

My Home Life

The bulletin for care home staff

ISSUE 1: Managing Transitions

November 2007

Free*

Tips for improving residents' quality of life

P2

STORY AND ADVICE INSIDE

Managing the move to a care home

P2

TRUE STORY

Leaving my bungalow, after 37 years

FREE POSTER

SEE INSIDE



My Home Life

My Home Life is a UK initiative aimed at improving the quality of life of those who are living, dying, visiting and working in care homes for older people.

My Home Life celebrates existing best practice in care homes and promotes care homes as a positive option for older people.

My Home Life, led by Help the Aged, the National Care Forum and City University, is a collaborative programme bringing together organisations that reflect the interests of care home providers, health and social care commissioners, regulators, care home residents and relatives and those interested in education, research and practice development.

My Home Life, a bulletin for care home staff, is distributed to 18,000 care home contacts through *Care Management Matters*. Additional copies can be provided at a cost of £1 per issue (+ 50p towards p&p) from Help the Aged Publishing (tel. 020 7239 1946).

The next issue will be sent out in January 2008 with *Care Management Matters*.

The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Help the Aged or its affiliates.

Managing Editors: Tom Owen, Gill Rowley
Design: Harry Ward
Produced by Help the Aged Publishing
Copyright © Help the Aged 2007.

My Home Life is supported by an unrestricted grant from



Moving to a care home – the challenge for care staff



Foreword by Esther Rantzen

Moving to a care home is a major life change. It is often the last house move that people ever make, and it can be exciting, or disconcerting, or very distressing. For many, it follows a change in personal circumstances – maybe the death of a partner, or a decline in physical or mental health. Leaving their old home, full of precious memories, can be an emotional wrench.

Sadly, going into a home can often be a muddled, chaotic event that leaves everyone, care staff included, exhausted.

Care staff are in a unique position to improve the situation. After all, many older people in care homes feel that moving to a care home gave them a new lease of life – a new beginning. While for others, particularly those who are very ill, care homes can provide

the comfort and reassurance that they need. And it is the expert support of care staff that can help older people and their family retain control over the whole process and move forward in a positive way.

My Home Life bulletin offers some suggestions on how staff can play an important role in supporting each new resident through this challenging time. It celebrates the practices

that make a difference to quality of life and which mean such a great deal to residents.

This is the first of six magazines

developed in partnership with and for care staff working with older people. We hope you find it useful.

'Care staff are in a unique position to improve the situation'

Esther Rantzen

Need more copies? Download at www.myhomelife.org.uk or call Help the Aged on 020 7239 1946



Leaving my bungalow after 37 years

– Rosina Powell

I came here in 2005 but it all started long before that. John, my husband, had dementia; he had altered such a lot and it was a great worry to me. Then one day I was bending down to light the fire and collapsed with a stroke.

I ended up in hospital and John had to go into a care home because there was no one to look after him. Well, it wasn't long after that I fractured my hip and was back in hospital again. This time my health had got much worse and I couldn't walk any more. They told my godson that now I would have to go into a home.

I remember feeling devastated. I thought of all the things I had heard about care homes and I could not imagine leaving my lovely bungalow after 37 years, to go into a place where I wouldn't know what was going to happen. Luckily I put myself into the hands of my godson and his wife, who I trusted and who knew me. After seeing four homes they found this one. Well, it turned out to be the right move.

From the moment I arrived it was wonderful. I am not exaggerating. I felt warm and wanted, and it was the manager who was there waiting for me. She gave me such

a welcome – I felt respected, wanted and cared-for straight away. But the first night I slept in this home, I was so heartbroken, I can't tell you. It did take me a while to adjust, despite the support of people around me.

Eventually I had to sell the bungalow. I went back to sort things out, the ornaments and bits 'n' pieces. It was awful to have to get rid of everything. I think the manager here understood. I would shed a tear with her and that would help.

Then last April my husband died and I thought that was the end. But again the staff helped by putting on a buffet in the small lounge for after the funeral. And after the service, when we arrived back, it really did feel like I was back home; I had my family and the staff around me.

Of course, these places can't be perfect for everyone. It's not possible – we are all different, but as far as I am concerned, I am here for the rest of my life.

Managing the move

Thalia Gaskell, Corner House Care Home, Clacton

Moving into a care home is a huge change for both the residents and the family. In those first few days and nights feelings will run high and emotions will be very near the surface. Both the new resident and their family need to feel in control and listened to.

Take Mrs Price, who moved here some years ago. She was so upset about leaving her home and really didn't know what to expect from us. On the first day, I devoted most of my shift to simply spending time with her, finding out about her life and the routines that she had developed at home. At the end of my shift, I made sure she was introduced to the nightstaff to

reassure her that she wouldn't be forgotten.

Like many residents, Mrs Price had come directly from hospital, so she didn't get the opportunity to say goodbye to her old home. Sometimes we take residents back home to give them time to do a bit of final packing, but sadly Mrs Price wasn't mobile enough for this. With time and patience we helped her to collect her 'treasures': her Victorian bed, her shelving unit, photos, ornaments and memories.

Like many residents (and their relatives), Mrs Price found it hard to come and tell us when she felt unhappy with things. So



we were persistent in checking with her – 'What can we do?' 'What haven't we done?' Where necessary, we would adjust our practices and systems to fit in with her routines and preferences. It does take time for a care home to become a resident's 'home'. I am sure that if we hadn't devoted time to Mrs Price, to build up a trusting relationship right from the beginning, it would have been much harder for her to adjust in the long term.

TIPS AND IDEAS FROM MY HOME LIFE NORTH EAST

Care homes in the North East have come together to develop best practice in relation to the theme of 'managing transitions'. Here are a few of the practical ideas already emerging from the network:

- Open days and outreach visits for potential residents and local agencies can get the word around about the type of care that your care home offers. Providing written information in large print or on audiotape can be helpful for those with visual impairment.
- The pre-admission assessment offers a real opportunity to find out how potential residents feel about the move to the care home, their fears and expectations, and to ensure that they are in control of the decision-making regarding the move.
- Residents can benefit from having a role in the care home to ease the transition: staff in one home found out that gardening was the thing that a new resident missed most about not being at home, so they arranged for him to be supported to take on responsibility for a greenhouse in the care home garden.
- Supporting relatives to continue to be involved in the care of their loved one is crucial. A few phone calls by the care staff to the relative in the first week to keep them updated on how the resident is settling in can also make a world of difference.

If your home is in the North East and you wish to join this network, let us know and we will put you in touch.

Did you know . . . ?

A recent UK survey of residents and relatives found that the majority (71 per cent) did not remember seeing any booklets or leaflets giving information about care homes, and over a quarter could not remember whether or not they had had sight of an inspection report before making their choice. (OFT 2005)

How do you help residents, particularly those with dementia or visual impairment, to access information about your care home?

OTHER TIPS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Welcome booklet

Residents and relatives at 67 Birch Avenue, Sheffield worked together to produce a 'welcome booklet' to help prospective residents and their families to understand what it was like to move into the care home. The booklet included stories written by relatives and staff about their own experiences of moving to or working at the home.



Come for a meal, come for a weekend!

Inviting a prospective resident and their family to join us for a meal gives them a chance to meet others, sample the food and really get a feel for the place. We offer trial weekends (usually better than during the week as family are available for helping with transport and are on hand if the resident should wish to go home early).

A welcome from other residents

Other residents can help new residents settle in. We have one or two ladies who like to meet and greet new arrivals and can also show the new ones that life is not over just because they are in a residential home.

Jane Wentford, The Nunnery, Diss

From care at home to 'care home'

Offering a domiciliary care service from within the care home, where staff work between the care home and the community, can really help to promote a smooth and seamless transition into long-term care. It offers others the chance for prospective clients to come in for visits and to get to know the staff. Elen Hughes, Plas Garnedd



For more ideas, tips, resources and opportunities to talk to other care homes, check out the 'shared space' at our website www.myhomelife.org.uk.

Care challenge

What would you do in the following scenario?

Mrs MacDonald has mild dementia and osteoarthritis and uses a wheelchair. For years she was looked after by her husband. He recently died, and as her only daughter is unable to take on Mrs MacDonald's care an emergency placement has been arranged for her at Greenfield Care Home.



You have been nominated as her key worker and are expected to support her transition over the next few days. She arrives at lunchtime with her social worker and daughter looking confused, angry and in tears, saying that she wants to go home.

What are the various factors that might be causing Mrs MacDonald's distress?

How would this make the daughter feel?

How does this make you feel?

What could you do to help Mrs MacDonald, her daughter and yourself deal with this difficult situation?

How could you help her settle into the home?

Over to you . . . Tell us your stories!

My Home Life is all about celebrating best practice. We want to hear the good news, about how care homes have made a difference to residents' quality of life.

Tell us:

Who was involved?

What was the problem?

How was it sorted out?

Any other comments.

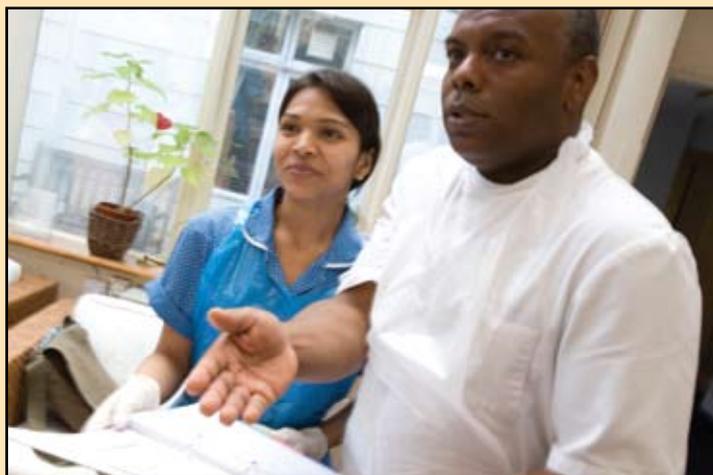
Email us at: myhomelife@helptheaged.org.uk or write to us at the address below. Names and locations can, on request, be omitted from the published text.

Rating your care practice

Put yourself in the position of a resident going into a home. It is a stressful, even traumatic, experience to leave your own home, perhaps after many years, possibly experiencing health problems, and maybe in great distress if the move follows the death of your partner.

1. What information might you want before deciding on the home?
2. What would be your main fears about going into a care home? What might help alleviate these fears?
3. What kind of support might you need to come to terms with the loss of your home, your health, your loved one?
4. What practical help would you need to move into a care home?
5. What possessions would you hope to bring with you to the home?
6. What can the home do to make you feel welcome, cared-for and valued?
7. How can you be helped to remain linked to the past, to old friends, hobbies and places?
8. What things in life are most important to you? How can these things remain with you in a care home?
9. What will help you feel positive about the future?

Exploring the experience of the move with your residents can be therapeutic and can help you think through your day-to-day practice.



NEXT ISSUE: Maintaining identity – send us your tips on helping older people to feel positive about themselves and valued as an individual.

My Home Life, Help the Aged, 207–221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ

Email: myhomelife@helptheaged.org.uk Website: www.myhomelife.org.uk Tel. 020 7238 1881

Help the Aged is a registered charity no. 272786

My Home Life is supported by a range of collaborators including the Care Commission and Commission for Social Care Inspection.

10

My Home Life

TIPS

to support practice in managing transitions



1. A positive choice

Moving from one's own home into a care home is a major life transition for older individuals, particularly if it is unplanned, but with appropriate planning and support from care staff quality of life can ultimately be achieved by both residents and relatives.

2. Providing information

Think creatively about how best to provide potential residents and families with information so that they have a real sense of what to expect from the home and the role that they can play.

3. A trial run

Although it is not always possible to arrange one, a good way for a prospective resident to make an informed choice of a home is the 'try it and see' approach, whereby they visit different ones, staying for a period of a few hours or even a few days.

4. Minimising pressure

Moving is likely to be traumatic. People need to feel that they have sufficient time to consider the move without undue pressure being placed on them. Care staff can help by encouraging them to take their time.

5. Feeling in control

It is crucial that wherever possible the resident feels in control of the decision to move to a care home. Engaging the services of advocates or friends to support the resident through the process can be helpful.

6. A proper welcome

Residents and relatives need to feel a part of the community of the home. They need to understand the layout of the home, their room and what is available to them, and who to go to for help.

7. Family members as partners in care

Many relatives want to continue to play a role in looking after their loved one, and should be encouraged to do so. Find ways to help them feel they are a valued part of the team in the care home.

8. Supporting people through upheaval

Relatives and residents need to feel that others are aware of the impact of the move on them and their loved ones. Assigning a particular staff member to a resident and family can help. Care staff in such a role should try to understand carers' and residents' feelings and the reasons why they might seem angry and suspicious. This way, care staff will gain trust.

9. Getting other residents to help

Where possible, other residents can help to support the new resident and the key staff member(s), offering friendship and understanding.

10. Continuing with life

Moving to a care home should not be the end of life outside of the home. The new resident should be encouraged and assisted to maintain relationships with family, friends and other individuals who may be able to help them through the transition.