

 Maintaining self esteem

A Healthwatch Bucks Good Practice Report

on using meaningful activities to promote the health and wellbeing of care home residents 

Healthwatch Bucks have now visited over 50 care homes. We have come across a wide range of instances where meaningful activity has made a real difference to residents enabling them to continue to live as independently and happily as possible.

“Meaningful activity includes physical, social and leisure activities that are tailored to the person's needs and preferences. Activity can range from activities of daily living such as dressing, eating and washing, to leisure activities such as reading, gardening, arts and crafts, conversation, and singing. They can be structured or spontaneous, for groups or for individuals, and may involve family, friends and carers, or the wider community. Activity may provide emotional, creative, intellectual and spiritual stimulation. It should take place in an environment that is appropriate to the person's needs and preferences, which may include using outdoor spaces or making adaptations to the person's environment.⁽¹⁾”

The key to meaningful activity is that it should be important to the individual concerned. This means care staff need to be able to take time to understand what is important to each resident. Residents should be helped to choose activities that promote independence, pleasure or interest, with family and friends also being involved. Staff also need the skills to support people with cognitive or communication difficulties in decision-making.

This guide is designed to share some of the great work we have seen .



We've heard about residents being taken to the pub and the boy's night in watching football

Keeping individual interests alive

- **Art, craft and colouring** - can be therapeutic and used as communication tools
- **Sport** - swimming, sailing, yoga, watching cricket or playing golf with friends
- **Hobbies** - even if some hobbies are no longer as accessible, IT and computer tablets might help a hobby to still be followed e.g. vintage cars
- **Social Events** - both in and outside the care home

(1) [Adapted from SCIE guide 15, *Choice and Control*, *Living well through activity in care homes: the toolkit* (College of Occupational Therapists) and expert consensus]

Relatives told us a great deal of fun was had at an indoor campsite set up one day in a care home



Keeping it fun

- **Programmed activities** - visiting entertainers including singers, or film evenings, and seasonal events such as Christmas parties, carol singing or special occasion events for jubilees or birthdays
- **Trips and visits out** - residents visiting primary schools to watch dress rehearsals of nativity plays or school concerts or trips further afield e.g. to the seaside
- **One off treats** - other groups of residents have enjoyed occasional afternoon tea parties
- **Regular Little Treats** - Songs of Praise with a glass of sherry or favourite food item
- **Joint Productions** - in one care home, relatives and residents work with staff to put on musicals

Many homes have small or large dogs visiting via Pets as Therapy which everyone loves to stroke

Teaching one person dominoes in one care home led to a regular dominoes group run by residents



Keeping active mentally

- **Reading** - the newspaper or having a book or the paper read out loud and discussed
- **Puzzles and Games individually** - crosswords, word searches, sudoku or jigsaws
- **Games together** - cards, bingo, playing board games
- **Quizzes** - about certain decades or subjects relevant to residents

One care home has a small dog residents walk around the grounds



Keeping active physically

- **Guided Exercise** - can be chair based and use props such as pom poms or wrist bells for variety
- **Active Games** - e.g. skittles can be played by those using walking frames and wheelchairs
- **Dancing and Zumba** - can also be done at many levels of ability with adaptation
- **Singing** - uses a wide range of muscles as well as having social benefits
- **Walking with purpose** - to the coffee shop or to get the paper
- **Sensory rooms** - allow those are restricted by wheelchairs to move on the floor or on bean bags or move arms or eyes following patterns on walls or floors

One care home asks residents to review best practice in their own homes or others in the group

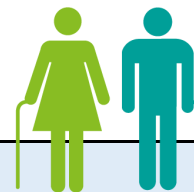


One care home takes residents ice skating at Xmas

Keeping a sense of ownership

- **Making decisions** - getting involved in the running of the home and making decisions about what to do with one's own time
- **Housework** - dusting, folding serviettes, laying the table, putting towels away or closing blinds
- **Catering** - baking or helping plan menus, shopping online or going to the supermarket
- **Gardening** - weeding, pruning, sowing seeds to grow on window sills and plant out, fruit and veg. to pick and eat. Some care homes have allotments and/ or bird feeders

One resident was taken to Bletchley Park where they worked during the war



Keeping memories alive

- **Mementoes** - talking through photo albums and life storybooks made with family and the resident can help conversation, as can memory boxes containing items special to each individual
- **Surroundings** - we have seen bunting erected to celebrate the queen's jubilee
- **Music** - themed music evenings and singing songs around tunes that are familiar. Tunes from residents' youth or middle years are likely to be remembered
- **Performance** - residents can enjoy playing the piano or recount poems they learnt when younger

Keeping connected

- **With the world** - watching the news online or on TV and listening to the radio
- **With each other** - having meaningful conversations even if not verbal; a laugh and familiar touch makes us feel human; this could include facetimeing relatives and friends
- **With food** - encouraging residents to eat together (with or without assistance). People eat better together and this helps people to form friendships
- **With the Community** - to the theatre or cinema, to church or out for a coffee or lunch or visiting a garden centre enables residents to remain part of a wider community
- **With all generations** - scouts visit to chat to residents on topics as part of getting a badge.
- **With themselves** - in many homes, residents have told us that they enjoy having their nails and hair done, or a hand or head massage

One care home invites in primary children and some of the residents listen to them read. In another, a secondary school visit monthly to run a bingo session

These are just some of the techniques in use every day in our care homes which make a real difference to residents lives. At Healthwatch Bucks we know there are more great ideas out there. Please do comment on this report and share your ideas and experience so we can all work together to help care home residents and others live with dignity.

If you have any questions please get in touch with Alison Holloway,
Project Manager:
alison@healthwatchbucks.co.uk
01844 348847

Healthwatch Bucks
www.healthwatchbucks.co.uk
01844 348849
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