

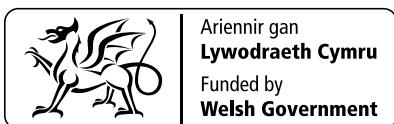


Supporting the wellbeing of older care home residents

A toolkit

How to improve the wellbeing of care home residents by putting them at the centre of their care.

 agecymru.wales/carehomes



My home life.
Wales

 **age Cymru**

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Background

Age Cymru has created this toolkit to bring together helpful resources to enable care homes, families, friends and residents to create the ideal environment for supporting wellbeing.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 defines well-being as a person who is healthy, happy, and comfortable with their life and what they do. It also includes; feeling safe and protected, being able to learn new things, having personal dignity, and being protected from abuse and neglect.

This toolkit is informed by conversations with 17 residents and 48 professionals across 20 care homes, five local authorities and one health board and draws on a huge wealth of knowledge and experience.

This toolkit recognises a relationship-centred approach, where [research shows that people with more social connection live longer, happier and healthier lives.](#)¹ It's written for care home staff, as well as friends, families and residents.

It follows the Senses Framework principles of security, belonging, continuity, purpose, significance and achievement as important for staff, residents and their families to achieve an enriched environment of care.



How to use the toolkit

Care homes vary greatly across Wales, catering to a wide variety of resident needs. The way that they operate also varies, with different staffing structures and levels, and access to a different range of resources. Therefore, not everything in this toolkit will be applicable to every care home, but we are confident that every care home will find something useful within its pages.



This toolkit can be used by all care home staff, family, friends and residents and aims to provide resources, ideas and share the best practice gathered from care homes across Wales. It's divided into four sections:

- **Transition:** Feeling welcome
- **Meaningful activities:** Making someone feel at home
- **Purpose, significance and achievement**
- **A good ending:** What matters most

In each section you will find links and search terms for useful resources, a tool to try and 'Hints and Tips' which are broken down into separate sections for staff, family and friends, and residents.

1 Characterizing the mechanisms of social connection
Mauricio R. Delgado¹ Dominic S. Fareri² · Luke J. Chang³

Transition: Feeling welcome

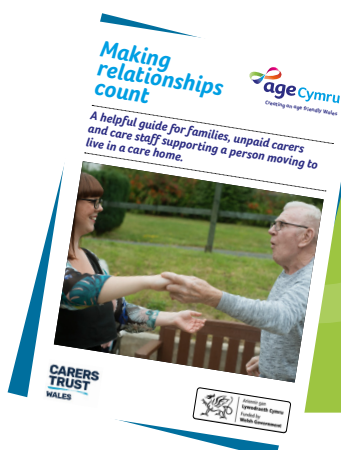
When someone moves into a care home, it's a time of significant change. They may be recovering from a hospital stay, have experienced a bereavement, or had a decline in physical health or mental capacity. They also may not initially have any of the objects that provide the familiarity of home. Providing a good transition into a care home can provide psychological safety and positively impact on a residents' ability to find their place within a care home.

Age Cymru have produced a resource focused on supporting the wellbeing of residents when entering a care home – you can click the link or use the search term below.



Search term:
Age Cymru
- Preserving
What Matters

When a loved one moves into a care home it's a time of great change for families, friends and/or carers. **Age Cymru have produced a resource focused on supporting family members and friends when a loved one moves into a care home – you can click the link or use the search term below.**



Search term:
Age Cymru
- Making
Relationships
Count

'[We're] being trusted with their prized possession'
– Manager on the importance of building trust with families and friends.

Older unpaid carers

Age Cymru and Carers Trust Wales formed a partnership to support older unpaid carers so they can become more involved in the care planning process for the people they look after.

Age Cymru have produced a resource supporting unpaid carers when their loved one moves into a care home – you can click the link or use the search term below.



Search term: Age
Cymru - Working
with older carers:
A good practice
resource for care
home staff



Introductions

The time when a person moves into a care home can be difficult for them and their loved ones. Ensuring that care home staff know as much as possible about a person can ease this transition and help the resident to feel 'at home'.

We heard about a wide range of tools care homes use to help them get to know their residents – often this took place over a series of weeks and was an ongoing process throughout a resident's entire stay. Some of these tools are listed below. Where there are links to specific templates, these have been provided. Other tools can be found online through searches.

- Utilising care planning software to go beyond personal care and medical needs
- [Life Story](#) and [This is Me](#) booklets provide templates and questions to follow
- Using The Kitwood flower principles of person-centred care to focus questions to get to know residents: love, comfort, identity, occupation, inclusion and attachment
- Family Trees and Relationship maps can help you to have conversations about who matters to residents
- The Age Cymru Tell Me More approach supports meaningful conversations (more below)

'[Using Person Centred Software] halved the work' – Manager

Involving family and friends in this process can help all involved adjust during the transition period, and being flexible can help care homes to discover more about the residents. It is worth allowing friends and families to find their own ways to tell you about their loved ones – can they bring in photos, newspaper clippings, objects of importance? Friends and family can also help care homes to maintain community connections that are important to the residents, like faith services or hobby groups.

It is important to not just learn about a resident's background and interests, but also to learn about whether they prefer to take part in activities alone, or in groups, and to discover what brings them comfort when they are feeling distressed.

Day services

Not all local authorities are offering day centre services, but where they do exist, they can provide transition support when an individual in the community is known to them and moves into a local care home.

'We have valuable information and personal insight to help with this process as we have supported them along this path, gaining their trust and supporting not only them but also the family member, who I feel are just important' -
Team Lead, Day Services

Day services can be crucial in supporting care homes to connect residents to the wider community, and residential staff can bring residents to community groups where they know that the residents will be well supported and welcomed.

Health boards and hospital discharge

We heard examples of a strong commitment from the health board to nurture relationships between the healthcare sector and care homes. This involves a variety of practices including care home awareness sessions that provide practical information for health care professionals around how care homes operate, opportunities to learn and improve together, and practical support to aid communication.

We also heard examples of how a strong working relationship with the discharge team from the local hospital allowed all involved to create a smooth transition into the care home for the residents.

You can get in touch with your Health Board to find out more about your local hospital discharge service – you can click the link or use the search term below.



Search term: Welsh Health Boards Contact



Tool

Age Cymru developed the Tell Me More approach to support good person-centred conversations – you can click the link or use the search term below.



You can work through some of the questions from the **Tell Me More Approach** to help you get to know a resident and what is important to them.

Search term: Age Cymru – Tell Me More Approach

Security	What helps you feel at home?	What helps you feel safe?	What would you change if you could?
Continuity	What are your interests? Tell me more...	Are you able to do the things you love?	Do you have opportunities to try new things?
Belonging	Do you have good friends in the home?	How do you stay connected with your family?	What could make things better?
Purpose	Are you able to plan your day?	What are your ambitions?	What are your hopes for the future?
Achievement	What has been your biggest achievement?	Do you set yourself goals to stay active?	Does your home help you with this?
Significance	What makes you happy?	What do you look forward to?	What is your favourite food/smell/place?



Hints and tips

For staff	For family and friends	For residents
<p>Make this work ongoing, every six months or if there's a significant change in the resident's life</p> <p>Be flexible, is there a different way that you can get this information? Some approaches can form part of creative activities, like the Tree of Life exercise</p> <p>Can you introduce a buddy system where a more established resident supports the new resident?</p>	<p>Support loved one to share their wishes, life story, and preferences</p> <p>Work with the care home to support loved one to maintain connections within the community</p>	<p>Your life story, wishes and preferences are important and can be accommodated in the home by the staff</p> <p>Find ways to bring things that matter to you into your new home</p> <p>Request a buddy to support you as you settle into your new home</p>

Meaningful activities: Making someone feel at home

Access to meaningful, person-centred activities allows residents to relax or get active, socialise or reflect, learn a new skill, create something and express themselves, all of which can enhance wellbeing.

We have heard inclusive examples of how care homes are providing person-centred activities for their residents. Where this works well, care homes establish programmes of everyday activities for groups and for individuals who may prefer to stay in their rooms, as well as bringing in professionals for special events, performances or workshops, even pet therapy. Care homes are utilising annual celebrations to make decorations, serve new foods and celebrate other cultures.

'The activities are what 'sell' the home' – Activities Coordinator



Some care homes provide easy-to-access activities, like knitting needles and wool, jigsaw puzzles, board games and music players so that any member of staff can start an activity with a resident if they wish to.

Where we heard the best success, engaging with residents and setting up activities was seen as part of everyone's role within the home. Care staff, as well as activity coordinators, felt empowered to take time to have a chat with a resident or take time to enjoy music or other activities with them. This allows all care home staff to play a vital role in recognising a resident's sense of wellbeing and could help to identify a change in their mental health as well as their physical health.

Age Cymru have developed a series of creative activities with artists and care homes staff – you can click the link or use the search term below.



Search term: Age Cymru - Arts in Care Homes Resources

Community

Continuing to stay connected to the wider community is important for residents' wellbeing. Finding simple ways to maintain a resident's connection to relationships outside of the care home can support their mental resilience. We heard examples of care homes supporting residents to attend faith services in the community, and trips to local libraries or cultural venues.

Ideas for connecting with the wider community:

- Start a pen pal project with a local school, or with another care home
- Host a community coffee morning: you could invite an organisation to present and open it up to older people in the community
- Encourage local community groups to host their activity in the home to enable residents to attend
- Invite the family and friends of residents to share their skills or talents
- Connect with a local [Men's Shed](#) group – can they support residents to attend or can they visit the home?
- Connect with the local schools – can their choir provide concerts or performances?
- Utilising festivals and celebrations like [Gwanwyn Festival](#), Halloween and the Eisteddfod to invite the wider community to events and activities
- Posting your weekly programme somewhere visible within the care home will allow family members to know more about what you're up to and encourage involvement
- Create a small network with other local activity coordinators to share ideas and contacts

Age-Friendly communities

There are Age-Friendly Leads within every local authority in Wales, and they may be able to support care homes to connect to the wider community, particularly with schools. We heard of Age-Friendly Leads working with care home residents and their families to find out what's important to them, and in turn, residents feeding into training and guidelines. Through other local authority services, we heard examples of how the Age-Friendly teams were able to connect young volunteers with care homes to deliver digital skills sessions, or young people supporting care home garden development with residents.

Some local authorities provide opportunities for residents to get active and support them to attend sessions outside of the home. We even heard of 'sports day' activities, linking care home residents with school pupils to compete in teams, and a boccia league. Other Age-Friendly Leads supported care homes to host community members to celebrate the Olympics with themed food and entertainment.

Some local authorities are able to loan reminiscence pods and interactive touch-screen tables to care homes. Age-Friendly Leads have provided support for residents to access creative activities in arts centres locally.

You can get in touch with your local Age-Friendly Lead to find out how they might be able to support you.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

01495 311556

Bridgend County Borough Council

01656 643643

Cardiff Council

02920 872087

Carmarthenshire County Council

01267 234567

Caerphilly County Borough Council

01443 815588

Ceredigion County Council

01545 570881

Conwy County Borough Council

01492 574000

Denbighshire County Council

01824 706000

Flintshire County Council

01352 702121

Cyngor Gwynedd

01766 771000

Isle of Anglesey County Council

01248 750057

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

01685 725000

Monmouthshire County Council

01633 644644

Neath Port Talbot Council

01639 686868

Newport City Council

01633 656656

Pembrokeshire County Council

01437 764551

Powys County Council

01597 827460

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

01443 425005

Swansea Council

01792 636000

Torfaen County Borough Council

01495 762200

Vale of Glamorgan Council

01446 700111

Wrexham County Borough Council

01978 292000

Volunteers

Volunteers can provide support for care home staff and bring their own special skills to the care home. Where this works well, volunteers have thorough induction training and have specific tasks or roles, such as supporting residents with gardening, running a quiz or supporting residents to attend faith services or community activities.

‘The experience I’ve had at the care home was amazing, I’ve had the opportunity of meeting with people, I was able to relate freely with the residents especially one of them who loves word puzzles at over 98 years’ -
Volunteer

You can get in touch with your local voluntary agency to see how they might be able to connect you with volunteers, or to link you with community organisations. **Community Foundation Wales has produced a list of County Voluntary Councils and their contact details – you can click the link or use the search term below.**

Search term:
Community Foundation
Wales - County Voluntary
Council contacts



Age Cymru have produced a toolkit to help care homes to recruit, train and retain volunteers – you can click the link or use the search term below.



Search term:
Age Cymru -
Care Home
Volunteer Toolkit



Hints and tips

For staff	For family and friends	For residents
<p>Link with voluntary agencies to find volunteer support for person-centred activities</p> <p>Host an external group in your spaces, for example, Mums and baby/toddler morning</p> <p>Create newsletters to share with friends and family encouraging them to attend activities</p>	<p>Make sure care staff know about your loved ones birthday, anniversaries and dates of cultural events that are important to them</p> <p>Initiate a family and friends coffee morning at the home</p> <p>Get involved in care home activities and events</p>	<p>Make sure that the care home staff know what interests and hobbies you have, and work together to find ways to make them happen</p> <p>Share any cultural celebrations that are important to you with the staff and other residents</p>



Tool

Programme planning

You can download Age Cymru’s Programme Planning tool by clicking the link or using the search term below.

With a solid understanding of your residents’ **backgrounds, hobbies and interests**, you can plan activities and events throughout the year that will be important to them, to enhance everyday activities.

Search term: Age Cymru – Programme Planning Tool



‘You live for the quirks’

– Manager on residents’ individual interests



Programme Planner

Birthdays, celebrations, visitors, trips



JAN	FEB	MAR
Birthdays Helen (3rd - turns 94) Jim (24th - turns 88)		
APR	Celebrations Santes Dwynwen- 25th Visitors Pet therapy - 15th	JUN
JUL	Use highlighters to mark completed events	SEP
OCT	Use a digital version on Teams or Google Drive to keep it live, or keep a large-scale printed copy to edit	DEC

This template is a simple way to map out a programme for the whole year. You can add residents’ birthdays, cultural celebrations, any visits from external individuals or organisations, and any trips out. An example has been provided to show how this can work.

On-going projects:
 Residents collage wall
 Flower bed

Weekly:
 Monday - Board game club
 Wednesday - Book club

Daily:
 Spotify playlist
 Activities box

Purpose, significance and achievement

Everyone's wellbeing benefits from having their voice heard, and from having a sense of purpose. Care homes can offer opportunities for residents to feel part of the home by supporting them to have a say in their day-to-day lives, and to find jobs to do to support the running of the home that are linked to their interests.

Shared decision-making

Sharing decision-making with residents is key to person-centred care and will help residents to feel a sense of control in their lives. As some residents may lack capacity to make decisions for themselves, this must be balanced by rights against risk.

Age Cymru have produced a resource to support care homes to enable shared decision making - you can click the link or use the search term below.



Sharing decision making in care homes



Search term:
Age Cymru-
Sharing Decision
Making in Care
Homes

Social Care Wales have produced a document around supporting people to make decisions about their care - you can click the link or use the search term below.

Search term:
Social Care Wales -
Supporting People
to Make Decisions
About Their Care.



Jobs

'Activities of daily living' can provide a meaningful sense of purpose and achievement for residents.

We heard some simple ways that care homes are supporting residents to get involved in care home life:

- Answering the phone
- Helping in the kitchen, peeling potatoes, washing up, making their own drinks
- Folding napkins and towels
- Laying tables
- Looking after care home pets
- Creating vegetable patches in the grounds
- Organising bingo or a quiz
- Organising birthday cards for staff or residents
- Ongoing projects like making decorations, or gardening

Residents can become 'resident ambassadors' and take on a wide variety of roles including representing the views of the other residents, being a buddy to a new resident, giving guided tours to prospective residents, and helping with activity programming, even supporting recruitment. Residents can also be given the opportunity to regularly feedback on their life in the home through anonymous surveys. Care homes can also support the residents to share their skills, for example through Make Do and Mend sessions.

Language

Supporting a resident to communicate in their preferred language can support their mental wellbeing, as language is closely tied to our identities and how we understand the world. This is particularly important for those living with dementia and other types of cognitive decline, who may revert to their first language if they learnt English later in life.

Not being able to communicate in our first language can lead to social isolation, loss of identity and can have an impact on our physical health.

Whilst it is not always possible to be able to provide a member of staff that can communicate in a resident's preferred language, we heard examples of how care homes utilised Google Translate and image cards to help them to support the resident. Recognition of the importance of language, and staff making small efforts to learn greetings and short phrases goes a long way towards supporting residents to feel included.

We also heard of care homes linking with local colleges to support their staff to learn Welsh. Singing Welsh songs, providing Welsh-language entertainment like Radio Cymru and S4C, and linking with organisations like Merched y Wawr are simple ways to bring the Welsh language into the home.

Social Care Wales can provide advice through the Understanding Language Needs page – you can click the link or use the search term below.

Search term: Social Care Wales- Understanding Language Needs

They also provide a 'Caring Through Welsh' app on Android and Apple.

Residents with dementia

Residents with dementia need additional support and may find it difficult to express their needs around mental health. Social Care Wales has developed a training resource to enable care homes to support residents with dementia - you can click the link or use the search term below.

Search term: Social Care Wales – One in a Million: Dementia Training Resource



Playlist for Life support people living with dementia to access personally meaningful playlists, which can reduce anxiety, improve mood, make difficult tasks more manageable and evoke memories that can support connections with families and carers - you can click the link or use the search term below.

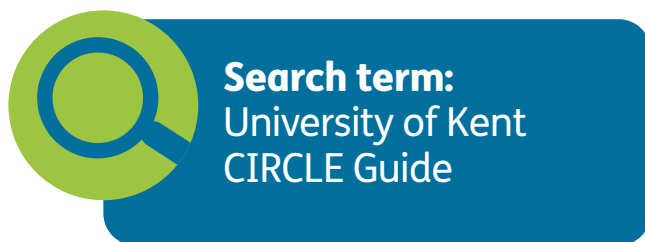
Search term: Playlist for Life



LGBTQIA+ residents

Ensuring that all residents feel accepted and welcome in their own home is crucial to their wellbeing. Not all care home residents might be 'out' so it is important not to make assumptions about a resident's sexuality, gender identity, or their immediate family.

University of Kent has produced the CIRCLE guide, co-designed with LGBTQIA+ older people and care homes – you can click the link or use the search term below.



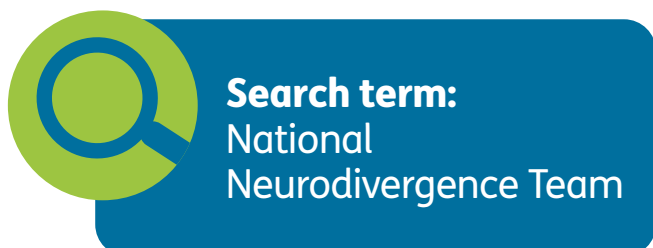
The Diversity Trust have also produced a guide on how to make care homes more inclusive for LGBT+ residents - you can click the link or use the search term below.



Neurodiverse residents

Care home residents may be neurodiverse and supporting them effectively will have a positive impact on their mental health.

The National Neurodivergence Team provide a range of resources, training and advice – you can click the link or use the search term below.



Veterans

It's important to ask residents in care homes whether they have served in the Armed Forces. This information can offer insights into the relationships that matter to them that should be preserved during their transition into a care home – as well as enabling care staff to identify any additional care needs and support available.

Champions for Armed Forces and Veterans have been established in every local authority, health board and NHS Trust in Wales. They advocate for veterans and Service personnel to ensure their needs are reflected in local service plans. The Welsh Local Government Association provides further details of local authority support for veterans – you can click the link or use the search term below.



The Confederation of Service Charities has produced a guide on how to support older veterans in resident care – you can click the link or use the search term below.





Tool

Public Health Wales and Improvement Cymru have created a resource to support care staff to consider how positive risk-taking creates 'magic moments' for residents with dementia. At a dedicated staff meeting, why not discuss the magic moments described in this document, with each team member picking a favourite and discussing how positive risk-taking has impacted on the resident's life? How might you use this mindset in your role to support your residents?

You can click the link or use the search term below



Search term:
Magic Moments in
Dementia Care Services



Hints and tips

For staff	For family and friends	For residents
Find ways to involve residents in day-to-day activities within the home	Ensure that care staff understand loved ones work histories and interests so that they can identify opportunities	Speak to the staff about ways of getting involved in care home life
Find ways for residents to have a voice in what happens in the home, for example, resident committees, resident ambassadors, resident surveys	Encourage loved ones to have a say in what matters to them within the home	If you have a particular interest, why not find other residents who share it and form a regular group. Maybe a book club, craft club, gardening club or local history club
Involve families by giving them an opportunity to feedback	Utilise opportunities to feed back to the care home on yours and your loved ones experiences	Consider getting involved in residents' committees/ associations to support activities



A good ending: What matters most

Advanced care planning allows residents to have a say in their end-of-life care. But it is also important for residents to have a say beyond their medical care – Where would they like to be? Who would they like to have with them? Do they have specific religious or spiritual needs?

Providing a good ending for a resident can have a positive impact on the wellbeing of the resident's friends and family, as well as the care home staff.

It's important to be aware that residents have a variety of backgrounds and that cultural and language differences will exist around end-of-life conversations.

Age Cymru provides information and guidance around end-of-life wishes – you can click the link or use the search term below.



Search term:
Age Cymru – End of life planning

Age UK have produced a LifeBook as an easy and safe way to record the practical details of your life - you can click the link or use the search term below.



Search term:
Age UK - LifeBook

We heard stories of how residents chose to spend their final days in care homes, as this was an environment where they felt safe, comfortable and that they had reassurance that their families would be supported. Where staff are well trained and well-supported, they can ensure that a resident has the best possible end to their lives. Staff have told us that this comes down to processes throughout the resident's time in a home that allow them to have conversations about their end-of-life wishes. This gives staff confidence, knowing that they are putting the resident at the centre of their care.

'The ultimate privilege' – Manager



It is important that every staff member feels empowered to discuss this topic with a resident, as and when the resident feels comfortable doing so. Some residents may be more open to a conversation during a quiet time of personal care, others may be more responsive when focused on an activity in a group.

'Activity coordinators are friends, carers become family. When someone passes, I'm losing a mate'
– Activity Coordinator





Tool

Environment

We heard some simple ideas of how care homes can create peaceful environments at the end of a resident's life:

- If a resident wishes, move furniture around to allow them to see out of the window
- Create an End-of-Life box. This can include; music players, gentle lights, scent diffusers, hand cream, digital photo frames
- Ensuring that visiting hours are relaxed to allow family members to be there when they wish to
- Offering to clear a resident's room if it is distressing for the family to do so
- Honouring the resident by placing their photo in a prominent place and lighting a candle during their funeral

Where all staff are empowered to be part of a resident's end of life care, there is a positive impact on all involved. Care staff and activity coordinators have often spent a lot of time with residents and have built special relationships, it is crucial that they are supported to use their various skills to support residents at the end of their lives.

Support for staff

One care home that we spoke to had developed a Bereavement Policy which offers guidelines and processes to all staff to allow them to support residents' wishes around end-of-life care. Some care homes are offering Mental Health First Aid training so that staff can support each other with their mental wellbeing. Others offer Employee Assistance Programmes which support staff on personal as well as work-related issues, and some offer grief counselling. It is important to recognise that staff may be grieving after the loss of a resident, and managers have a duty of care to support them.

What Matters Most

Care home staff are in an ideal position to create an environment that nurtures conversations around end of life wishes. These conversations could be gently started during moments of personal care like bathing, or during creative activities where residents are absorbed in tasks. Specific activities can be ideal conversation starters, for example, when doing a family tree, care staff could ask about parents, where they were from, when they passed away.

Questions don't have to be direct. Below we have provided some questions that allow for a conversation to be started. The most important thing during these interactions is to use active listening to ensure that the resident feels heard; Let the resident know you are listening and understand and use reflective statements, reframing and summarising to confirm what you have heard.

Question examples:

When you're not feeling well, what matters most to you?

Who or what supports you when you're having a bad day?

How do you feel about going into hospital?

Where do you think you might want to be if you're unwell?

Is there anyone you can talk to when you're feeling fearful or anxious?

Have you thought about who you might want to make decisions on your behalf?

Can you name 3 songs you'd like played at your funeral?

Marie Curie offer a free taster pack of conversation cards to get you started - you can click the link or use the search term below.

Age Cymru and Marie Curie worked with College Fields Care Home to have end-of-life conversations with residents, through creative activities - you can click the link or use the search term below.



Search term: Marie Curie - Play Cards to Spark a Meaningful Conversation

Search term: Age Cymru and Marie Curie - End-of-Life Discussions in Care Homes



Hints and tips

For staff	For family and friends	For residents
<p>Explore training or support from specialists</p> <p>Be brave about addressing the 'elephant in the room'</p> <p>Find ways to create ongoing conversations about end-of-life care</p> <p>Support other residents to remember their friends and attend funerals if they wish to</p>	<p>Utilise support from organisations like Marie Curie to have conversations with loved ones around end of life wishes and advanced care planning</p> <p>Seek information from healthcare professionals about advanced care planning for your loved one</p>	<p>Speak to staff, friends and families about your end of life wishes</p>



Tell us more

We value your feedback and comments about how this toolkit has enabled you to support your residents and loved ones. You can share your feedback with us via carehomes@agecymru.org.uk or **029 2043 1555**.

You can tell your residents and their friends and families that you are using the toolkit and encourage them to ask you about it using our 'Ask us about' Poster - you can find the poster on the link or the search term below.

Search term:
Age Cymru – Ask Us About Poster



Get updates from Age Cymru about care home opportunities by joining our mailing list – you can click the link or use the search term below.

Search term:
Age Cymru - Care Homes Mailing List



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Contributors include:

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