

RIGHTS

Made Real in Care Homes

Recognising, respecting and responding:

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

Jenny's Well, Paisley

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 Jenny's Well, Paisley

Focusing on abilities, not disabilities

Jenny's Well, Paisley

Promoting someone's human rights in a care home setting requires more than just actions. It needs to build from a mindset that values people's rights to make choices, even if that may present risks.

'Talking about human rights usually means we are also talking about risk-taking,' says Nicola Dow, deputy manager of Jenny's Well, a 54-bed care home in Paisley for people who are blind or partially sighted.

'Many staff tend to be risk-averse. We're trying to change their mindset so they don't consider a resident wanting to use a hammer to put nails in a bit of wood as a risk to the person's safety, but rather an expression of his right to take a risk. The resident would be building stuff if he was at home – why should that stop just because he's in a care home? Residents are people. They have the right to make that decision and be confident to do it with appropriate support.'

– Nicola

Royal Blind, who run the home, used the opening of Jenny's Well to seize the opportunity to encourage staff to rethink care approaches, as head of care for Royal Blind, Morag Francis, explains:

'When we opened Jenny's Well in 2017, it was a completely new building and a completely new staff team. Staff came from lots of different places. Many had been working in task-oriented cultures that focus on routine. Our aim was to develop a person-centred, enabling approach that focuses on what people can do, rather than what they cannot do. The focus then is on ability, rather than disability.'



The home set up a project that aimed to promote human rights and encourage a person-centred approach by focusing on activities for residents.

'We wanted to work with residents who are vision impaired and have dementia to ensure that any activities they are involved in are chosen by them,' Morag explains. *'The aim was to offer a wide range of options based on the residents' preferences and which would enhance their lives in ways that are important to them.'*

The project has enabled Morag and the team to take the care home forward in the positive way intended.

'Having the opportunity to take part in this project has been brilliant,' she says. *'It's helped support us to get the team going in the direction we want to go in. We have 90 staff and very few, if any, had experience of working with people with vision impairment before Jenny's Well. It was quite a steep learning curve, but the focus of the project has helped us get there.'*

Ensuring older people have a voice in decisions about their care and support is a core principle of the work of Royal Blind. The project in Jenny's Well was taken forward by two meaningful-activities assistants, who designed activities programmes based on discussions and evaluations with residents. But progress was never going to be straightforward.

'All our residents are blind or partially-sighted, and around 70% also live with dementia,' Morag says. 'It can be a huge challenge to make sure people who have a vision impairment and dementia get involved as much as possible in activities, so our initial approach was to encourage them to understand that they can still do things.'

Questionnaires were passed among residents, staff and families and two focus groups were held with residents.

'What was really interesting from the questionnaire responses was that families and staff viewed activity as big-ticket items – concerts, outings, big events. But for the residents, activity meant someone to be with, to do things with and to pass the time of day with. That's what's important to them. So we had to start getting that message across to families and to the staff as well.'

- Morag

‘Staff thought there wasn’t a lot of activity going on in the home,’ Morag continues. ‘But from the residents’ perspective, there was. If someone was in the resident’s room, spending time with them and helping to pick their clothes for the next day, that was seen as activity. Trying to get that message across, though, has been quite challenging.’

Residents’ ideas from the focus groups were taken up by the activity assistants and absorbed into the programmes. It became clear quite early, though, that ‘exercise’ was not top of the residents’ list of potential activities.

‘In the first focus group we did, nobody wanted to do any exercise at all,’ Morag says. ‘As soon as we mentioned exercise – absolutely not! But they wanted to go dancing, bowling, walking and gardening, so exercise was covered in a different way – we just didn’t use the word exercise!’

A range of projects sprang from the focus group. Two of the main ones were developing a reminiscence room and setting up a bar.

‘Reminiscence is quite important to the residents – they like to talk about the old days,’ Morag says.

Football was a particularly big topic for reminiscence, and the home used contacts with St Mirren Football Club to secure some donations that have been placed in the reminiscence room.

And the bar is open.

'The bar serves a dual purpose,' Morag says. 'First, it's a hub where people can meet and chat over a drink. Some of the families work for a large drinks company and have been able to donate drinks for the residents.

'Second, we've turned it into a bit of a games room. The residents were involved in that part of the project, and we've listened and acted on the advice they gave us.'

A remarkable turnaround in attitudes to exercise was found at the second focus group, as Morag explains.

'We went from a group of people who didn't really want to exercise to a group of people who were very keen to get involved. So the activities were turned around to be more exercise-based. We've now got footsteps around a central area that the residents can follow – the number of yards walked is marked up, so some competition has emerged over who can walk the furthest.'

'Some of the residents also did a 5k walk a couple of weeks ago. That helped to bring the community in – a big part of our project is to involve the community as much as possible.'

So where is the project at this time, and where is it heading?

'The residents have been listened to, they are seeing their thoughts turned into actual activities, and staff are getting a bit braver,'

Morag says.

'We try not to have absolute set timetables. It's about going with the flow a little and if the residents decide, "We don't actually want a quiz today, can we do something else?" , we do something else. There's no rule book – we're constantly adapting and changing.

'One of our challenges for the future is trying to get families more involved,' Morag continues. 'There's a lot of things we would like to do, but we need families' support. And while many like the ideas, some are still quite hesitant about joining in. That's something we're going to start tackling over the next year.'

Nicola feels that while challenges do remain, the home, the staff and the residents have come a long way in a short space of time.

'It was a big step for the residents and the team to move forward, but they've done an absolutely brilliant job,' she says. 'One of our proudest achievements is that we've made a fully functioning well. It has been sanded, varnished and stained with the help of the residents and they are absolutely beaming with pride. It's one of the very big things in Jenny's Well that we're really happy to be part of.'

Rights secured:

- ✓ **Right to liberty and security**
Article 5, European Convention on Human Rights, with Article 14 – right secured without discrimination.
- ✓ **“I get the most out of life because the people and organisation who support and care for me have an enabling attitude and believe in my potential.”**
Health and Social Care Standards, 1.3
- ✓ **“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 am recognised as an expert in my own experiences, needs and wishes.”**
Health and Social Care Standards, 1.9

