

RIGHTS

Made Real in Care Homes

Recognising, respecting and responding:

*promoting human rights
for residents of care
homes in Scotland*

Bankhall Court, Govanhill

Introduction

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Made Real in Care Homes

Rights Made Real in Care Homes is an exciting project, funded by the Life Changes Trust and delivered in partnership with Scottish Care and the University of the West of Scotland.

The overall aim is to improve the quality of life of those living in a care home and to help support staff to not only recognise, but embed, human rights in their everyday practice.

The funding supported the development of seven creative and innovative projects and ways of working that will benefit people living with dementia and show others how to make rights real in care homes. All partners in the project are committed to ensuring that older people, including those living with dementia, have a right to maintain strong connections with family and friends, with their communities and with the things that matter to them regardless of where they live.

The Life Changes Trust invested £135,000 to support these seven projects across Scotland to promote the inclusion and participation of care home residents with dementia in a meaningful way. Scotland's new health and social care standards state that everyone in Scotland deserves to receive the care and support that is right for them. Each of the funded projects was designed to show how these standards can work in practice.

In order to showcase good practice in the care homes, particularly in relation to observing and promoting people's human rights, we have produced a collection of stories from the projects which show that adopting a human-rights based approach is not something people working in care homes should view with anxiety, but instead recognise that it is about building on many of the attitudes they currently possess and activities they currently practise.

The overall aim of the project and the stories is to inform and encourage workers in care homes across Scotland in their efforts to meet the new health and social care standards and provide care that recognises human rights, promotes people's dignity and demands only the highest-quality level of service.

This story is from Bankhall Court, Govanhill

Engage me, enable me, empower me

Bankhall Court, Govanhill

Bankhall Court, a dementia residential care home in the Govanhill area of Glasgow, is unusual in that it is arranged over five floors with a conservatory on top. But it also stands out for the ambition of its residents who are not inclined to be restricted by any cognitive impairment. Running a 5k, attending the opera, visiting a safari park, dropping into the pub – activities at Bankhall Court are designed to suit individuals' interests and to give their life real meaning.

Susan Glen, the home's project manager, says Bankhall Court has been on a journey. Before receiving a £20,000 grant through the Rights Made Real in Care Homes project, budget and resource constraints meant there were limited opportunities for residents to feel part of the community. Activities were geared more to groups than individuals and some residents rarely went out. *'It made me really quite sad,'* Susan says.

A first step in embedding more of a human rights approach to care and support was the introduction of one-page profiles for everyone, staff included, with the aim of pairing key workers more closely with particular residents.

'The profiles helped us bring likeminded people together – staff and residents who had similar interests, were on the same wavelength, had the same sense of humour, the same interests.' says Susan.



Some colleagues were wary at first, she recalls. *'It didn't sit very well with them and they asked why they should share personal information.'*

'So I took my profile to a staff meeting, read it out and said, "I'm not telling you anything you don't know about me – but you can tune in to what makes me tick".'

And then they got it, they understood.

'It's not as though we were asking for their bank details – it's more about knowing that family is important to them, or they always need a coffee in the morning, or they don't like to be woken before 8am on days they're not working.'

Bankhall Court team leader Kristine Douglas adds: *'The profiles are simply about getting to know the finer details about someone. My profile is about my husband, my three children and my dog, and how they make me happy – and how cake and tea is the way forward when I'm stressed!'*

Another development was to involve residents in the recruitment of staff. *'We felt it was important,'* says Susan. *'Although it wasn't something we'd done before, our residents have the right to voice an opinion about who would best support them, help them feel involved and included.'*

'And the residents participated really well in the process. They asked questions and gave feedback at the end, and that was really nice to see. We're going to keep doing it and will ask more of them to become involved.'

Creating Conversations, an approach pioneered by dementia specialists working with people with the condition and their carers, has also helped Bankhall Court shift towards a more rights-focused philosophy.

Part of the charity Artlink Central and now a social enterprise, Creating Conversations aims to enhance the lives of those with dementia and anyone connected to them through communication and activity kits that help overcome any barriers. Tested in care homes, NHS wards and mental health units, Creating Conversations products include a tablecloth designed with images that help access memories, stimulate engagement and strengthen relationships.

'Our tablecloth is outdoors-based so, for example, it has little flowers on it,' Susan explains. The cloth and the conversations it stimulated has led to other things. Bankhall Court now has its own roof garden up in that fifth-floor conservatory where residents can grow their own produce, an initiative that helped the home win a Food for Life Served Here bronze accreditation from the Soil Association.

*Kristine says: **'We were trying to teach residents about where their food comes from and to help them grow their own. They were really involved in the roof garden, they felt included and they really like it.'***

A subtle but equally important factor in Bankhall Court's success has been more careful consideration of communication and of the language used to encourage residents to express their wishes and desires.

'The use of language, and how language can be perceived, is a big thing in our project,'

Kristine says.

An example she cites is the word 'aspirations'.

'I was often talking about 'aspirations' and 'long-term goals' but it just didn't sit right. If I said to a resident, 'What's your aspiration?', they would just look at me and I thought, 'Right, they're getting the same feeling as I am'.

The home's lounge even featured a painting on a wall of a 'tree of aspirations', which Kristine asked to be painted over because she disliked it so much.

In conversations with residents, 'aspiration' became *'if I could, I would ...'*, a phrase they readily understood and which meant much more to them. It also gave insight into attainable objectives such as a visit to Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall, rather than outlining long-term, possibly unobtainable goals.

Some very practical changes brought immense reward for particular residents. One man, for example, wanted internet access so he could follow sport and feel more connected to his family.

But the building's unusual layout made a connection difficult. Potential solutions were tried but all proved unsuccessful. Undaunted, staff persevered and eventually technicians were able to *'run wires all over the building'*, as Kristine puts it, and an internet connection was established.

'I would have paid a million pounds to see his face when he was finally able to watch his sport channel on TV,' Susan says. 'He was just so delighted.'

Ensuring activity is tailored to an individual, rather than focused on a group, is central to the home's approach now.

*Susan says: **'Some of our guys love doing 5ks. Even though they all have dementia, there are different stages and different types of dementia. It doesn't mean they lose the ability to use their legs. I'm not saying we'll run a 10k next but if someone wants to do it as a project, we'll definitely try it.'***

Of course, some activities are not without risk – running a 5k is one example, as is going to a swing park, which some residents tried, where they also descended a slide. Susan acknowledges that potential dangers must be assessed but adds: *'Sometimes, benefits outweigh the risks.'* Photographs of laughing Bankhall Court residents on the swings and slide suggest she has a point.

Kristine concludes with a maxim that embodies the Rights Made Real in Care Homes philosophy:

'Engage me, enable me, empower me to live well with dementia.' – Kristine

Bankhall Court has taken that philosophy and, in partnership with residents and families, turned it into life-affirming action.

Rights secured:

✓ **Right to liberty and security**

Article 5, European Convention on Human Rights

✓ **"I can maintain and develop my interests, activities and what matters to me in the way that I like."**

Health and social care standards, 2.22

✓ **"I make informed choices and decisions about the risks I take in my daily life and am encouraged to take positive risks which enhance the quality of my life."**

Health and Social Care Standards, 2.24

✓ **"I know who provides my care and support on a day to day basis and what they are expected to do. If possible, I can have a say on who provides my care and support."**

Health and Social Care Standards, 3.11

✓ **"I... can choose to grow, cook and eat my own food where possible."**

Health and Social Care Standards, 1.38

