

Care home community engagement toolkit

Encouraging care homes to open
their doors to the local community.

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Introduction

This toolkit has been developed by West Sussex County Council in partnership with three care homes in the county as part of a project designed to increase community links within care home settings.

The care homes that have taken part in the project are: Francis Court, Copthorne; St Mary's Residential Home, Worthing; and Oakland Grange in Littlehampton.

The aim of the project was to encourage care homes to open their doors to the local community. This is because there are significant benefits for people living in care homes and for those in the community, such as increased wellbeing and a sense of being part of the local area.

We have worked closely with the care homes taking part in the project and there have been four community engagement workshops for activity coordinators were held across the county. We have developed this toolkit which includes the experiences of the care homes that participated as a resource for other care homes that want to establish community links.

Why is community engagement with care homes important?

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It is important for people to continue to feel engaged with the community when they live in a care home for a number of reasons.

- ▶ It helps develop a sense of being part of the wider community.
- ▶ Residents continue to enjoy activities and interests they may have had before living in a care home.
- ▶ Supports a more personalised experience for people.
- ▶ Enables residents to continue relationships they may have outside of the home.
- ▶ Provides variety, creates choice and promotes decision-making by residents.
- ▶ Introduces new people, different ideas and experiences and gives residents the opportunity for new social interactions.
- ▶ Reduces the sense of isolation residents may experience.
- ▶ Raises the awareness of your organisation in the community.
- ▶ Raises the profile of the care industry in general.
- ▶ Care homes should be seen as being part of the community as many have gardens and spaces that could be shared with local groups, and people living within them have a wealth of skills and knowledge to share.
- ▶ Community engagement links to the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) key lines of enquiry – well led, responsive and caring.

HELPFUL LINKS

Think Local Act Personal (TLAP)

- Innovations in community-centred support

My home life

- Community engagement



Personalised approach



It is important that people have choice and control over their lives and how they wish to live.

- ▶ Enabling someone to decide how they wish to meet their needs and outcomes will ensure they have better experiences and promotes wellbeing and independence.
- ▶ When organising community activities it is important to establish which ones people want to engage with as this will form part of the persons care plan and ensure that activities are meaningful. For example they may have worked in a clothes shop and may wish to volunteer in a charity shop or have skills that may be useful to a service in the local area.
- ▶ It is important to prepare and arrange with the person to have a conversation and explain what you will be discussing.
- ▶ Use co-production and organise a residents, and if appropriate, relative's discussion about the activities people would like to participate in and how they would like to engage with the local community as a whole.

HELPFUL LINKS

Social Care Institute for Social Excellence (SCIE)

- Co-production
- Co-production in social care: what it is and how to do it

Care Quality Commission

- Regulation 9: person-centred care

Opening your care home to the local community



Bringing the local community into the care home can bring real benefits to those living in the service. It can help to broaden horizons, combat loneliness and ward off depression.

Here are some ideas that could support people requiring care and support at home who may benefit from social interaction and community groups. Care homes often have gardens and spaces inside the home which could be utilised by community groups.

- ▶ Do you have residents that like to knit, or people that like to play board games and cards? These activities could be open to those in the community to come and join in.
- ▶ Could you offer space to a local community group, for example, toddler groups, Knit and Natter, Men in Sheds, space in the garden for the local nursery to plant and look after? All these activities could be of benefit to residents that may like to join in.
- ▶ Sharing activities is a good way to engage the local community. For example holding games afternoons, inviting people that live alone and would benefit from social interaction to join in activities or come along for lunch or a tea dance.
- ▶ Why not open a room for community groups to hold meetings?

HELPFUL LINK

Social Care Institute for Social Excellence (SCIE)

- Care home in the community



Knowing your local area



How familiar are you with the local area around your care home? In order to be fully embedded and established in your neighbourhood, it is important to know what is around you.

- ▶ Locate your care home on an interactive map, such as Google Maps or Bing Maps. Pick out the main features of the area such as roads, railway stations, rivers etc., and look for locations of schools, medical practices, parks and the seaside.
- ▶ Plan a route around the area of your care home (taking digital photos as prompts) and think about routes to and from your home for visitors and residents using public transport, minibuses and walking. How easy is it for people to get to and from your home? What might be the barriers for people accessing activities in the community, or for local people visiting your home to take part in activities?
- ▶ Parking can be difficult in residential areas and town centres, so think about car sharing or locating where parking permits can be purchased.

Here are some suggestions of who to contact in order to connect to the community.

- Tourist information in West Sussex
- Schools, academies and colleges in West Sussex
- Sussex museums
- West Sussex girl guides
- West Sussex scouts
- West Sussex local clubs
- West Sussex County Council libraries

Community groups in your area

West Sussex has a strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector. There are approximately 3,800 groups around the county, ranging from very small local groups, to voluntary organisations delivering contracted services countywide.

The sector is very diverse and made up of organisations supporting:

- children, young people and families;
- health, social care, mental health;
- disability;
- environment and conservation;
- arts and culture; and
- Housing and homelessness.



There is no one place to look for groups, but a good starting point is for your care home to make contact with the West Sussex Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Alliance organisations:

- Adur and Worthing – Community Works
Phone: 01273 234023
Email: info@bhcommunityworks.org.uk
- Arun and Chichester – Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester (VAAC)
Phone: 01243 840305
Email: admin@vaac.org.uk
- Crawley Community and Voluntary Service
Phone: 01293 657000
Email: info@crawleycvs.org
- Horsham Voluntary Sector Support
Phone: 01403 215191
Email: community.development@horsham.gov.uk
- Mid Sussex Voluntary Action
Phone: 01444 258102



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These organisations will have lists of their member groups, and will be able to signpost you to voluntary organisations and community groups working in your area who may be interested in connecting with your care home.

Suggestions for engagement with voluntary/community groups.

- Open up your care home garden space for a tea party for a lunch club to host
- Invite a community group to use a training room space in your care home for a training session
- Have an art group exhibition in a dining room area of your care home
- Invite a conservation group to support to provide ideas and tips to make your garden more welcoming to wildlife
- Invite a local scout or guide group to your home to sing for residents
- Join up with a voluntary organisation supporting older people on a joint trip to a garden centre
- Link up with a charity around a campaign 'week', for example, mental health awareness week, dementia action week and jointly promote messages on social media, and within the care home

Forums

West Sussex has forums and group meetings for those supporting older and vulnerable adults. Why not join in with your local meeting? Examples include:

- Horsham District Older People Forum,
- Crawley Older People Forum
- Mid Sussex older people's council.



Using technology to connect to the community



Many older people, particularly those that live in care homes, do not have access to the internet, which can lead to social exclusion. Technology and access to the internet can greatly improve the wellbeing of people living in your service.

Technology can help residents to access the outside world; for example, common interests groups, shopping and keeping in touch with family and friends. Consider the following.

- ▶ Assistive technology can also help people become more independent and interact with the outside world. Voice assisted technology can enable residents to listen to talking books and music of their choice or keep connected to outside news.
- ▶ Explore using Skype and Facetime to enable people to have face to face communication with relatives and friends.
- ▶ The use of social media can also help people feel connected to what is happening in their local community and continue to keep in touch with friends and family.

- ▶ Think about the use of iPads and laptops within your service. Could residents be encouraged and supported to use this technology to stay connected to interests, the local community and friends and family?
- ▶ Could the use of technology lead to intergenerational opportunities? Young people are raised with technology as part of their daily lives and can be great teachers to the older generation. Think about contacting a local school or college to see if there is the opportunity for young people to spend time in the service teaching people how to use technology.

HELPFUL LINK

Age UK

- [Using technology in care homes](#)



Making connections with other local care homes



Making connections with other local care or nursing homes is a good way for people to make new friends and for care staff to share best practice and ideas.

Attending local care home manager forums is a great way to link in and develop relationships with other homes, or approaching a neighbouring care home to invite them to join in with activities you may be arranging. This is also a great opportunity for you to share ideas, plan joint events and share costs. There are real benefits for people living in your service.

There are number of ways in which you could connect.

- ▶ Pen Pals – establish if you have residents that are like-minded and would enjoy writing to someone about the things they enjoy.
- ▶ Games – do you have a resident that enjoys playing card games or board games? You could invite residents from a neighbouring home to join in or organise a regular games afternoon, taking turns to host.
- ▶ Sharing outings to the theatre, museums or a day at the seaside, this is a great way of reducing the cost of transport.
- ▶ Organised activities – do you have room to invite others to join in or to share these activities with a neighbouring home?
- ▶ Share a meal by inviting others to join you for lunch, dinner or afternoon tea.

Dementia friendly communities

Dementia Friendly Communities were set up as a result of the 2012 Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia. There are currently nine Dementia Friendly Alliances in West Sussex and details of these can be found at [this link here](#).

The aim of these alliances is to form a collective group of local organisations to support and improve the quality of life for people who live in a geographical area, and who are affected by any form of dementia or cognitive impairment – whether as a patient or carer. In addition, the aim is to raise awareness and to normalise the condition, ensuring that existing services are dementia-friendly.

Here are some suggestions to ensure your home is dementia friendly.

- ▶ Open up activities in your care home to people living in the community who have a dementia diagnosis. The aim is for activities to be dementia friendly, and not dementia only.
- ▶ Attend the regular Dementia Friendly Alliance meetings in your area – get to know others who are providing services in the area that are dementia friendly such as banks, sports clubs, lunch clubs, and so on.

- ▶ Be a dementia friendly home and contact the Alzheimer's Society to arrange for a Dementia Friends session for staff and residents.

The Alzheimer's Society is a leading charity supporting those with all forms of dementia, as well as providing professional resources for care homes to use. Why not make contact with your local society and invite them to visit your care home? Visit: www.dementiafriends.org.uk

HELPFUL LINK

Find out if your service is dementia friendly

- Kins Fund dementia friendly audit

CASE STUDY



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Intergenerational activities

There are great benefits that come from intergenerational activities, for both older people and young alike. Improvements in wellbeing, cognition and feeling connected.



This case study details how St Mary's Residential Care Home planned and implemented ongoing intergenerational activities with a neighbouring school.

Prior to the latter part of 2018 social connections with community groups were faith based or took the form of visits from external entertainers complemented by organised activities. Residents felt that they would like to explore the possibility of developing a connection with a local school.

St Mary's residents and staff launched a plan to create an intergeneration connection with the neighboring nursery and primary school by taking the following steps.

- Identifying a possible school
- Developing an open line of communication between St Mary's and the school management team and teachers.
- Developing joint projects of social and educational value for participants.
- Linking timetables and schemes of work between St Mary's and the school.

Action taken

A neighbouring school was contacted and an informal meeting took place between the management teams of St Mary's and the school

A number of initiatives were identified and planned and a commitment given to actively engage.

- School children invited residents at St Mary's to visit the nursery class to take part in a Christmas craft morning to make decorations for the towns Christmas tree.
- Sunflower planting activity
- Easter egg hunt/ bonnet making
- Wind chime making
- Pancake races
- Chinese dragon dance

Friendships began to develop, both generations enjoyed the craft and dressing up activities. A visit from the nursery children was then arranged and a story time and sing along session took place at St Mary's.

This was followed up by a visit to St Mary's by the junior school children who read stories to the residents and residents shared life stories with them.



Outcome

Intergenerational relations between St Mary's and the children from the Lady of Sion School began to bloom. More joint activities were planned which has proved to be beneficial in many other ways exceeding expectations.

Intergenerational activities between the residents and the children have proved beneficial and effective in reducing social isolation of the residents, giving them a sense of purpose and something to look forward to. The children have gained confidence and developed an awareness of life in past years. Both the recipient and children have gained friends and have enjoyed the interaction with each other.



West Sussex Libraries

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There are 36 libraries in West Sussex. Their details and opening times can be found [here](#), along with their offers and events throughout the year. Possible suggestions for care homes to engage with are as follows.

- ▶ **Reading Friends** – a national project being piloted in West Sussex. Befrienders link with people and engage with them through reading books, poetry, discussing authors, looking at newspaper articles, etc. Befrienders can also read aloud to someone if this is the best way of engaging.
- ▶ **Book clubs** – these could be held in care homes (open to residents and the wider community) and can be supported by the library service with books. Alternatively, care home residents would be welcome to join in with a book club held at a local library.
- ▶ **Library led activities** – care home residents are welcome to join in activities such as 'Knit and Natter' and board game groups.
- ▶ **Reminiscence packs** – the Reminiscence Collection consists of books and 200 packs of objects, music CDs, photographs, jigsaws and replica items on different themes. Items from the Collection can be used with older people and people with dementia, either in a group setting or one-to-one, and they can also be useful for intergenerational work too.
- ▶ **Play aways** – portable gadgets that are very straight forward to use and can be played via a headset. These can be loaned out to both individuals and to care homes.
- ▶ **Select and collect** – a service where a care home can join on a group ticket and borrow up to 100 items for a maximum of 10 weeks. There is no charge for this service. Please ask your local library for further details
- ▶ **Communication library** – this includes a Talking Photo Album (20 pockets allowing for up to 40 images to be displayed, with a built in recorder allowing a separate voice message to be recorded on each page), and also an interactive wall chart (30 pockets which can hold pictures, symbols, words or small objects. 10 second messages can be recorded for each pocket).

Oral histories and the West Sussex Records Office

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Oral Histories

Oral history is the living memories and experiences of people shared using audio or video tapes or transcriptions – everyone has a story to tell! Care home residents will have led a range of interesting lives – some will have been involved directly in key historical events and some will have had jobs, or been home-makers over the past years. Oral history provides opportunities for people to tell their stories, to reminisce and to pass on wisdom and personal experiences that otherwise would be lost in the passing of time.

West Sussex Archives and West Sussex Libraries have produced guidance notes on oral history – including providing useful tips, question suggestions, permission templates, how to preserve the recording and producing a synopsis. Your home could recruit volunteers to carry out the interviews, or staff in your home could carry them out.

The resulting recordings could be taken in and preserved as archives by the Records Office. It has a digital preservation archivist and processes in place that enable us to preserve digital archives including oral history recordings.

West Sussex Records Office

The Records Office holds many resources that could be used to explore and to engage with residents to stimulate their memories. For example, local history records, photographs, school records, maps, oral histories and potentially clips from archive films. Does your care home have a history you don't know about? And could you share this history with people living in your local area? What about looking at Census records to find out who lived in the home 100 or more years ago?

The Records Office is based in Chichester, and can be contacted as follows.

- Email: record.office@westsussex.gov.uk
- Phone: **01243 753602**
- Website: www.westsussex.gov.uk/recordoffice



Making the most of your assets

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One of your greatest assets and often the key to opening up opportunities to link to the community, is the people that work in your service.

- ▶ Often members of staff have children that attend nurseries, schools and colleges and they could open the door to working together.
- ▶ Managers and activity coordinators say they find it difficult to engage nurseries and schools when looking to set up intergenerational activities. Where this has been successful, however, it is often a member of staff that has approached a nursery or school that their child attends.
- ▶ It is also good to get to know the hobbies and interests people that work in the home have and find out if they are similar to the people living in the home. Could staff introduce residents to groups or invite their group into the home, or give a talk about their interests and enable others to become involved?
- ▶ Do you have a member of staff that is passionate about community engagement? You could identify a champion to make links and relationships with community groups and services.

Volunteers and work experience

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Volunteers can make a significant impact on the wellbeing of residents.

They can:

- provide additional people to share time and skills with residents;
- offer befriending to isolated/lonely residents;
- support/lead activities in care homes for residents;
- escort residents (with paid staff) on outings and trips outside the care home; and
- provide the volunteer with a meaningful and worthwhile volunteering opportunity, which could lead to a career in care.

Volunteers support staff to enhance the quality of life for people living in your care home. They also provide the opportunity to be creative with activities.

Things to think about

- Are there relatives and people visiting the service that may be interested in volunteering a few hours of their time?
- Involve staff, relatives and residents in seeking volunteers as they may know someone that is looking for volunteer work.
- Look at local community groups and go along and talk about your service and the difference volunteers make.

- Local advertising is also a good way to attract volunteers.

If you want to know more about volunteers and how to recruit them, click on this [link](#) to find out more information.

Work experience in a care home

Providing work experience placements in your Care Home can have benefits to your home as well as to the participants. A future, skilled workforce is essential for ensuring that generations to come people living in care homes will have staff who are trained, caring and professional. Schools, usually with students in year 10 (15 years of age), have week-long work experience programmes annual. Why not make contact with your local secondary school to see how your care home could be part of this. Schools are very experienced in this area and will help you with the requirements and paperwork to sign up to host students, including providing information around supervising students, and the tasks they can undertake.

CASE STUDY



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Fundraising for the local community and for activities

As you have seen, community activities do not have to be a huge strain on resources, however, sometimes funds are required for a special outing or to develop an area in the home-for example for dementia café. Fundraising can be fun and involve everyone- residents, relatives, staff and volunteers.

Here are some fundraising ideas.

- Host an afternoon tea party or the cake sale.
- Car boot sales
- Traditional fete
- Sponsored walk
- Raffle
- Uniform free day – staff donate £1 to not wear uniform.
- Pre- loved clothes rail.
- Book sale

Choosing a local charity to support can help residents feel connected to the community and also offer fun activities as well as raising funds for a worthy cause.

Talk to residents about what causes they would like to support and the activities they would like to do to raise money. Oakland Grange case study provided a helpful account of how this can be achieved.



CASE STUDY

Oakland Grange sponsored walk for Care for Veterans

Oakland Grange have long been supporting the Care for Veterans charity, and hold regular meetings with the fundraiser.

Residents and staff have been raising money for the charity and wanted to think about something different – together we came up with a sponsored walk.

Christine the charity's fundraiser, helped us map out a route, and the date was set for a four mile walk around Littlehampton. Everyone was very excited and we set out with buckets so members of the public could offer a contribution. Most residents use a wheelchair and eight wanted to participate along with a number of staff members.

Christine also had t shirts printed for all those that took part and goody bags made up. We met lots of people walking along the sea front and many came out of their homes to talk to us and cheer us on our way.

As you can see from the photos the event was enjoyed by all and along with our garden party, we managed to raise £320.

Benefits for Residents – the people that took part had a real feeling of achievement, and

really enjoyed taking part in something that had benefits for others. Meeting people along the way, it really felt like we were part of the community.





Care Quality Commission (CQC) requirements

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Adopting a community-based approach could help to demonstrate that you are meeting or exceeding the regulatory requirement which could support you to improve your ratings with CQC. Below are the Key Lines of Enquiry which relate to community engagement.

1. Are social activities included as part of a planned programme? How often?
R1.4
2. Do you support people to feel part of the community and join in local events, for example, book groups, dances, fundraising events, seasonal celebrations?
R1.3
3. Can people maintain links with their community that are important to them, for example, being a member of a church or club? R1.3, R1.4
4. Are there any links with other organisations, for example, schools, colleges, other care homes, or nurseries?
R1.4
5. Do you support those who can't go out independently? R1.3. WL3.2
6. Do you involve families and friends with activities? C3.7
7. How are peoples individual needs met by adaption, design and decoration of premises? E.6
8. Is consent to care and treatment always sought in line with legislation and guidance ? E.7
9. How are risks to people assessed and their safety monitored and managed so they are supported to stay safe and their freedom respected ? S.2

Quotes from an outstanding rated service

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“The registered manager and staff were committed to ensuring people were part of the local community and had opportunities to engage with people of all ages and interests. The registered manager worked with the local primary school to enable weekly inter-generational projects between people and pupils. They worked together to create opportunities to enhance the experience for the children and the people living at the home. For example, working together on art projects, singing, gardening and taking part in a raft of charity fundraising events held both at the service and in the community.”

“The registered manager is keen to improve community links and has shared ideas to open up space within the home to local community groups. For example, we heard how the local primary school was using the homes chapel for choir practice. Another area being looked at by the project is finding out about local history and how people could use the records office and library resources to research the local area”

Outstanding CQC Report
St Mary’s Residential Care Home





Examples of opportunities for community engagement projects

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Arundel Museum

Reminiscence workshops

Local museum workshops learning about artefacts and how these can be shared with residential care homes

Care home postcards

Intergenerational links with primary school students sending traditional postcards to residents of care homes on their summer holidays

Cheese and wine evenings

An evening reminiscing about what was on the site of the home before it became a care home – open to the public and care home residents.

30 Days Wild

Wildlife Trust annual campaign to spend time each day in the wild, enjoying nature. This year a special care home pack was designed and homes could register for a free pack.

Musical family day

1930s themed family day with a band, face painting, afternoon tea to raise funds for a local hospice. Or try another era or theme that the care home residents have agreed.

Park run

Staff and residents of a care home took part in a Saturday morning park run. Residents walked, or were pushed in wheelchairs around the route. In future residents will be encouraged to volunteer at the events, or just simply come out and enjoy the fresh air and watch the runners.

Free legal advice sessions in care homes

A care home opening up its communal space for a legal firm to offer free of charge legal advice sessions to family members, and members of the public.

Silver letters

Penpal scheme for older and younger people to write to each other regularly – both in care settings and living independently.

Community cafés

Organising a community café within the home, maybe for a few days a week and inviting those living in the local community to come in for a cup of tea and cake.

Community Sheds – create a space for people to come together for a cup of coffee and a chat, and work on projects of interest.



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Resources for care homes and communities

Facebook / Twitter / Instagram

Have active social media pages, which are regularly updated. Follow local groups and organisations to find out what is going on locally, and see how they can promote your home.

West Sussex Connect to Support

Use the provider area on this website to keep abreast with changes in adult social care. Establish your home as a setting for those living independently to visit and take part in activities with residents. [Click here to visit the website.](#)

Experience West Sussex

A website providing a range of information relating to events, places to go, food and drink and hidden gems of places to visit. [Click here to visit the website.](#)

West Sussex Five Ways to Wellbeing

The Knew Economics Foundation has developed a set of five evidence-based actions for a major new government report into wellbeing that, if practiced regularly, can improve personal wellbeing. [Click here to visit the website.](#)

West Sussex Pictures

The West Sussex County Council Record Office contains a fascinating history of the county. It has maps from the 19th century of places such as Worthing and Chichester, as well as vintage black and white portraits and urban and rural scenes. [Click here to visit the website.](#)

Libraries

Books, information, life-long learning, reminiscence packs, free internet and Wi-Fi can all be found in our libraries, as well as Knit and Natter and other groups. [Click here to visit the website.](#)

Parish or town councils

[Click here to visit the website.](#)

West Sussex things to do

All the latest information about what's on in West Sussex. [Click here to visit the website.](#)