

Step 3 - connecting with your new Friends and Neighbours

What is Step 3?

To get the message out to your community that you are interested in building new connections.

You have

- + identified your current contacts (Step 1)
- + explored ideas for new connections and what residents want from them (Step 2)

This third step is about asking, “Do you want to connect with us?”. It’s a bit like asking someone out on a date. You hope there will be chemistry, but won’t know until you ask.

Taking Step 3 means:

- + Being clear yourself about who you want to achieve
- + Thinking about the best ways to communicate to the individuals
- + **Meeting your connections and exploring next steps**

Why do it?

If you don’t ask you don’t get. Many people see care homes as a separate and not particularly active part of the local community. This step is about painting a different picture for them. Having good community links will help you to respond to your residents’ needs and wishes. Stronger connections will help the whole care home feel more involved with community life.

How do we do this ?

A. Know what you are trying to achieve

It’s good to be clear about what you want from your Friends and Neighbours project. Ask yourself what are your top three reasons for wanting to develop stronger connections with your community?

Think back to what came up when you did Steps 1 and 2.

What changes would you like to see for your residents, staff and relatives? Try to create a picture of how things would be different. What would success look like?

Your objectives - saying it simply

Long words and complicated concepts won’t be helpful here. Start with, “We want to...” and fill in the rest. (TopTip: Say it out loud to yourself first or write down what you’d say in a friendly chat). For example:

“We want to help our residents to reconnect with hobbies they’ve enjoyed or to take up new ones.”

“We want a strong relationship with our local primary school so residents and children can get to get to know each other and share stories.”

“We want our residents to reconnect with tastes, experiences and places that they enjoyed as children.”

The important thing is to be clear about what you want to achieve.



B. Thinking about the best ways to communicate to the individuals

Once you have got your objectives clear it's time to reach out to potential connections. This could be face to face, an email or letter. And you might like to create a newsy sheet of details about your residents' ideas, or more.

The important thing is to answer three questions that your reader will have:

- + Why am I reading this
- + What do I need to know?
- + What do I need to do?

Everyone is busy so it's good to be as clear as you can about why you are getting in touch. Decide what you want them to do. Are you asking to go meet with them one to one or inviting them to an event?

Get them interested in the fact that you are part of a national project called 'Care Home FaNs' to see if they would like to be involved. This helps them see that connecting with you means that they can be part of something bigger that others are involved in across the UK.

Here are some ideas that you could use or adapt:

Email or letter to potential connection

Dear

People, places and passions...connecting, sharing, doing.

This care home is part of a national project called 'Care Home FaNs'. The project recognises that care home residents can sometimes feel a bit forgotten by the wider community. As part of the project, we want to build strong local connections to help open up new ways for our residents to live fuller lives and feel that they belong. We are reaching out to potential Friends and Neighbours like you.

We'd like to invite you to a

OR

Can I come and meet you to talk about this idea?

Please let us know....etc

Other ideas:

In communicating with the community, why not....

- a. List your objectives for connecting with them
- b. Invite their ideas for how you could work with each other.
- c. Give a snapshot of life at your care home so they get a sense of your place
- d. You could start with a quick summary of how many residents and staff you have and then move onto some personal details like what people's favourite foods/song/hobbies or football teams are.
- e. Consider sharing, with permission, some of the wishes that your residents have:

For example:

xx residents live in our care home and we have xx staff altogether (a mixture of full-time and part-time). Residents say that the best things about our home are xxxx and xxxx.

One of our residents, Bill, enjoys watching golf on the television and used to play often when he retired from his job as an engineer. Bill's favourite time of year is spring and he'd love to spend some time in a wood, watching birds if we could find a way to make that happen.

Jean is a Yorkshire lass who grew up on a farm. She has a great interest in food and would love to have more chances to cook and pass on her recipes.

Jenny is our Home Manager she is always busy, but when she isn't she likes cycling and then eating cake.

Help them get excited about the possibilities of working with you.

Share a few short examples can help people to grasp the idea of Care Home Friends and Neighbours in action. Feel free to use any of the following:

Keep on running

A care home resident with dementia was a lifelong runner. The home contacted the local running club who were delighted to help. Resident, home, family and club have found a way for the resident to go out for a run with a group every week.

Boogie on baby!

Toddlers, babies and parents shared traditional fairy tales and nursery rhymes with care home residents when a local Boogie Beats class held their session in a Derbyshire care home's lounge. "Oh it was so nice to see the little one's dancing and singing and I even got to hold a little baby girl, it made my day" said Winnie who lives at the home.

Wishing washing line

Essex Friends and Neighbours have a great scheme where care home residents can put their wish on a cardboard washing line in a local supermarket. Shoppers can take it in at a glance and respond if they can. The scheme has really taken off and Facebook has helped it spread. Ethel asked to meet an owl in the morning and, thanks to a quick response from a local bird sanctuary, had one sitting on her lap by the afternoon! Current wishes include:

- + Peter, 75 and Dan, 90, would love a wet shave with a cut throat razor
- + Donald wants to have his dinner and a beer in the pub
- + Linda, 70, would love a chat about history, especially William The Conqueror

For more take a look at: www.facebook.com/fansnetworkessex/

C. Meeting your connections and exploring next steps

You might want to hold a small event and talk to people as a group or meet your connections one-to-one. You'll know what will work best for you.

Shaping your project

It's good to make sure everyone involved is clear about what you agree to do. Here is a short checklist to help:

Clear objectives

What are you hoping to achieve? Be as clear and specific as you can:

1. what are you going to do?
2. who will be involved?
3. where and when will it happen?
4. why are you doing it?

Next steps

What needs to happen to make this happen?

Who will do/provide what? And when by?

How will you communicate with each other?

How will you know if it has worked?

This is often missed out of plans, but it's important to get this clear and agreed before you start doing anything.

1. What will success look like for everyone involved?

Be as clear as you can.

2. How will you capture the details of this?

For example if success is about residents enjoying themselves, will you:

- + Ask them questions during or after the activity (how will you record their answers?)
- + Take photographs or video that can capture their experience
- + Ask other people, such as friends or relatives, for their opinions



3. How will you know what's worked and what hasn't?

At the end of whatever you do it's important to step back and look at whether you achieved what you set out to do. To ask was it all worth it? And to learn –celebrating what worked well and considering how to make things even better next time.

We hope Step 3 goes well and that you enjoy developing relationships with your Friends and Neighbours. Good luck!