



Prioritising Wellbeing



MEANINGFUL VISITS

A GUIDE FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY



THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING THIS GUIDE

NAPA specialises in providing professional development opportunities that support person centred activity and engagement; this includes toolkits and resources to support and develop practice.

It is very important to us that every practitioner and family carer has access to the information they need to engage the people they support.

All NAPA resources are therefore available either FREE of charge or at a very low cost.

Here are some of the toolkits and resources we provide free of charge:

The NAPA Calendar – An Activity for Every Day of the Year. Click [HERE](#)

Bits and Blogs – Guest blogs and updates from Specialist Practitioners on issues relating to activity and engagement. Click [HERE](#)

FREE Resources – Free publications focussing on a range of themes and topics to support the practice of Activity and Care Providers. Click [HERE](#)

Specialist Resources for Friends and Family – Free resources created to support friends and family members in engaging their loved ones. Click [HERE](#)

We are thrilled to present *Meaningful Visits - A Guide for Friends and Family*, a project made possible by generous funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.

With heartfelt gratitude, we extend our thanks to the fund for their invaluable support in making this initiative a reality.

This toolkit stands as a testament to our commitment to enhancing the lives of people living in care homes, as well as the cherished relationships they share with their friends, families and the dedicated activity and care teams who support them.

Designed with care and compassion, *Meaningful Visits - A Guide for Friends and Family*, aims to create a profound impact on the lives of care home residents. Through carefully curated resources and thoughtful guidance, we aspire to enable a sense of connection, joy and engagement for all those involved.

As we unveil *Meaningful Visits - A Guide for Friends and Family*, we look forward to witnessing the positive transformations it brings to the lives of those within care homes and the broader community. Your support and collaboration have been instrumental in making this project a reality, and we can't wait to see the positive ripple effects it creates.

Thank you for being a part of this journey towards creating brighter, more enriching care home experiences.

INTRODUCTION

This guide is dedicated to supporting you in encouraging and facilitating meaningful visits. We understand the pivotal role everyone involved plays in creating a nurturing and enriching environment, and we are here to provide tools and strategies to enhance the quality of these connections.

Visits from loved ones are vital for wellbeing and happiness. These visits have a profound impact on emotional, mental, and even physical health. The presence of friends and family provides a sense of comfort, belonging and social support that is essential for maintaining quality of life.

Building positive relationships with the care team will enhance your visiting experience. Activity Providers, play a crucial role in facilitating and optimising these visits and have the opportunity to create an atmosphere that encourages meaningful interactions and strengthens the bonds between individuals and their loved ones. Their expertise in planning and organising activities can significantly enhance the overall visit experience, ensuring that every encounter becomes a source of joy, connection and positive memories.

Together, let's create a nurturing and supportive environment where every visit becomes a cherished moment of connection, love, and joy for everyone.

Our heartfelt acknowledgments go to:

*Asa Johnson, Emma Hewat, Emma McMillan, Lizzie Grant,
Rebecca Spicer, Chris Maddocks and Sue Meehan*

This resource has been created following consultation with NAPA members, thank you to all those who provided their feedback and shared their ideas and positive practice examples.

This guide is **FREE** to download due to funding from the Lottery Community Fund.





GUIDANCE FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Regular visits from friends and family make a difference in the following ways:

- Visits from loved ones can provide individuals with a sense of emotional connection and support. They can engage in meaningful conversations, share stories and express their feelings, which helps to reduce feelings of loneliness, sadness and isolation. Having someone who genuinely cares about their wellbeing can lift their spirits and improve their overall emotional state.
- Regular visits from friends and family offer opportunities for social interaction and engagement. Individuals can participate in activities, outings and shared hobbies with their loved ones. Engaging in social interactions can stimulate the mind, improve cognitive function and boost overall mood and wellbeing.
- Friends and family members can provide a connection to an individual's personal history, memories and identity. They can reminisce together, share family stories and provide a sense of continuity and belonging. Regular visits help Individuals maintain their sense of self and strengthen bonds with their loved ones.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

- Interacting with friends and family can provide mental and cognitive stimulation. Engaging in conversations, debates and intellectual discussions exercises cognition. This can be particularly beneficial for individuals experiencing cognitive decline.
- The presence of friends and family during visits can positively impact an individual's physical health. Visits can help alleviate stress, reduce anxiety and provide comfort, which can have indirect benefits on physical wellbeing. Engaging in activities together can promote physical movement, exercise and overall mobility.



- Regular visits from friends and family members allow for active advocacy and monitoring of an individual's wellbeing. Visitors can observe the individual's wellbeing, communicate any concerns or issues to the Activity Provider or care team and ensure that their loved one's needs are being met effectively. This involvement can lead to enhanced quality of life.
- Knowing that friends and family members are actively involved and regularly visiting can provide individuals with a sense of security and reassurance. Feeling supported, loved and valued, contributes to wellbeing.

Regular visits from friends and family can significantly improve wellbeing. Meaningful visits can provide emotional support, social interaction, mental and cognitive stimulation, a sense of identity and belonging, and physical health benefits. The involvement of friends and family members ensures advocacy, monitoring and a sense of security.

MEANINGFUL VISITS – A GUIDE FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Visiting loved ones in care homes is an essential way to maintain connection, provide support and promote the wellbeing of Individuals.

This guidance has been developed in consultation for people living with dementia, friends and family members and Activity Providers. It provides practical guidance and suggestions for friends and family members to facilitate meaningful visits with their loved ones in care homes. It aims to enhance the quality of interactions, create positive experiences and enhance time spent together.

“A meaningful visit, when visiting a loved one in a care home, is one that encourages connection, engagement and a sense of wellbeing for both the Individual and the visitor“.

Hilary Woodhead, NAPA’s Executive Director.

Prepare for the Visit

- Familiarise yourself with the care home's visiting policies and schedules.
- Contact the care home in advance to confirm the visit and enquire about any special considerations.
- Reflect on shared memories, interests and activities that you can engage in during the visit.
- Coordinate the visit with the care home/Activity Provider to ensure a convenient time.
- Check if there are any specific visiting guidelines or protocols.



Creating a Positive Encounter

- Bring meaningful items from home, such as family photos, favourite books or familiar objects, to personalise the visiting space and create a sense of familiarity.
- Consider bringing small gifts or tokens of affection that hold sentimental value.
- Create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere by adjusting seating arrangements, lighting and temperature, as appropriate.

Engage in Meaningful Activities

- Plan activities based on your loved one's preferences and abilities. This can include listening to music together, looking through photo albums, reading aloud or engaging in hobbies or crafts.
- Incorporate reminiscence activities to stimulate memories and encourage storytelling.
- Participate in activities that promote physical movement, such as taking short walks together or enjoying some seated physical activities.

Capture Memories:

- Consider taking photos or videos during the visit, with permission and in compliance with care home policies, to help preserve cherished memories and moments.
- These captured memories can be shared later and provide a source of comfort and connection.

Effective Communication

- Use active listening techniques, show empathy and give your loved one ample time to express themselves.
- Avoid distractions, such as electronic devices or interruptions, during your visit to maintain focused and meaningful conversations.
- Adapt your communication style to meet your loved one's needs. For instance, if they have hearing difficulties, speak clearly and face them directly.

Emotional Support

- Be attuned to your loved one's emotions and provide reassurance and comfort as needed.
- Offer words of affirmation, love and encouragement to lift their spirits and reinforce your relationship.
- Validate their feelings and emotions, even if they may be experiencing challenges.

Flexibility and Adaptation

- Recognise that each visit may be different, and it is important to be flexible and adapt to your loved one's needs and energy levels.
- Be open to spontaneous moments of joy, laughter and emotional connection that may arise during the visit.
- Respect any boundaries or limitations your loved one may have and adjust your activities or conversations accordingly.



Reflect and Communicate

- After the visit, take some time to reflect on the experience. Share your observations, thoughts and any concerns with the care home staff, if necessary.
- Communicate with other family members or friends who may not have been able to visit, sharing updates and insights to keep everyone connected.

Meaningful visits with loved ones in care homes can significantly enhance their wellbeing and yours. The key to a meaningful visit is to create an environment that promotes connection, understanding and shared experiences. By preparing in advance and being present and engaged during the visit, friends and family members can make these moments truly special and valuable.

By following these guidelines, friends and family members can create a supportive, engaging and meaningful environment during their visits. Remember, the most important aspect of your visit is the connection, love and companionship shared with your loved one.

Note: It is important to consider and adhere to any specific guidelines and regulations set by the care home or relevant authorities regarding visiting, especially during times of health crises or pandemics.

COMMUNICATION

When communicating with care home staff, it's crucial to establish and maintain positive relationships.



Here are some top tips for effective communication, particularly with the Care Manager and Activity Provider:

1. Take the time to introduce yourself and get to know the Care Manager and Activity Provider. Developing a personal connection can go a long way in encouraging effective communication.

2. Remember that care home staff have multiple responsibilities and tasks to manage. Approach conversations with patience, empathy and a willingness to listen. They may be busy at times, so try to schedule meetings or discussions in advance to ensure they can give you their undivided attention.

3. Before engaging in conversations, gather relevant information and prepare any questions or concerns you have. This will help you communicate your needs more effectively and make the most of your interactions. Consider writing down key points to ensure you don't forget anything important.

4. Be clear about what you expect from the Care Manager and Activity Provider. Whether it's specific care requirements, preferences or goals for your loved one's wellbeing, articulate them in a respectful and concise manner. Providing clear guidance helps staff understand your expectations and work towards meeting them.

5. Establish a regular communication schedule with the Care Manager and Activity Provider to stay informed about your loved one's overall health, activities and any changes in their care plan. This can help you stay involved and address any concerns in a timely manner.

6. View yourself as a partner in your loved one's care. Collaborate with care home staff to develop and review care plans, discuss potential improvements and explore ways to enhance your loved one's quality of life. By working together, you can create a supportive environment.

7. Provide feedback: If you have positive feedback or suggestions for improvement, share them with the care manager and Activity Provider. Acknowledging their efforts and providing constructive feedback can strengthen the relationship and encourage a culture of continuous improvement.

8. Whenever possible, participate in care home events and activities. This not only shows your support for the care home but also gives you an opportunity to observe their interactions with Individuals and assess the overall quality of engagement.

9. If you have concerns about your loved one's care, the level of activity and engagement or notice any issues, don't hesitate to advocate for their needs. Approach the Care Manager or Activity Provider with your concerns and work collaboratively to find solutions.

10. A simple "thank you" can go a long way in building positive relationships and encouraging a supportive environment for your loved one and a meaningful experience for you.



By approaching conversations with care, respect and a collaborative mindset, you can establish strong relationships with care home staff, including the care manager and Activity Provider, ensuring the best possible care and support for your loved one.

PREPARING TO VISIT

When friends and family members visit their loved ones in a care home, it's essential to have effective communication and coordination with the Activity Provider. This ensures a smooth and meaningful visit for all involved.

Here's a guide for friends and family members on visiting their loved ones in a care home while liaising with the Activity Provider:



1. Contact the Activity Provider

- **Reach out in advance:** Contact the care home's Activity Provider before your visit to notify them of your intention to visit and inquire about any specific guidelines or protocols they may have in place.
- **Share information:** Provide the Activity Provider with relevant details such as the date and time of your visit, the number of visitors and any specific requirements or requests you may have.

2. Understand the Visiting Policies

- **Familiarise yourself:** Ask the Activity Provider about the care home's visiting policies, including visiting hours, any restrictions or specific guidelines to follow. Understand the rules regarding the duration of the visit, the number of visitors allowed and any necessary safety measures.
- **Compliance with guidelines:** Ensure that you and your group comply with all the care home's policies and guidelines. This includes adhering to any restrictions related to COVID-19 protocols or specific Individual needs.

3. Coordinate and Schedule Visits

Discuss availability: Coordinate with the Activity Provider to determine the best time for your visit. Consider the care home's routine, the availability of the Individual and any planned activities or events that may be taking place.

Schedule in advance: Make an appointment for your visit to ensure that adequate preparations can be made, such as arranging a suitable visiting area and having staff available to assist if needed.

PREPARING TO VISIT

4. Seek Input and Suggestions

- **Share preferences:** Communicate any specific preferences or requests you have for the visit. This could include activities, games or items you'd like to bring that may enhance the experience for your loved one and other Individuals.
- **Ask for suggestions:** Enquire about any recommendations or ideas the Activity Provider may have to make the visit more engaging and enjoyable. They can provide insights into activities or topics of conversation that resonate well with Individuals.

5. Follow Guidance from the Activity Provider

- **Respect instructions:** Listen to and follow any guidance provided by the Activity Provider. They may offer advice on how to engage with your loved one, the best ways to communicate or any particular sensitivities or preferences to be aware of.
- **Collaborate for a meaningful experience:** Work together with the Activity Provider to ensure the visit is meaningful and tailored to the preferences and capabilities of your loved one. They can provide suggestions for activities, topics of conversation or ways to create a comfortable and positive environment.

6. Provide Feedback and Maintain Communication

- **Share your experience:** After the visit, provide feedback to the Activity Provider. Share your observations, any positive experiences or suggestions for improvement. This helps them better understand the needs and desires of both visitors and Individuals.
- **Stay connected:** Maintain open lines of communication with the Activity Provider for future visits. Keep them informed of any changes in your loved one's preferences or needs so they can continue to support and enhance future interactions.

By liaising with the Activity Provider, you can ensure that your visits to your loved one in a care home are coordinated, respectful and meaningful. Their guidance and expertise can contribute to a positive and engaging experience for both you and your loved one, encouraging a supportive environment within the care home.

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FACILITATING POSITIVE AND ENGAGING EXPERIENCES

Family members can indeed liaise with the Activity Provider and kitchen team to provide food that will enhance the visit and ensure a meaningful experience for all involved.

Here's an explanation of how and why this collaboration is important:

1. Coordination with the Activity Provider

Understanding Individual Needs: The Activity Provider has valuable insights into the preferences, dietary restrictions, and any specific requirements of the Individual. By communicating with them, family members can gain a better understanding of what foods would be suitable and enjoyable for their loved one during the visit.

Incorporating Activities: The Activity Provider can suggest food-related activities that engage the Individual and promote social interaction. This could include cooking or baking sessions, themed meals or reminiscence activities centred around food. Collaborating with the Activity Provider allows family members to plan food-related experiences that align with the Individual's interests and abilities.



2. Collaboration with the Kitchen Team

Sharing dietary information: Family members can provide the kitchen team with detailed information about the Individual's dietary needs and preferences. This includes any allergies, intolerances, cultural or religious dietary requirements, or personal food likes and dislikes. Sharing this information ensures that the kitchen team can prepare meals that are safe, suitable and enjoyable for the Individual.

Discussing special requests: If family members have specific food requests for their visit, such as preparing a particular dish or incorporating family recipes, they can communicate these to the kitchen team. This collaboration allows the kitchen team to accommodate these requests and provide a more personalised dining experience.

Seeking advice and suggestions: The kitchen team can offer guidance and suggestions on meal options that are both nutritious and appealing to the Individual. They can advise on suitable ingredients, cooking techniques, and presentation to make the meals more visually appealing and appetising. Collaborating with the kitchen team ensures that the food provided aligns with the Individual's dietary needs and maintains their enjoyment of meals.

FACILITATING POSITIVE AND ENGAGING EXPERIENCES

3. Benefits of the Collaboration:

Personalisation: By collaborating with the Activity Provider and kitchen team, family members can create a personalised dining experience for their loved one. This personalised approach makes the visit more meaningful and helps to maintain a sense of familiarity, comfort and connection for the Individual.

Inclusion and engagement: Involving the Individual in food-related activities and providing meals that they enjoy can promote social engagement and stimulate their senses. Sharing meals together can encourage conversation, trigger memories and create a sense of togetherness for the Individual and their loved ones.



Wellbeing and enjoyment: When family members provide food that aligns with the Individual's preferences and dietary needs, it contributes to their overall wellbeing and enjoyment of the dining experience. Enjoying a favourite dish or having access to familiar foods can evoke positive emotions and enhance the Individual's quality of life during the visit.



By collaborating with the Activity Provider and kitchen team, family members can ensure that the food provided during their visit is personalised, suitable and engaging for their loved one. This collaboration enhances the dining experience, promotes social interaction and creates a meaningful and enjoyable time together.



ACTIVITY IDEAS

ACTIVITY IDEAS - A BRIDGE OF CONNECTION

Within these next pages, you will discover a range of activity ideas that transcend the ordinary, igniting sparks of joy and connection. These activities have been designed to create memories, to bridge the generations and to weave stories that endure, we invite you to explore a world of possibilities that can turn a visit into an experience.



As we explore a wealth of activity ideas in this chapter, we invite friends and families to discover new ways of connecting, engaging and creating lasting memories with their loved ones. These ideas are not only a means of enhancing the visits but also a celebration of the enduring bonds that hold families and friendships together.



LIFE STORY IS YOUR STORY

Life Story is a vital piece of work for any individual who has moved into a care home. The time and understanding it takes varies individually. As a loved one or friend working together can have a positive outcome, as you know the individual and their memories and how to support the sharing of information. Life Story can enhance esteem as together you can reminisce about good times prompted by your conversations.

Why don't you encourage your loved one to share their story?



You will need:

- Life story book. Care providers often have their own resource which they use and will provide you with. The Alzheimer's Society has a free downloadable 'This is Me' click [HERE](#)
- Pens/pencils
- Photographs

What you do:

- Support your loved one to answer the questions already there as prompts.
- Share any information that is relevant to providing inclusive meaningful engagement and support.

Top tips:

NAPA has a resource to support Life Story work - Click [HERE](#)

Make Life Story fun and engaging by using visual prompts or positive communication such as "This was your 60th birthday party mum and you were doing the Can-Can in the kitchen and making everyone smile".

MUSIC TO MAKE THOSE MOMENTS COUNT

Music can be the key to happiness, it has the power to unlock those wonderful memories. Individuals can be brought together by music in amazing ways. In addition, it can improve mood, reduce anxiety and reduce feelings of social isolation or loneliness.

Does your loved one enjoy music? Or would you like to try to incorporate music into your visit? Your visit can be based around any singer or choice of music that is person centred to your loved one. Why not add some interactive fun to your visit?

You will need:

- Access to a music player/iPad or DVD
- Props can be anything that makes a sound such as clapping, tapping the table or box



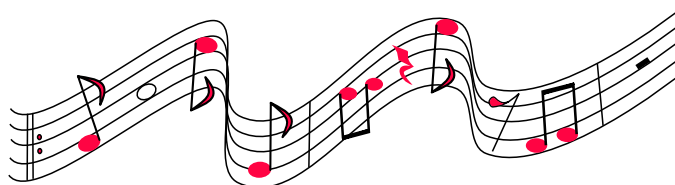
What you do:

- Choose a song together.
- Position yourself so that your loved one has a clear view of you to support the mirroring of your actions.
- Play it through selected choice of player.
- Clap along to the beat and encourage your loved one to do the same.

Top tips:

- Support and encourage a loved one who has a visual impairment by using clear, positive communication.
- It's ok to just tap away, sing or dance to the music. It's about having fun!
- Ask the activities team if they have resources to support your visit, they always have lots to share!

If you are a loved one who struggles to engage during a visit the power of music is a marvellous tool to eliminate this. Have a cup of tea and cake, play a song, it can trigger memories, instigate conversations or enhance esteem by simply making your loved one smile. This could be a great photo opportunity as well as positive keep-sake for you as a reminder or to share with your wider family.



USING MUSIC

Music can greatly enhance your visit when visiting a loved one in a care home. It has the power to evoke emotions, stimulate memories and create a meaningful connection. Here's a guide for friends and family members on incorporating music into your visit, including the importance of liaising with the Activity Provider and suggestions on where to start:

1. Importance of Liaising with the Activity Provider

- **Communicate your interest:** Inform the Activity Provider about your intention to incorporate music into your visit. They can provide valuable guidance, suggestions and support in creating a musical experience that aligns with the care home's policies and the needs of your loved one.
- **Understand guidelines:** Discuss any specific guidelines or restrictions related to music, such as permitted instruments, noise levels or scheduled activities that may affect your visit. Following the care home's guidelines ensures a smooth and enjoyable experience for everyone.



2. Explore Musical Preferences and Memories

- **Discover favourite songs and genres:** Engage your loved one in conversations about their favourite songs, genres, or artists from their past. This can help you create a personalised playlist or musical selection that resonates with their preferences.
- **Stimulate memories:** Music has a powerful effect on memory recall. Choose songs or melodies that are associated with positive memories or significant moments in your loved one's life. Listening to familiar tunes can evoke emotions and encourage meaningful connections during the visit.

3. Live Performances or Recorded Music

- **Live performances:** If suitable, consider organising live musical performances during your visit. This could involve hiring a musician, inviting local performers or even playing an instrument yourself if you have the ability. Live music can create an intimate and interactive experience, encouraging sing-alongs, clapping and engagement.
- **Recorded music:** Prepare a playlist of your loved one's favourite songs or soothing melodies to play during the visit. Use portable speakers or bring headphones if necessary. Select a range of songs that evoke different emotions and moods to create a varied and enjoyable listening experience.

USING MUSIC



4. Singing and Participatory Activities

- **Engage in singing sessions:** Singing familiar songs together can be a joyful and uplifting experience. Encourage your loved one to join in, even if they have difficulty with verbal communication. Singing can boost mood, promote relaxation and create a sense of connection.
- **Incorporate musical games or activities:** Consider interactive musical activities such as musical trivia, name-that-tune games or playing simple instruments like shakers or hand drums. These activities encourage participation, stimulate cognitive abilities and create a lively and enjoyable atmosphere.

5. Collaborate with the Activity Provider

- **Seek suggestions and resources:** Consult with the Activity Provider for suggestions on appropriate music activities, resources, or local community groups that offer musical programmes for care home Individuals. They may have access to music therapists or musicians who can further enhance the musical experience during your visit.
- **Share your plans:** Inform the Activity Provider about your musical plans and discuss any assistance or support they can provide. They may be able to provide additional instruments, sound equipment or help facilitate the logistics of the musical activities.

Remember, the primary goal is to create a comfortable and enjoyable experience for your loved one during the visit. By liaising with the Activity Provider, you can ensure that your musical efforts align with the care home's guidelines and that the visit incorporates appropriate activities that enhance the wellbeing and engagement of your loved one.

READ WITH ME

There is something wonderful about books and the powerful way you can get lost in them. They can take you on great adventures, submerging you into the story.

Did You Know?

- Reading is great for the mind, so why don't you sit and share a book with your loved one.
- Books are a wonderful way to step out of reality into a fantasy world. Hold that thought if your loved one is feeling overwhelmed or anxious. Use the power of a book as a distraction.

Does your loved one enjoy a quiet calm environment? Do they enjoy books?

Why don't you choose a book together and invite your loved one to sit and read with you?

You will need:

- Book or magazine
- Quiet and calm environment



What you do:

- Let your loved one know you would like to read to them. Starting with a page at a time and observing engagement.
- Invite your loved one to give feedback with simple questions for example:
 1. Are you enjoying it?
 2. Would you like me to continue?
 3. Would you like to read to me?
- Make a note of the page you stop on and pick it back up on your next visit.

Top tips:

Books can lead in all directions and instigate conversations. Don't be afraid to go with the flow of the topic, you may discover information you never knew before!

Use magazines for short stories and vibrant pictures.

If your loved one has a vision impairment, large print and talking books can be sourced. Ask your care home to help you. The Royal National Institute of Blind People, RNIB, has lots of free resources to support you. Click [HERE](#)

YOUR NAME, MY NAME

Names and meanings for them come from all over the world. Some children are named after famous actors while others as a tradition to keep a certain name within the family. Whatever your name is there is often a reason it was chosen.

Do you know why your loved one chose your name?

Why don't you invite your loved one to share a conversation using the questions as prompts?

WOULD THEY CHANGE THEIR NAME IF GIVEN THE CHOICE AND IF SO, WHY?

WHY DID THEY CHOOSE YOUR NAME?

DID THEY CHOOSE YOUR NAME?

IS THERE A NAME THEY DO NOT PARTICULARLY LIKE?

This topic can lead in many directions, and you could talk about family pets and their names, or grandchildren. Anything that encourages interaction and enhances esteem, emotional and social wellbeing can have a positive outcome.



Top tips:

- Life story work can support this engagement. For example, “Your friend Mary has a lovely name”. This could open a memory of Mary and their friendship and lead into beautiful conversations such as growing up or traveling with Mary.
- Do not worry if the topic you began with leads to a different one. It is often those unplanned conversations that are the most relaxed. Spontaneous engagement can be very resourceful and informative. If your visit has been an enjoyable experience, you can take that feeling with you.

COME DINE WITH ME

The dining experience is an important part of any individual's day, and it is important to create a calm and welcoming environment. We all understand the importance of good nutrition and hydration intake, but, that it is not always as straight forward as we would like. There are many factors that influence the experience such as medical and physical needs. Dining with your loved one has many positive benefits and should be encouraged where possible.

Why don't you arrange a day and time with your loved one to share a dining experience together?



Use the suggestions below as guidance.

- Make arrangements with your loved one's care home to ensure this can be facilitated.
- Decide on what experience is best for your loved one. Do they enjoy the lunch time experience the most? Or is breakfast the best time to engage? The care home will be able to support you.
- What support is required during the visit? Does your loved one require assistance?
- Engage with the activities team and see if they can set up a personal experience for you and your loved one in a more intimate area.
- If there is a celebration or special day, speak with the catering team.

Top tips:

- If informing your loved one about your visit triggers anxiety or behaviours, you could let them know when you visit and ask, "Would you like me to stay and enjoy lunch with you". If your loved one agrees it would be lovely, then it's a great spontaneous surprise for them.
- The dining experience is a great place to share conversation, especially if the food is well received! But it also allows you to share an intimate moment if you find there is a communication barrier.
- Let the care home know if your loved one has any favourite foods and if there are any family or cultural traditions to enhance their dining experience or encourage intake.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO RUMMAGE

Rummage boxes or boxes for engagement are popular resources to have within a care home. They enable not only the individuals and staff to engage, but also families and friends to access resources to support them during their visit. Often you will find them strategically placed around the care homes in areas popular with individuals and their families such as lounges. The boxes will contain a variety of items from magazines, books and creative items to reminiscence cards, memory joggers, board games and dolls. It all depends on and what items have been found to be most engaging for the individuals within the care home.

When visiting your loved one's care home don't be afraid to rummage through the boxes and take items you feel would support your visit to be meaningful.

You could set up your own rummage box person centred to your loved one. This would be a great resource to have available each time you visit.

You will need:

- Box or basket
- Items for meaningful person-centred engagement



What you do:

- You can either leave the box in your loved one room or, if you prefer, bring it with you each time you visit.
- Invite your loved one to rummage through the box and pick out an item.
- Depending on what is picked out of the box, that will then decide the engagement.



Top tips:

- If there is an item you would like to suggest being added to a rummage box in your loved one's care home, please let the team know.
- If your loved one lacks capacity to decide due to too many options, you can support them by removing some items and setting them aside. Or pick for them and show as a visual prompt.

FLOWERS FOR YOU AND ME

Flowers are often a good choice of gift when visiting your loved one in a care home. Their bright colours are pleasing on the eye and their smell can trigger memories or just simply make you smile! The use of flowers is a great creative activity and is wonderful to do together.

Why don't you enjoy an engaging flower arranging session with your loved one?

You will need:

- Flowers. These can be fresh or artificial
- Vase or suitable container
- Scissors
- Water

What you do:

- Sort your flowers and trim to size.
- Arrange in the vase.
- Display with pride!



Top tips:

- Instigate conversations by using a sensory approach through smell, touch or vision.
- Go for a walk outside together and see if there any flowers you could pick and put into a vase.
- Share memories of your garden together.



GREEN FINGERS

There are many benefits to spending time outside and spending it together doing something that is enjoyable such as planting flowers and vegetables outweighs them all! That said, we can not always rely on the weather and sometimes we need to make provision available to bring the outside in.

Do you have green fingers? Does your loved one enjoy time spent in the garden? Did they often do gardening before moving to the care home?

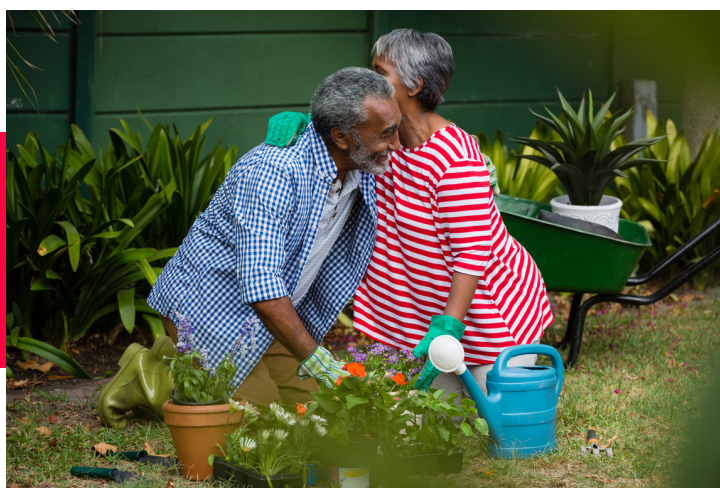
Why don't you speak to your loved one's care home and make arrangements with them on how they can support you to plant some bulbs or flowers together.

What you need:

- Bulbs, seeds or flowers
- Soil
- Area to plant
- Tools/gloves

What you do:

- Invite your loved one to spend some time with you in the garden.
- Offer the choice to plant some bulbs or seeds.
- There may already be a session advertised on the activity planner. Speak to the team on how they can best support you to join the activity with your loved one. They might be able to set aside an area where you can work one-to-one with your loved one but still have their support should you require it.



Top tips:

- Speak to the maintenance team/gardener to see what support and guidance they can offer.
- Time spent in the garden watching others or listening to the birds can be just as beneficial.
- Potting does not have to be done outside. Speak to the care home about indoor and bedside potting ideas and how they can support you.
- The Royal Horticultural Society has lots of information on their website – click [HERE](#)

LET'S HAVE A PICNIC

We all have memories of picnics at the beach, in the park and sometimes, when the weather is not so good, in our own living room! Picnics can be fun especially when they are spontaneous because you have seen that the sun is shining brightly outside. Or they can be intimate as a sign of a celebration or just simply, enjoying food and beverages together.

No matter what the reason is for a picnic they are a great way to connect with loved ones and friends.

Why don't you invite your loved to enjoy a picnic with you? You could ask the catering team at the care home to assist you with any dietary requirements and support you to source any favourites or preferred foods.

You will need:

- Picnic basket and items
- Blanket
- Food and beverages



What you do:

- Invite your loved one for a picnic. Use your own judgement to decide if you should take the ready-made picnic basket as a visual prompt to encourage engagement without the feeling of pressure to agree being added.
- Find a spot to enjoy your time together. This could be at bedside, in a lounge, sat at a table or outside.
- Set out your food and beverages and enjoy your time spent together.

Top tips:

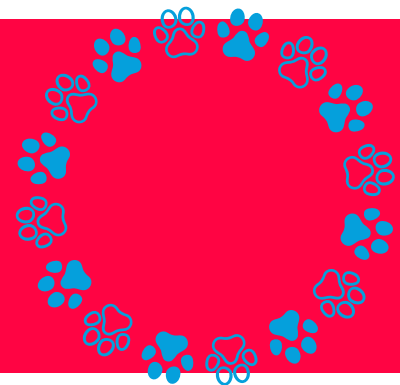
- Have gentle background music playing.
- This is a great intergenerational activity so why not invite the grandchildren along for some cake and ice-cream!

PETS

Pets can bring numerous benefits and enhance the visiting experience when visiting a loved one in a care home. Here's how pets can contribute to the visit, including their interaction with the Activity Provider.

1. Emotional Support: Pets have a unique ability to provide emotional support and comfort. Their presence can help reduce stress, anxiety and feelings of loneliness for both the Individual and the visitor. Interacting with a friendly and familiar pet can bring joy, happiness and a sense of companionship during the visit.

2. Social Connection: Pets can act as social catalysts, encouraging connections and conversations between Individuals, visitors and staff members. The presence of a pet can serve as a conversation starter and facilitate engagement, creating a positive and interactive environment during the visit.



3. Physical and Sensory Stimulation: Interacting with pets can offer physical and sensory stimulation. Petting a dog or a cat, for example, can provide a calming and therapeutic effect, lower blood pressure and promote relaxation. The tactile experience of touching or holding a pet can be particularly beneficial for Individuals with sensory impairments.

4. Reminiscence and Memory Recall: Pets often evoke memories and experiences from the past. They can trigger conversations and reminiscence, allowing Individuals to share stories and engage in meaningful interactions. This can be especially valuable for individuals with dementia or cognitive decline, as pets may elicit memories and emotions associated with past relationships with animals.



PETS

When it comes to liaising with the Activity Provider regarding pets during visits, the following considerations can be taken into account:

1. Pet Policies: Before bringing a pet for a visit, it is essential to check with the care home's policies regarding pets. Some care homes may have specific guidelines, such as size restrictions, vaccination requirements or designated visiting areas for pets. Liaising with the Activity Provider will ensure that you have the necessary information and adhere to any regulations.

2. Scheduled Visits: It is advisable to coordinate your visit with the Activity Provider to ensure that the presence of a pet aligns with the care home's schedule and other Individuals' needs. This allows the Activity Provider to prepare and create a suitable environment for the visit.

3. Safety Considerations: The Activity Provider can provide guidance on safety protocols to ensure the wellbeing of both the pet and the Individuals. This may include guidelines on leashing, hygiene practices and interactions with Individuals who may have specific sensitivities or allergies.

4. Engagement Opportunities: The Activity Provider can work collaboratively with you to incorporate pet-related activities during the visit. This may involve organizing supervised pet interactions, arranging pet therapy sessions or facilitating pet-themed discussions or reminiscence activities.

Overall, by liaising with the Activity Provider, you can ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience when bringing a pet to visit a loved one in a care home. Their involvement can help address any logistical considerations, maintain a safe environment and create meaningful interactions that benefit both the Individuals and the pets.



Meow

HERE ARE 50 ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO DO WHEN VISITING A LOVED ONE

1. Bring photo albums and reminisce about old memories
2. Play board games or card games together
3. Read books or articles aloud
4. Enjoy a picnic in the care home garden or courtyard
5. Have a mini tea party with tea and cookies
6. Bring a puzzle to work on together
7. Listen to music or play musical instruments
8. Watch a favourite movie or TV show
9. Engage in arts and crafts activities, such as painting or colouring
10. Solve crosswords or word search puzzles together

11. Take a walk around the care home premises
12. Share a meal together, either homemade or takeaway
13. Bring a pet for a visit (if the care home allows it).
14. Plant flowers or tend to a small garden together
15. Write letters or cards together for other family members or friends
16. Create a memory jar by writing down favourite memories and putting them in a jar
17. Share family recipes and bake together
18. Have a spa day with facials, manicures and pedicures
19. Bring a photo printer and print out recent photos to create a collage
20. Watch a sports event together on TV or attend a local game

21. Play a game of Bingo
22. Bring a portable karaoke machine and sing songs together
23. Make homemade crafts or decorations for the Individual's room
24. Do gentle exercises together, such as stretching
25. Write a story together, taking turns adding sentences or paragraphs
26. Organise a mini fashion show with clothes and accessories
27. Bring a laptop or tablet to show funny videos or family videos
28. Put on a puppet show or create a play
29. Bring a deck of cards and learn new card games together
30. Take photographs of the Individual and create a personalised photo calendar

HERE ARE 50 ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO DO WHEN VISITING A LOVED ONE

31. Bring a scrapbooking kit and create a scrapbook of memories
32. Share and discuss current events or interesting articles from newspapers or magazines
33. Do a DIY project, such as making a birdhouse or painting flowerpots
34. Enjoy a virtual reality game or experience
35. Arrange for a professional musician or entertainer to perform
36. Complete a series of arm chair exercises
37. Bring a portable DVD player and watch old family videos together
38. Organise a family talent show or showcase talents individually
39. Take turns reading aloud from a favourite book or novel
40. Bring a photo booth with props and take fun pictures together



41. Create personalised playlists of the Individual's favourite songs
42. Build a model car, plane or ship together
43. Have a themed dress-up day, such as a retro or favourite movie character theme
44. Bring a tablet and play interactive games together
45. Write and perform a song or rap about the Individual's life or family history
46. Bring a telescope and stargaze together (if there's an outdoor space available)
47. Play charades or act out favourite film scenes
48. Create a family tree or a timeline of the Individual's life.
49. Have a picnic indoors on a rainy day with a blanket and favourite snacks
50. Make homemade greeting cards or gift tags for upcoming occasions.



SUPPORT SERVICES FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

<p style="text-align: center;">Age UK</p> <p>A charity with a network of local branches that aims to support older people through companionship and advice. It has a befriending service, wellbeing programmes and local health and care services.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0800 678 160 ageuk.org.uk</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Carers Trust</p> <p>Provides support and information for carers in England through its network of carers' centres.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0300 772 9600 https://carers.org/</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Age Cymru</p> <p>The national branch of Age UK for Wales. They support older people living in Wales.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0300 303 4498 ageuk.org.uk/cymru</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Carers Trust Cymru</p> <p>Provides support and information for carers in Wales through its network of carers' centres.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0300 772 9702 https://carers.org/around-the-uk-our-work-in-wales/our-work-in-wales</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Age NI</p> <p>The national branch of Age UK for Northern Ireland. They support older people living in Northern Ireland.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0808 808 7575 ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Carers Trust Scotland</p> <p>Provides support and information for carers in Scotland through its network of carers' centres.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0300 772 7701 https://carers.org/our-work-in-scotland/our-work-in-scotland</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Age Scotland</p> <p>The national branch of Age UK for Scotland. They support older people living in Scotland.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0800 12 44 222 ageuk.org.uk/scotland</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Carers UK</p> <p>Provides expert advice, information and support to carers.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0808 808 7777 Northern Ireland: 028 9043 9843 Scotland: 0141 371 065 Wales: 029 2081 1370 https://www.carersuk.org/</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Beacon</p> <p>Beacon provides free advice on NHS Continuing Healthcare, and it can help prepare you if you have an assessment for Continuing Healthcare.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0345 548 0300 beaconhc.co.uk</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Crossroads Care NI</p> <p>Crossroads provides support for carers in Northern Ireland who care for an older, frail, ill or disabled friend or family member.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">028 9181 4455 https://www.crossroadscare.co.uk/</p>

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

<p>Care Information Scotland A telephone and website service providing information about care services for older people living in Scotland. 0800 011 3200 careinfoscotland.scot</p>	<p>Health and Social Care Northern Ireland Information on health and social care services in Northern Ireland. Search for a local doctor or other health professional. online.hscni.net</p>
<p>Centre for Independent Living NI This website has lots of useful fact sheets to help people live independently. They also provide an advice service. 028 9064 8546 cilni.org</p>	<p>Independent Age Care and support for people as they get older. Includes a befriending service. 0800 319 6789 independentage.org</p>
<p>Crossroads Caring Scotland Provides support services to help people live independently at home in Scotland. 0141 226 3793 crossroads-scotland.co.uk</p>	<p>MIND Supports people with their mental health through information, advice and local services. 0300 123 3393 mind.org.uk</p>
<p>Dementia Carers Count Provides courses for carers of people with dementia. Courses include practical tips on caring, looking after your wellbeing, and offer the chance to meet other carers. 0203 5400 700 https://dementiacarers.org.uk</p>	<p>Minders Keepers An organisation which offers house-sitting and pet-sitting services if you're away for an extended period of time. For example, if you need to go into a hospital or hospice. 01763 262 102 minders-keepers.co.uk</p>
<p>FirstStop Free service helping older people, their families and carers in England get the help or care they need to live as independently and comfortably as possible. 0800 377 7070 firststopcareadvice.org.uk</p>	<p>Paying for Care Find out how much you can expect to pay for care in the UK, and for how long, by answering simple questions. You can also contact an advisor using an online form. payingforcare.org</p>

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Perennial

Advice, support and financial assistance for people working in or retired from horticulture.

0800 093 8510
perennial.org.uk

Social Care Institute for Excellence

Works to improve the lives of people using care services in the UK. It can also help you with finding an independent mental capacity advocate (IMCA) in Wales and England.

0203 840 4040
scie.org.uk

UK Homecare Association

The professional association for homecare providers.

020 8661 8188
ukhca.co.uk

National Activity Providers Association

Resources to support activity and engagement.

0800 1585503
supportline@napa-activities.co.uk

