

# My home life

Promoting quality in care homes for older people Issue 15

## Community Engagement



Making life more interesting for everyone in care homes

How to make the most of neighbourhood links.

# My Home Life

*Our vision is a world where care homes are great places to live, die, visit and work.*

**My Home Life** is a UK-wide initiative, and social movement, that promotes quality of life in care homes for older people.

## Our key activities include:

- Research – we work with the care home sector to find new ways of working and share the lessons learnt with others
- Enterprise – we deliver local packages of support to enhance care home leadership and encourage quality improvement
- Social Action – we engage locally and nationally with policy makers, practitioners and the public to better support care homes to deliver a shared vision of quality

## How do we do this?

- We identify and share good practice
- We broker positive relationships
- We focus on being appreciative
- We work with and for care homes to make a difference

## Impact

**My Home Life** is increasingly seen as the voice for quality for the care home sector. It is making a significant impact, delivering a range of benefits:

- Positive outcomes for care home managers from Leadership Support Programmes

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



*Our vision is a world where care homes are great places to live, die, visit and work*



Improved partnership-working between care homes and wider statutory agencies

- Acknowledged by providers as playing a significant role in turning round homes that are perceived by others to be failing
- Positive independent evaluation of our work in promoting relationship-centred commissioning and community visitor programmes

## Promoted by

- Commission on Dignity in Care for Older People, Centre for Social Justice, National Assembly for Wales Health and Social Care Committee
- Government, as a “recognised quality scheme” for care homes in England



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# Community Engagement

This bulletin offers some ideas to help you make better links with your local community.

As we all know, being in a care home can feel very isolating. Everyone tries hard to give residents the time they deserve but sometimes there just aren't enough hours in the day. When resources are short, bringing in the local community can make a real difference.

Community engagement is anything that connects care homes with local people, charitable groups, businesses and clubs.

Neighbourhoods can be a great resource for volunteers and activities for care homes and, equally, care homes have a wealth of knowledge and experience to share.

In this bulletin, you can find out what staff in other care homes are doing.



Also, why not have a look at our Top Tips for developing more sustainable and fulfilling local connections?

By engaging more with your community you can help challenge the negative public perception of care homes and show people that they really are great places to live, work, die and visit!

Good luck with all you're doing and plan to do in the future.

*Very best wishes from  
The My Home Life Team*

## We are working to improve our own community engagement

Our community extends across UK borders to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We are keen to spread the good news about care homes and broaden our engagement as widely as possible.

**Our Twitter feed** is growing and we encourage you to join in. It's a chance to learn, celebrate and also promote positive messages of the work going on in care homes.



You can be part of this too!

Please follow us and join the conversation at [@MyHomeLifeUK](https://twitter.com/MyHomeLifeUK)



Our email address is [info@Myhomelife.org.uk](mailto:info@Myhomelife.org.uk).

Please send pictures of your events and community activities so that we can include them on the website.

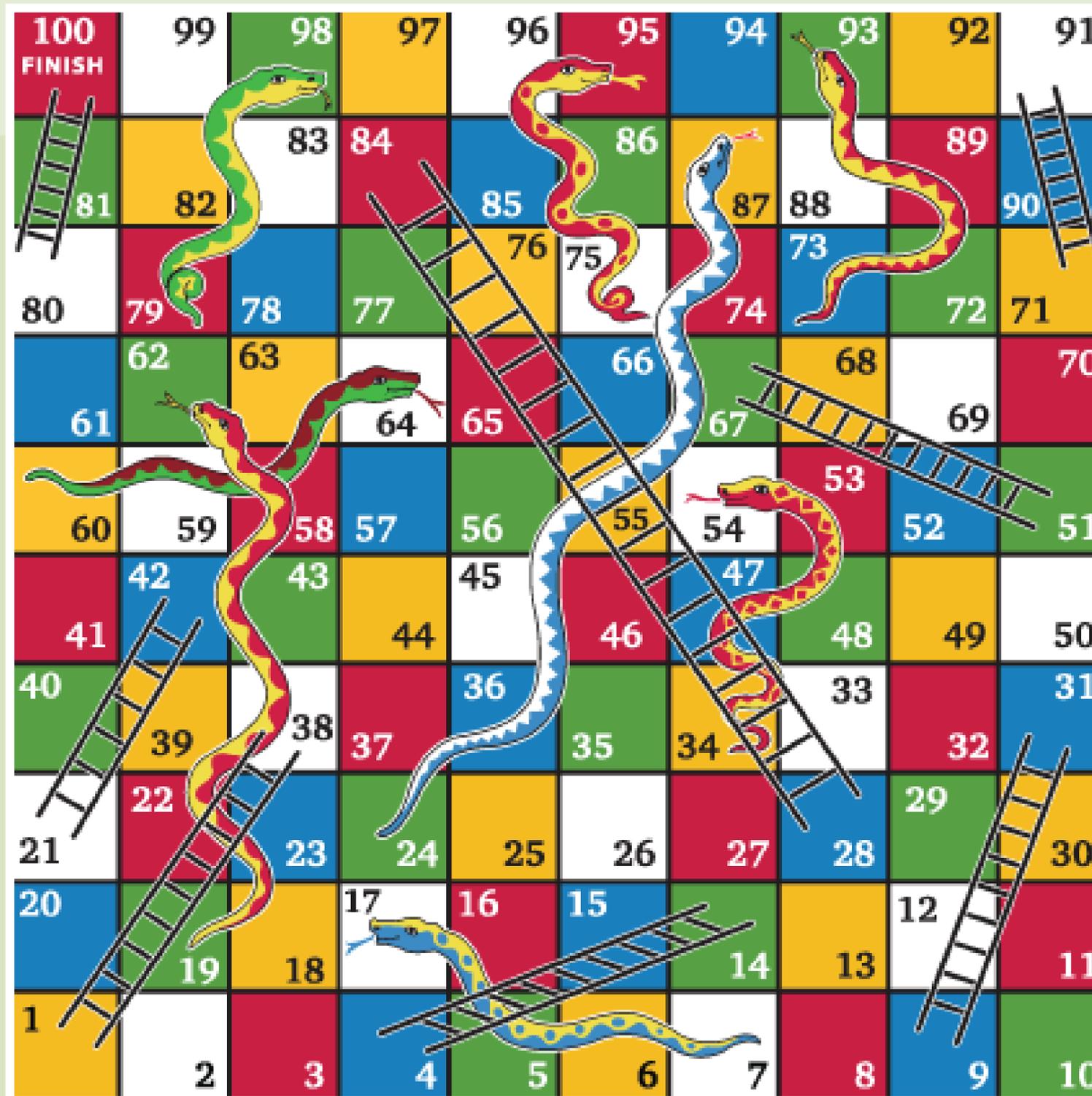


**Our website** is being re-vamped and will be ready for launch in the Autumn. It will be more useful to everyone working in the care home sector as well as the public.

**Find out more at** [www.Myhomelife.org.uk](http://www.Myhomelife.org.uk)



# The Snakes and Ladders of Community Engagement



Here's a Snakes and Ladders game to explore the ups and downs of Community Engagement. *All you need is a dice!*

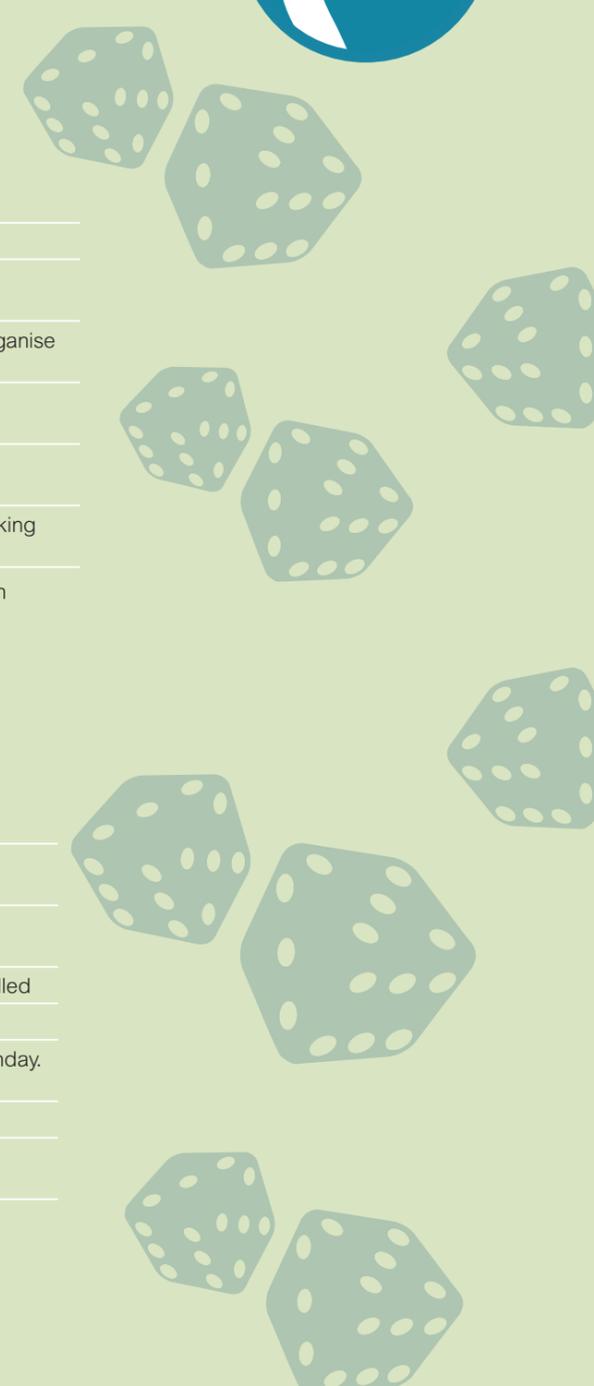


## Ladders

- 4) Resident runs knitting circle for local school children
- 8) Church volunteers help staff to take residents on holiday
- 20) The local Rotary Club reconnects with a resident who used to be a member
- 28) A local voluntary organisation agrees to help recruit and organise Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for new volunteers
- 40) Relatives agree to organise a BBQ for residents, friends and staff
- 51) Local DIY shop donates paint for student art project in the care home
- 63) Brownies and Scouts spend quality time with residents talking and sharing cake
- 71) A care assistant becomes the digital technology champion and sets residents up on Skype

## Snakes

- 1) No transport available to take residents out
- 17) Local pub feels uneasy about residents coming for a summer lunch
- 53) No response from an invitation to local neighbours to come to the summer party
- 62) Maintenance man falls off the ladder! Summer Fair cancelled
- 64) Local museum doesn't have wheelchair access
- 87) Local community invited to celebrate resident's 100th birthday. Candles missing!
- 93) Residents don't feel well enough to go on the planned trip
- 96) Charity brings exotic animals to the care home: snakes escape!
- 99) Local school sing Christmas carols – Aargh! not enough mince pies!



## Good Practice Everywhere! – Great and Small!

*“Small children from the local nursery school are teaming up with residents to plant flowers and vegetables and creating a sensory garden.”*

**Rae Murphy, Dalmellington Care Centre**

*“Two of our residents visit the local library who loan out the large print library books. The library staff always have a chat and are very friendly and helpful.”*

**Christine Freeman, Bracebridge Court**

*“The residents enjoy going out to Battersea Dogs Home to visit the dogs and cats waiting to be re-homed.”*

**Tania Pell, Forget Me Not House**

*“Local students from Princess Trust are connecting with some of our residents and take them bowling.”*

**Gillian Johnson, St Catherine’s Care Home**

*“Former relatives and friends come in to read to residents, push wheelchairs on trips, get involved in our garden party and also help write Christmas cards. Some local pubs and cafes know when we are coming and always make us welcome. One lady likes to go swimming – even if our staff aren’t keen to get in their swimsuits!”*

**Fidelma Tinneny, Ascot Residential Home**

*“Our local Tesco kindly donated fruit juices and fresh fruit to our tea party.”*

**Neil Dominy, Fairlawn Care Home**

*“Residents look forward to their time with our regular Pat-Dog visits. An enthusiastic pupil from the local school comes in every Wednesday to talk with residents and join in with activities.”*

**Sarah Core, Belmont House**

*“Our residents sent our Christmas cheer to serving troops in Afghanistan by sending them shoe boxes full of morale-boosting treats and goodies.”*

**Sara Jaspán, Whetstone Hey Care Home**

*“The donkey is always a very popular visitor and residents love to pat him – it can really brighten up their day.”*

**Katrina Hammond, Donkey Assisted Therapy**

*“We have a great relationship with local garden centres, which provide plants and flowers to enhance outdoor spaces in the care homes.”*

**Janet Russell, My Home Life Essex**

*“We regularly write a piece for the church Newsletter and the local ‘Burford Bridge’ newspaper to keep the community updated on what’s happening in our home.”*

**Catherine Jefferies, The Cotswold Home**

*“One of our homes has an allotment. Local school children work on it with the residents who are able to do so. Everyone has fun! The children learn a lot about the life experiences of the older people and the residents feel valued because they contribute.”*

**Kim Davies, Buckinghamshire CC**

*“Millwall Football Club generously donates free tickets for residents. They’re always delighted to use them. A national coffee chain is based in the reception of one of our care homes – it really creates a hub of activity and engagement.”*

**Rochelle Jamieson, Southwark Council**



# How well are you connecting with your community?

1. We organise coffee and cakes for the relatives and friends who come and visit the residents.

Yes  No

2. Religious representatives come to the care home regularly and/or residents attend services outside the home.

Yes  No

3. We have contact with the local schools around the care home

Yes  No

4. We organise trips to the museum, art gallery, library, gardening centre etc

Yes  No

5. We sometimes organise a fete or BBQ in the care home that is attended by members of the local community

Yes  No

6. We have animals brought into the care home

Yes  No

7. We encourage the community to use some of our communal spaces for their meetings and events

Yes  No

8. We find ways to take individual residents out shopping, to the pub, and/or other places they want to go

Yes  No

9. We encourage volunteers to come into the care home

Yes  No

10. We have helpful links with our local high street (florist, butcher, baker etc.)

Yes  No



## Final Score:



Yes answers

>8 Yes answers:

*Fantastic.*

*That's outstanding!*

>5 Yes answers:

*Well done. Keep at it!*

5 ≤ Yes answers:

*Good effort – why not get inspired from our Top Tips on the back page!*

# Developing Community Engagement in your Care Home

1. **Map Residents' Interests**  
Consider the interests and capacities of your residents in thinking about the type of community engagement that might be valuable to them.
2. **Map your Community**  
Identify who in your local community might engage with your home – individuals, groups, clubs and businesses.
3. **Identify a Leader**  
While community engagement should be everyone's business, it may be helpful for a member of staff, activities co-ordinator or a family member to take a lead role in brokering relationships with the local community.
4. **Little Things Count**  
Sometimes we focus on organising big events rather than recognising that for some residents, having just 15 minutes' quality engagement with a friend or volunteer can mean so much more.
5. **Involve People of all Ages**  
Activities based on genuine interests help motivate people of different ages. Think about how you can engage with active retirees, housewives, children, and anyone who may have time and skills to donate.

## 10 Top Tips!

6. **A Little Fundraising Can go a Long Way!**  
Having a small budget to cover the costs of taxis, lunches, entertainers, snacks etc. is really important.
7. **Give it a Go!**  
Be creative – try everything – you may be surprised at which types of engagement have the most positive impact. If something doesn't work on one occasion, it doesn't mean it won't work the next time.
8. **Don't let 'Health and Safety' put you off!**  
While we need to consider the possible hazards involved in any community involvement, the potential benefits can often outweigh the risks. Don't let the idea of Health & Safety stop you engaging – be prepared to take positive risks.
9. **Reach out to the Community via Social Media and the Press**  
Twitter, Facebook, local newspapers, online forums and newsletters are all good ways to find upcoming events and share your news and good practice! Connecting in this way can help create a positive shift in public attitudes towards care homes.
10. **Seek Mutually Beneficial Activities**  
Community engagement is more likely to work if all partners (residents relatives, staff and the community) can enjoy the benefits. Consider what your care home might be able to offer others that might encourage them to engage more with you.

My Home (MHL) is led by City University in partnership with Age UK, with some work being undertaken in collaboration with Dementia UK. It is supported by the Relatives and Residents Association and all the national provider organisations that represent care homes across the UK.