Dear Friends

Welcome to our new issue of ‘My Home Life’ Magazine. We’re here to support you to deliver quality of life in your care home. In this issue we’re remembering the importance of the ‘little things’ in life that cost nothing but make the biggest difference.

As a social movement we love hearing about all the great things that you do so please keep sending in your selfies, photos, and stories. To get the latest news from My Home Life sign up to our practice updates, visit www.myhomelife.org.uk for more details.

Best wishes

Jen

On behalf of My Home Life

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Coming together to launch dementia friendly communities in East Ayrshire

Hello to our My Home Life friends in Germany.

Professor Assumpta Ryan representing My Home Life in Japan at Kobe University

Certified My Home Lifers in Northern Ireland: validation day for Belfast care home managers

I know Arnold Schwarzenegger!
Weight lifting champion Tom (86) from Essex, who’s living with dementia, visited his local gym to teach them a thing or two. Full film at www.carehomefans.org

May, a care home resident from Pembrokeshire and speaker at the MHLHC conference 2018.

Blooming wonderful! Ladies from Sunnyside House, Northern Ireland, flower arranging.
It’s the LITTLE THINGS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Sometimes it’s the little things in life that matter most. Whether it’s the feel of clean sheets on your bed or the quick chat with the Postie, these magic moments are what brings light to life. In our care homes, we need to find out what these magic moments are for each of our residents, relatives and staff, write them down, remember them and see if they can happen more.

Take a peek at some of the things that you’ve said that makes life worth living:

**When life feels good for residents when…**

**MAGGIE**

“Staff bring me a lovely hot water, bottle which helps me sleep.”

“I have my pink and purple patchwork quilt, a family heirloom, it makes me feel snug.”

**JOAN**

“When Laura (a care home resident) and I have a cuppa together on my breaks in the warmth of our conservatory.”

“When we are dancing together with residents and the kitchen staff on a Monday afternoon to Elvis.”

**ALEX**

“Staff bring me my ‘Friday box of chocolates’. It reminds me of when my wife was alive and what we used to share together.”

“When we get an email from the care home sharing a photo of mum baking a cake.”

“Staff bring me a lovely hot water, bottle which helps me sleep.”

**TELL US YOUR STORIES OR ‘LITTLE THINGS’. EMAIL US:** mhl@city.ac.uk
Perhaps one of the most surprising side-effects has been that I can leave the care home knowing it’s in safe hands and can attend to the ‘little things’ that make life feel good for me!”

Care home manager Carole introduced the notion of ‘simple pleasures’ in 2012 at Glendale Lodge. “It was something I liked that I had picked up on the Kent ‘My Home Life’ leadership programme. I began implementing the ‘Simple Pleasures’ ethos in our care home by listening to the ‘simple things’ that made a real difference to my staff’s happiness. Recently staff complained of pain in their shoulders from the stress and physical hard work of caring. In response, I hired a masseur to visit our care home once a week to give 15-minute massages to staff. “I wanted staff to feel happy, listened to and supported by the management team”, six months on and colleagues are still loving this useful therapy.

The next natural step was to invite staff to repeat the same exercise of talking about the tiny things that made life worth living with residents and relatives. For some, it was the first time they had been asked, “What matters most to you?”

One resident shared that they wanted to walk across the beach again; another wanted a big biscuit tin for her granddaughter to dive into when she visited; a relative wanted a ‘tea station’ so she could make a cuppa without bothering staff.

“Knowing how important these ‘little things’ were, we wrote them down on a leaf-shaped cards and attached them on our ‘conversation tree’, we then invited others to add their own ‘simple pleasures’.”

“Hearing and responding to the ‘little things’ that matter to everyone is now part of our everyday culture - it’s as if the branches of that conversation tree have spread across the home. We’re proud that occupancy is 100%, staff retention is high and sickness is very low.”

“I want to walk across the beach again

A big biscuit tin for my granddaughter

I’d like a tea station to make a cuppa without bothering staff
OPENING UP
A CONVERSATION

The good news is you’re probably already knowledgeable about the ‘little things’ that matter most to your residents, relatives and staff, but wouldn’t it be nice to remind ourselves and perhaps even uncover new things that bring light to life for our care home community?

STEP ONE
Open up conversations with your staff about ...

What brings pleasure and comfort to life?

If you were to dream what are the other things that could bring light to life?

What are the little things that make you smile?

STEP TWO
Ask relatives and residents the same questions.

Staff could aim to have this chat with a couple of people each day. In Bolton some care home managers hold ‘flash meetings’. They bring staff together for ten minutes at ten o’clock (‘10 at 10’) and invite them to share one ‘little thing’ each that they have learnt about someone in the care home.

CHALLENGE!

How can we learn more about what matters to people who find it hard to express themselves verbally?

Why not use three different coloured sticky-notes to write down responses from residents, relatives and staff? Hold on to your responses...you’ll need them for Step Three…

See Magazine #13
STEP THREE
Use the ‘little things’ you’ve discovered

YOU COULD...
Bring your care home community together:

• Take the time to sift, read and enjoy what your team has gathered
• Perhaps, like Carole (see page 5), pop the ideas onto a ‘conversation tree’ or
• Simply Draw the circles pictured below onto a large piece of paper and put it up somewhere in your staff room.

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE TOGETHER:

• What strikes you about what has been written on your sticky-notes?
• Are there any common themes?
• Do all these ‘little things’ currently happen?
• Could they happen more often?

DONT FORGET!
Sometimes it’s OK to simply learn from one another about what matters without taking action.
Having a conversation about ‘what makes us feel good’ with residents can be a lovely activity by itself.
RESEARCH TELLS US...

The evidence base says...

Offering voice, choice and control to care home residents is really important. Having choice over the little things that matter can sometimes be of most importance (1).

A vibrant care home community is one where everyone feels valued, and knows a little bit about each other (2).

Relatives can feel reassured if they see that staff are attending to the little things that matter most to their loved ones (3).

Researchers at Sheffield University identified six ‘senses’ that are important to the wellbeing of everyone in the home (4).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>A sense of...</th>
<th>😊</th>
<th>😐</th>
<th>😞</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security: to feel safe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Belonging: to feel part of things</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuity: to make connections between the past, present and future</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose: to have a goal</td>
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<td>Achievement: to feel progress is being made</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significance: to feel I matter</td>
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HOW WOULD YOUR RESIDENTS, RELATIVES AND STAFF RATE THEMSELVES ON THIS CHART?

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, due, 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

1. Owen, T; Meyer, J et al. (2012) MY HOME LIFE: PROMOTING QUALITY OF LIFE IN CARE HOMES JRF, York