons we all come into this work – the people. It is the relationships between staff, residents and relatives that are the special ingredients in a home.

When relationship-centred care is alive and well in a home, you can feel it. There is a calmness and a warmth. There are high quality interactions between residents, relatives and staff, creating a thriving and



- supportive community. Residents and staff enjoy time together, and staff feel positive about their work and more in tune with residents needs and aspirations.

- Perhaps what I have learnt is that positive relationships between residents, staff and relatives don't just happen, they need to be nurtured. That is where we, as managers, play such an important role. We need to ensure staff feel acknowledged, valued and able to engage and reconnect at an emotional level with residents. That is no easy task. It is about promoting a positive culture.

## The Senses Framework

Mike Nolan and a team at Sheffield University identified that residents, relatives and staff all need to feel a sense of security, belonging, continuity, purpose, achievement and significance within the care home. 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, relationships and partnership.

## TOP TEN TIPS!

# for promoting a positive culture

- 1. Creating quality of life in your home requires positive leadership:** The best leaders are trustworthy, enthusiastic, inspiring, confident, tolerant, calm, committed, motivating, influential and good communicators.
- 2. Relationships are at the heart of good practice;** they are the bedrock of good practice. As manager and leader, your role is to help establish high quality interactions between residents, relatives and staff
- 3. 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.
- 4. Develop a shared vision:** Step back and consider – with residents, relatives and staff – what you are trying to achieve. Look at your collective values and aspirations and make this vision visible to the outside world.
- 5. Promote best practice:** Use the My Home Life themes and the Senses Framework to articulate what you want to achieve to your residents, relatives, staff and external stakeholders, such as commissioners/ regulators.
- 6. Focus on what is working well.** Monitor your services and use your findings to celebrate what you are doing well.
- 7. Be open to how people experience the home** Create a safe, open environment for staff, residents and relatives to express how they feel.
- 8. Your home is full of leaders** – residents, relatives and staff. Think about how your care home community can be shaped by their ideas and skills.
- 9. Changing the culture takes time.** Care homes can be frantic, stressed and busy places. Acknowledge that change can add to the stress unless managed sensitively.
- 10. Look after yourself.** If you are stressed and tired, this will effect the atmosphere in the home.

**In the next bulletin:**

**More tips and ideas on how to create a workforce fit for purpose.**

