

## In times of uncertainty and upheaval, how do we look after ourselves and others?

Messages from My Home Life Associates from the Essex Leadership Support Programme



1. “It’s good to talk”: I made sure that my communication to the team was increased, making sure that everything that we hear from the top is communicated down to the staff, actively seek out those staff members that may have missed hearing the communication so that they know. I have been in two very different care homes, one where there was very limited communication with staff. In this home, the fear-based culture was much worse than the one where dialogue was central to how we worked with one another.
2. While I always spend time connecting with the staff and residents, at these sorts of times, I always make sure that I am ‘walking the floors’ as much as possible so that I am more available and modelling calm and engagement.
3. When things were really hard with my team, I had to spend proper time listening and praising them, letting them know that I was with them at this difficult time and that we would get through it together
4. My team was so deflated from having a series of managers coming and going, I knew I had work hard to develop trust, so that they knew I was here for the longer-term, listening and supporting. I told the team “I am not going anywhere, there isn’t anything too big or too hard that is going to make me leave you or this home. One member of staff remarked that she had never before felt that a manager actively believed in her or the team. That she in her way of behaving was different.
5. Commitment to Staff – When people feel so weary and uncared for, it’s time to step up, to show your own personal and professional commitment to the home and ask of it from your team.
6. Being bold, be courageous- at these traumatic times, it is easy to feel “I can’t face it all” and to hide or run away from the problem. It is important to face the source of anxiety which helps diminish its impact. You have



to be brave enough to seek out “the truth”- what is actually going on, how can we learn from it?

7. Being calm – Panic creates panic. My staff need to know I am here and that I am calm and modelling confidence. When the staff see me calmly talking to external inspectors and other officials, they get a sense of assurance and are picked up by this.
8. Finding your own support is so important –find someone you can trust so you don't feel so alone with all the problems
9. If one thing is certain it is that care homes operate with uncertainty and upheaval every day. We've got through it before, we can get through it again. It is also important to consider what we can change, and work with our team on this, and accept what we can't change. For me, remembering that we can't always make everything better for everyone helps me to stay resilient.
10. Keeping people connected to a shared vision for the home – we can all get distracted by whatever is facing the home, we need to keep people focused on our collective purpose.
11. Rest and relaxation: For me, as manager, it is important to take breath, to step out of the home, perhaps tackle things in the morning with a cup of tea when things don't feel so heavy and I have fresh energy and perspective.
12. Often threats to the home create a blame culture. As manager being open to anything that staff throw at you, and moving away from blame to a learning culture can create safety, security and insight.
13. If we set up high expectations across staff, residents and relatives, we are doomed to fail. It is important right from the beginning to share realistic expectations of what the home can achieve. In this way, if there is a poor inspection, people won't be so shocked.

