



## **THE BIG MY HOME LIFE CARE HOME CONVERSATION**

### **EVALUATION SUMMARY ENGLAND**

**JULY 2013**

#### **What is the Big Care Home Conversation (BCHC)?**

The Big Care Home Conversation (BCHC) was devised by My Home Life to discover what works well in care homes and what could be even better?

#### **What Did We Do?**

From May 2012, My Home Life worked with care homes including many of the care home managers in the 19 Local Authorities in England, who had been part of our Leadership Support programme to find out about life in a care home. We supported care home managers to have an open conversation with residents, relatives, staff and members of the public around 2 simple questions

- ✓ What makes life good in care homes now?
- ✓ What could make them even better?
- ✓ How might we get there?

Care homes were provided with a range of tools and materials to help open up conversations including leaf-shaped labels onto which residents, relatives, staff and the local community could share their thoughts and hang onto a 'tree' within the home.

Branded bags of resources and tools for use in the initiative were sent to 203 care homes in England . The resources were also uploaded onto the *My Home Life* website, enabling the BCHC to take place in other locations in the country outside of care homes, including hospitals, Age UK offices, libraries, councils and conferences.

## What Happened ?

- 50% of homes that we contacted took part in the BCHC
- In addition to organising the 'conversation tree', many undertook additional activities including arranging *open days/ coffee mornings*, *inviting thje community to join through posters on public noticeboards and at a doctor's surgery*, *inviting the Mayor to join*. *Inviting schoolchildren into the home*.
- Completed leaves were sent to My Home Life for analysis, overall 3,400 leaves were analysed.

## What Did We Find Out From the 3,400 Responses We Received ?

### What Makes Life Good in Care Homes?

#### 1. Love, kindness and reassurance

*"[They] reassure me if I am scared, listen and show me I am a valued human being."* (Resident)  
Good care is most often associated with care staff having qualities such as being **caring, friendly, warm, loving, offering kindness and reassurance** and with residents feeling **safe and secure** in an environment that valued the **older person as an individual**. \*

#### 2. Positive relationships and companionship

*"They love us and I love them. It's the little things that matter."* (Resident)  
*"We are all like family; we laugh with them and we cry when they are down, but we are always here"* (Staff)  
Building **positive relationships** not only between staff, residents and relatives but also with other professionals, regulators and the public was deemed to be at the heart of quality. A feeling of **companionship and social interaction** with the residents were seen as being the bedrock of providing good care. \*

#### 3. Good food and choice

*"Being warm, clean, loved, and well fed"* (resident)  
Good food was mentioned regularly and often associated with the importance of 'having choice'. \*

#### 4. Strong leadership and good team working

*"Leadership that creates a supportive environment for all - residents and staff"* (other)  
There was recognition that **strong leadership** and **good team working** improved a care homes' ability to provide person-centred care. \*

## What could make them even better?

### 5. 'More time' and higher staffing levels

*"The gift of time would be a wonderful thing! A smile sometimes does the trick but a conversation would be better without having to hurry."* (Staff)

Higher staffing levels would reduce the pressure of work, enabling staff to have more time to interact with residents and provide the attention to detail necessary for **individualised care**. \*

### 6. Better communication

*"Communication is a key element in making people feel they are cared for and loved."* (Staff)

Associated with the above, the need for **good communication** both between residents, relatives, staff and with external professionals, was considered to be hugely important. \*

### 7. Opportunities for learning and reflection

*"Training is all very well, but the time to implement these new skills is not there."* (Staff)

Offering staff more time/training to **reflect** upon their complex role to help them understand the lived experience of older people. \*

### 8. Valued staff

*"We need better pay for carers as they work hard and are very kind."* (Resident)

Across all groups, there were comments about the need to **"care for the staff"** and **"improve staff pay"**. A link was made between **'staff feeling valued and supported'** and their ability to offer good care to residents. Better recruitment was also mentioned. People who work in care homes being valued for the work they did in lots of ways was important. Pay was only part of this. \*

### 9. More purposeful activities and connections to the community

*"I think residents should have access to the kitchen. I would love to cook for myself, or make a cup of tea for myself."* (Resident)

The provision of **activities** to help older people feel a part of things, that suited their individual capabilities and preferences; **getting out, encouraging people in, and being connected to the outside community**, were considered important. \*

### 10. Improved funding

*"Caring for residents is hard work and long hours. So, Mr Cameron, dig deep."* (Relative)

Funding to improve staff pay, for training, for improving the level of choice available, were all mentioned.

## Overall evaluation:

- 36 of 39 care homes told us that they found the exercise valuable to them. Some stating that residents were more confident to speak out. Changes in activities and residents meetings were made as a result of what was learned;
- 26 of 39 care homes shared that they felt closer to the community as a result of the exercise.

\*Note My Home Life programmes directly focus on these areas of what makes life good /what could be better.

## Why did some care homes not participate?

- The manager does not have capacity
- Not seen as relevant to the home
- Staff, residents and relatives appeared unenthusiastic



*My Home Life's two co-directors Tom Owen and Professor Julienne Meyer at the launch of the Big Care Home Conversation with Minister for Care Services Paul Burstow MP, and Tom Wright, CEO of Age UK*



*An example of a BCHC tree in one of the care homes*

*An example of a leaf completed by a participant*



*The contents of the Big CareHome Conversation branded bag*

