

RIGHTS

Made Real in Care Homes

Recognising, respecting and responding:

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

Tigh a 'Rudha, Tiree

Introduction

RIGHTS

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 Tigh a 'Rudha, Tiree

A garden for the isles

Tigh a 'Rudha, Tiree



It seems strange that residents of a care home in Tiree, one of the most beautiful of Scotland's islands, should not have an outdoor space from which they can safely enjoy the outdoors and all its splendours. But that is how it was for residents of Tigh a 'Rudha, a small local authority care home for older people and the only care home on the island.

Tigh a' Rudha (Scots Gaelic for House on the Point) sits in a beautiful spot with spectacular sea views. But the windows in most of the rooms are too high for people in wheelchairs to see out of, and the main lounge faces not the sea, but the car park.

This was a situation Jane MacDonald, assistant social care worker attached to the care home, was determined to rectify.

Inspired by older people's right to have access to a garden and safe, independently accessible outdoor space enshrined in the new Health and Social Care Standards, she made a successful application to the Rights Made Real in Care Homes funding to get things sorted.

'We wanted to enable people with dementia to exercise their right to access a garden,' she says. 'The aim was to ensure that people with dementia would have the freedom to choose to go outside when they wished and would experience the physical and psychological health benefits of spending time outside. We hoped that people with dementia, whose world so often shrinks, would feel that the garden had significantly expanded their world.'

Jane recognised that the care home residents, most of whom had lived all or most of their lives on the island, would have led predominantly outdoor lives when they were younger. She wanted to help them maintain or re-establish those connections with the outdoors.

Staff at the home had done their best to create an outdoor sitting area for residents, but it was not really doing justice to the surrounding landscape.

'The lounge has a patio door and we had created a small pavement area outside,' Jane explains. 'But although we did our best to brighten it up with tubs and planters, it was never in good repair and was separated from the car park only by a small kerb. It wasn't safe for residents to access on their own. And while it could be sunny in the afternoon, it lacked proper shelter, which meant that it was vulnerable to the prevailing southerly winds. We could only use it on still days, and you don't get many of those on Tiree!'

Jane's plan was to take this sitting area together with an under-used part of the car park and create a sheltered and attractive sensory garden suitable for people with dementia. In designing it, she followed the guidelines for creating dementia-friendly outdoor spaces from the University of Stirling's Dementia Services Development Centre.

'The garden is being paved to form a safe and level surface with the minimum possible threshold between the lounge and the garden,' Jane says. *'We'll have seating areas and space for wheelchairs, with a wide path looping around a central raised bed and back to the door.'*

'The raised bed is being filled with plants chosen for their scent, colour and different leaf shapes and textures. There will be calming greenery but also more stimulating colours and scents, as well as plants that sway in the breeze. We're choosing plants that thrive on Tiree and will make sure we don't include anything potentially harmful.'

The far end of the bed will have a gentle water feature flowing over pebbles, creating an interesting stopping place on the journey round the garden. Wheelchair-accessible planters will be placed along one of the boundaries to encourage residents to grow salads, flowers, strawberries and herbs.

And the residents and their families are not the only ones who will benefit – the local wildlife will thrive too.

'We've created a wildflower meadow beyond the garden boundary, sown with flowers and grasses native to Tiree,' Jane says. *'This makes good use of what would otherwise be a dead space once the garden is fully constructed and will also provide a habitat for wildlife, including the great yellow bumble bee, a native species of Tiree that is now endangered.'*

Residents and their families have had their say on the design of the garden, as have staff.

'The staff pointed out that when residents have been able to sit outside, they've enjoyed being able to see who is going in and out of the building, who is passing by on the road, and watching the sheep and cattle on the machair,' Jane explains. 'We've therefore, asked for "windows" or lower areas to be incorporated into the garden fence so that people can see what's going on. Similar "windows" will frame views out to the sea.'

Securing the funding was just the first part of a long process of bringing the garden dream to reality.

'There was, and is, so much to consider.' Jean says. *'The safety elements, the costs and the natural elements are but three. We of course have done everything we can to plan safety into every phase, and the budget is being monitored constantly, but there isn't much we can do about the weather! We painted the central plant bed, for instance, only to find it rained before the paint dried – so it will need to be done all over again.'*

'The garden is nearly, nearly finished, but this is why I've given up on predicting completion dates!'

The largest of the two raised beds has been planted and the wildflower meadow has been sown. Pavers are now going down and a new level-threshold patio door has been ordered, after which the access ramp can be completed and the gates hung.

The first planting day caused great excitement in the home.

'I did the planting with a friend whose mother, who is a keen gardener, is a resident,' Jane says. 'We opened the patio door while we were working to give residents and staff a sense of what it might look like once the garden is finished. It meant people could feel included in the process and my friend could discuss with her mother what plants we were putting in and where.'

The idea of inclusion was further extended through workshops Jane organised for staff to enable them to make some attractive objects for the garden.

'I think staff members enjoyed the chance to create things and also the opportunity to contribute something to the garden,' she says. 'We made a combination of word tiles in English and Gaelic collected from a previous 'Tiree in Your Words' community project and from a word-collection box at the home, and also some tactile, decorative shapes. The idea is to group the shapes at intervals along the rim of the central bed. If we have any left over, we may mount them on small boards or put them in a little cloth bag for people to touch as everyone – staff and residents alike – seems to enjoy handling the samples. They are so beautiful and tactile.'

Jane is conscious, though, that while several residents are or were keen gardeners, not everyone is interested in plants and flowers. She therefore has shifted her thinking towards alternative uses for the outdoor space.

'I was looking at my own garden and realised that I have got old floats, a lifebelt, creels and other objects I've picked up on the beach dotted around, as have many gardens on the island,' she says. 'We could include some of these in our garden – these artifacts would mean something to residents and would maybe prompt memories. This is just one of the ways in which people might like the garden to develop.'

Because Tiree is a small and geographically isolated island community, people with dementia who live there can lack access to many of the services and groups available to people in larger communities or on the mainland. Residents are close to their families and communities but have fewer opportunities to participate in the kinds of group activities and other creative pastimes that might lead to a richer and more fulfilling life. Jane and her colleagues hope the garden will go some way to filling those gaps.

'We hope that creating the dementia-friendly sensory garden will help people to re-engage with the outdoor world that once was so important to them, to use the outdoor space to spend time with family, friends and the wider community, and to be able once again to experience some of the wonderful sights of our beautiful island.'

Rights secured:

✓ **Right to liberty and security**

Article 5, European Convention on Human Rights

✓ **“I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors.”**

Health and Social Care Standards, 1.25

✓ **“If I live in a care home, I can use a private garden.”**

Health and Social Care Standards, 5.23

✓ **“I receive and understand information and advice in a format or language that is right for me.”**

Health and Social Care Standards, 2.9

✓ **“I can use an appropriate mix of private and communal areas, including accessible outdoor space, because the premises have been designed or adapted for high quality care and support.”**

Health and Social Care Standards, 5.1

