

# My home life

Resources for care home staff

## 26 tips for filling your care home with festive cheer

Compiled with contributions from the  
*My Home Life* Network of care  
home practitioners



## Managing Transitions

1. Memories of loved ones and of home can be especially hard for residents at Christmas. Make time, amongst all the celebrations, for residents and relatives to remember and grieve for the past. Trips to a local church, or even to a former home to say goodbye, might be valuable.
2. Make use, if you can, of residents' own decorations/centre pieces to decorate the care home.

## Maintaining Identity

3. Talk to residents about how they used to celebrate Christmas - food, drink, presents and the spiritual side too – and use this in your own planning. Explore what roles they had in previous years. Did they make the pudding or dress up as Santa, for example? To what extent could they still get involved in these activities?
4. Encourage the sharing of Christmas memories by bringing staff and residents together in a Reminiscence Group.
5. Use images, smells and the sounds of Christmas to help arouse memories.
6. Dressing for Christmas will be important for some residents. Will they need support in shopping for new clothes?
7. Be creative with presents! Try to buy presents related to residents' interests or which might even encourage them to take up new hobbies. Use the help of family and friends to identify a present that will really make a difference: it could be practical or simply fun, like a playstation!!
8. Celebrating Christmas is not for everyone: some residents may be more interested in other religious festivals or in New Year for example.

## Creating Communities

9. Family and friends are especially important at Christmas. Try to find ways of helping them feel part of the care home community.
10. Attract volunteers to help with fun activities at Christmas and they may be prepared to continue to support the care home in the New Year...
11. The act of giving is very important for many older people. Residents may need support in choosing presents and writing cards. They may even wish to make them themselves. Accessing art therapy to support this may be worth considering.

12. Create your own internal post box for staff and residents to use.
13. Find ways to help residents entertain family and friends in privacy in the home.
14. Explore the possibility of residents spending time out of the home with family or friends over Christmas where this is in everyone's interests.
15. Use volunteers, family and friends to enable residents to attend local events over the Christmas period.
16. Encourage schools to visit the home to put on concerts and give residents the opportunity to offer schoolchildren gifts.

## Sharing Decision-making

17. Involve residents, family and friends in setting up Christmas activities and entertainments. This can be a great way of helping residents feel part of the decision-making process.
18. New Year offers a chance to think about moving forward. Set up a discussion group to establish what residents would like to achieve in 2012.

## Improving Health and Healthcare

19. Beat the Christmas chaos in the Health Service by being well-prepared in terms of flu jabs, reviewing medication and pain relief and by nipping any illnesses, rashes or other problems in the bud.
20. Keep a list of out of hours chemists to hand.
21. Build positive relationships with the PCT or Local Authority by thinking creatively about how your care home might be able to provide support to older people in the community over Christmas.

## Supporting Good End of Life Care

22. Emotions run high at Christmas. Encourage staff and residents to be sensitive to the need to remember and to grieve.
23. Recognise that spouses, family or friends of former residents who have died might be on their own at home. They may really appreciate hearing from you.

## Keeping workforce Fit for Purpose

24. Flexible staff rotas and even investing in a few extra staff can really help staff morale. After all, they will not only be working in the care home but also trying to arrange their own family Christmas...

25. Help staff feel positive about the future as the New Year comes by keeping them motivated and by responding to their personal and professional development needs and interests. This will help keep them working with you!

## Promoting a Positive Culture

26. Try to maintain a relaxed and flexible atmosphere! Residents should always have choice and control over their lives in terms of bed times, meals and what they do during the day. This is especially true over Christmas when having a lie-in, a glass of champagne or an extra mince pie is surely what having a good time is all about!

***A very Merry Xmas from the My Home Life Team!***

**For more information about *My Home Life* visit: [www.myhomelife.org.uk](http://www.myhomelife.org.uk)**



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