



Relatives and Friends of the care Homes Welcome pack

August 2021

Welcome

Since March 2020, as the global pandemic took hold and the various lockdown restrictions and measures came into place, undoubtedly taking their toll on all of us. But for care homes and their staff, the virus imposed continuous and often almost unbearable, multiple stressful pressures. Time – both the lack of it and the way it can hang heavily on any person who is isolated if they must be, has been highlighted and heightened by COVID19. Understandable anxieties, including the footfall from outside agencies and how to protect both residents and staff, have been a continual worry and challenge for care homes.

As residents' families, you have experienced physical and emotional separation from each other, a disconnection of relationships, love and support for a sustained amount of time – in most cases, well over a year. As families and relatives, you will have experienced a sudden void in your lives where the person used to be and all that went with loving and caring for them. Maintaining and enabling regular contact between you and your relative/s living in a care home is vital for theirs and your health and wellbeing.

We want to help you to restore your relationships. This project aims to help reconnect relationships between families, relatives and care home staff and support their ongoing growth, going forward.

The pandemic has focused attention on human engagement as a truly essential aspect of good care and wellbeing, sadly missing during the first national lockdown and onwards. All families, residents, staff and managers have struggled to cope with the emotional strain of separation and anxiety that has inevitably resulted.

With 1,077 care homes in Wales, a national approach was needed to help establish a safe volunteering framework for care homes that is supported by all stakeholders, delivers consistent high quality and records the positive impact on residents, relatives, staff and the volunteers themselves.

It's time-consuming and practically challenging for care homes to organise visits in a fair and effective way. Having available staff to manage socially-distanced family visiting or to support residents to connect via the telephone and the internet can be a challenge when care home staff have so many – and increased priorities and responsibilities.

This 2021 Welsh Government funded pilot project is a partnership between Age Cymru and WCVA, care homes and volunteers.

It's hoped that care homes like the one involved in the pilot you visit, will be well-supported by volunteers and you. We also hope it can be sustained in the longer term beyond COVID, for everyone's mutual benefit by invigorating the relationships between the care home management, staff and you and your family. We hope the project will help to promote a culture of greater openness and bring new and different skills to complement those provided by the paid workforce. For the volunteers one of our aims is to provide career-related experience and personal fulfillment.

Thank you for supporting this Age Cymru Volunteering in Care Homes Pilot Project – which, without you, couldn't happen. The home your loved one lives in has a vital role to play. The volunteers are providing a real opportunity to make a positive difference to the people who live, work in and visit your care home. We look forward to gathering your feedback, which is an essential part of the initiative.

If you require any further information, please contact:

Zoe Newland, Volunteer Support Officer Carehomevolunteer@agecymru.org.uk

Suzy Webster, Care Home Network Manager Suzy.webster@agecymru.org.uk

Sarah Reed, Dementia Specialist Sarah.reed@manyhappyreturns.org

Pilot project locations and participating care homes

Location	Care Home
Aberdare	Ysguborwen Care Home Ysguborwen Aberdare RCT CF44 0AX
Anglesey	Glan Rhos Nursing Home Glan Rhos Brynsiencyn Llanfairpwllgwyngyll Isle of Anglesey LL61 6TZ
Cardiff	Llys Cyncoed 127 Cyncoed Road Cardiff CF23 6AF
Neath	Plas Bryn Rhosyn Care Home Heol Illtyd Neath Neath Port Talbot SA10 7SE
Newport	Capel Grange Care Home Capel Crescent Newport Gwent NP20 2FG

Powys	St. Nicholas House Ltd Care Home Church Stoke Montgomery Powys SY15 6AF
Port Talbot	Llys y Seren Moor Road Aberavon Port Talbot SA12 7BJ
Port Talbot	Ty Nant Tynant Lane Cymmer Port Talbot SA13 3NR

The role of volunteers and what they are doing:

- Meeting and greeting you /your family and other visitors – as a representative of the home and its staff
- Guiding you and other visitors to any facilities, if needed
- Wearing simple safety PPE, training for which and relevant safeguarding is being provided by the care home
- Assisting you with LFTs, where applicable / if necessary
- Checking LFT results on NHS phone Apps, where applicable
- Filling in details of all visiting guests for the Track and Trace log, where applicable
- Knowing where the visiting area/s are and how to get to them
- Guiding you through the home to the garden, pod or room, as appropriate
- Developing relationships with you and other regular visitors
- Logging basic admin information for the care home
- Completing a simple record for each visit for reference

The profile of volunteers

We've sought volunteers who are personable, friendly, well organised, responsible and capable of representing a warm welcome.

The project offers them opportunities to gain a greater understanding of how care homes work and insights into some of the stresses that families and friends cope with. It is hoped

that they will contribute to the life of the home, acquiring and learning new social and communication skills, while developing their empathic skills, for mutual benefit.

Establishing a routine for visits

Volunteers have been asked to

1. try to take responsibility for keeping themselves well-organised
2. make sure they know their way around the home
3. ensure that they are fluent in all the necessary information that you might require
4. be aware of any parking issues
5. take ownership. They are asked to greet all visitors warmly as though you are their own guests. As a regular visitor, we ask volunteers to take an interest in you and your lives, in order to develop relationships with you
6. ensure that they take any information provided from the LFTs correctly (where applicable)
7. fill in any necessary paperwork neatly so that the care home can use it if necessary
8. be aware of and sensitive to other things that might be going on at the home
9. remember that if wearing a mask, it helps to smile broadly and speak slowly and clearly
10. end visits by encouraging your feedback about your visit. We want to gather as much information from you as you are prepared to share.

What we have told the care homes

Broadly speaking, ideally, we would like the project volunteers to become a regular extension of their team. We have stressed the importance of staff at the home knowing about the care home's involvement in the pilot project, to ensure that they are able to welcome the volunteers and understand their part in it.

Please remember that our volunteers may need a little understanding

Many of the volunteers will know little or nothing about care homes or the way they work. They may have had little or no contact with anyone living with dementia. They may have had limited knowledge or experience of older people and their needs. The volunteers have been alerted to the fact that they may find some experiences distressing. Your re-assurance for them, if required, is vital if we are to maintain their interest, commitment and resilience.

Check-ins with the Project Leads

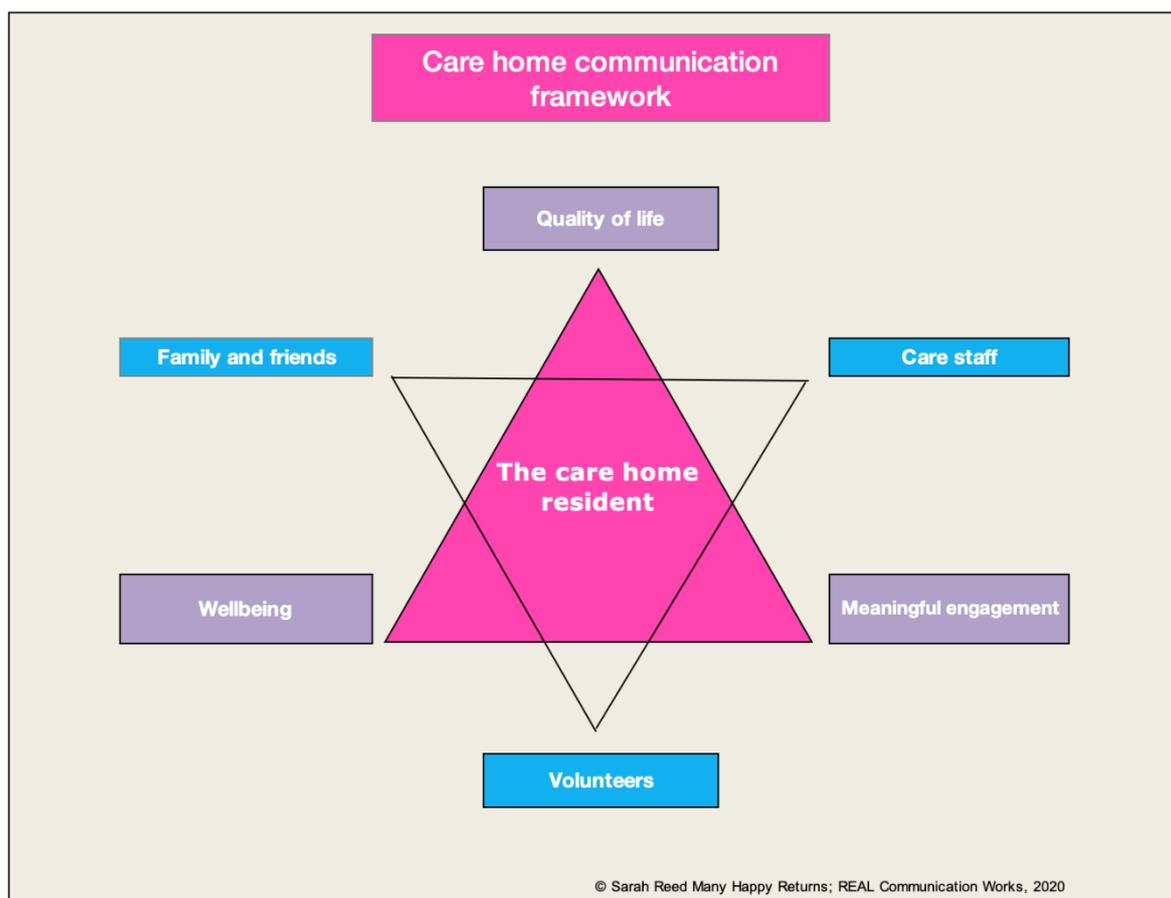
We will check in with the volunteers and care homes on a regular basis, to learn about the progress of the initiative and its impact on the home, the staff, the residents and you. We welcome your feedback if you would like to share, as it is a vital tool to move this project forward.

Communicating with volunteers

We are committed to the success of this project and have spent considerable time recruiting suitable volunteers, so we are keen to retain their engagement and enthusiasm for as long as possible! We will be monitoring the project through feedback sessions with them.

We recognise the possibility that during this time of COVID, volunteers may stay in their roles for shorter periods of time than in the past. We want to celebrate whatever time/talents they provide and hope you will be able to do the same.

Communication for volunteers with residents and families



A care home 'team' can be likened to a six-point star, representing everyone who is part of it. Being the most important, residents are at the centre of everything, surrounded by their needs (quality of life, wellbeing and meaningful engagement).

and those who contribute to that lived experience: staff, families and friends – and now, volunteers.

During the pilot, volunteers are very likely to encounter people living with dementia. In the induction and guidance, we have highlighted that dementia is a complex health problem – that a person with dementia may display a number of symptoms that have affected their memory, perception, behaviour, language and personality.

We have stressed the importance of relationships in the wellbeing of any person and those living with dementia – as well as those caring for them and their families. Volunteers have received preliminary guidance on connecting and communicating well with a person with dementia, including sensory approaches.

However, some volunteers will have little or no experience of the relationships between care staff and residents, nor the sometimes complex relationships for families of residents living in the care home. It's likely that few volunteers will have ever been inside a care home and of course, none will have been into one during COVID19. We want them to really enjoy their time in this project.

It's important to recognise that they may find certain aspects of their volunteering experiences unnerving or troubling. We know well how dementia can affect a person's behaviour, but volunteers, especially those who are younger, might be less aware of it and how it impacts a person. The participating care homes will be sensitive to this intergenerational issue and provide reassurance to help promote the success of the project.

Age Cymru – Ambition

The agenda for Age Cymru is broad, but to ensure we maximise the impact of our efforts we will be focussed. We have identified four goals to encompass the change we will drive to create an age friendly Wales.

1. Rights and participation

In an age friendly Wales we have the information and support we need to feel empowered to exercise our rights and to participate in all areas of society.

2. Community

We have meaningful and purposeful relationships; the transport we need to get out and about and we can live without environmental or social barriers preventing our inclusion.

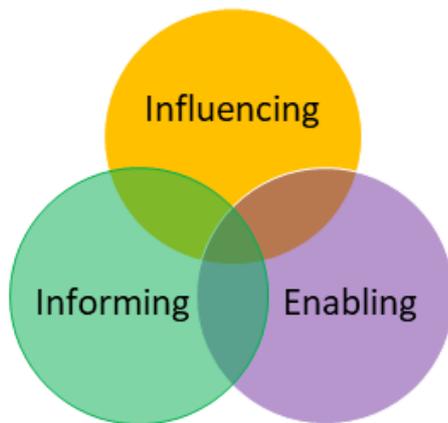
3. Well-being

We have access to the care and support we need to for our wellbeing and to age as actively as we are able.

4. Financial inclusion We have enough money to meet our needs and have a good quality of life.

Our strategy is to create the conditions where older people are able to live well by

- **Influencing** – campaigning for the changes that are needed to improve the lives of older people.
- **Informing**- strengthening our role as the place to go for people who need help as we provide accurate, trusted information and advice.
- **Enabling** - creating the conditions for sustainable services, whether that is through working with our local partners to develop national approaches for service delivery, like I&A or raising funds for projects to be delivered.



To underpin our organisation and ensure we remain fit for purpose, we will also

- Engage older people in their diversity to ensure we respond to the range of needs, wishes and experiences
- Develop volunteering opportunities to provide opportunities for older people to participate and to help us deliver our ambition
- Generate income to support us achieve our aspiration for an age friendly Wales.

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