



Building ties with your local community

A workbook to help you start
thinking about how to build ties
with your local community

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Alive's aims

Alive is the UK's leading charity enriching the lives of older people in care and training their carers.

Alive:

- Engage older people creatively through meaningful activity sessions
- Train and support care staff to enhance older people's wellbeing and deliver outstanding care at every opportunity
- Reduce older people's social isolation by connecting them to their local communities
- Speak up for the rights of older people in care to those with the power to improve their lives
- Depend on charitable donations to deliver our work.

Alive's Vision

Our vision is a world where older people live lives full of joy, meaning and opportunity.

Alive's Mission

Our mission is to put older people's mental health and wellbeing at the heart of care across the UK.

Alive's Ambition

Our ambition is to provide meaningful engagement for older people, and inspirational training for those who support them, in care settings right across the UK.

About this workbook

This workbook is designed to be used to help you think about your care home's assets and how you can use these assets to build ties with your local community.

Please work through the exercises page by page, you can do this by yourself or as an exercise with staff and residents. At the end, you will be left with a useful book of ideas to help you get started with building community ties.

This can be done by you in your own care home or as part of our 'Building ties with your community' training course. If you are interested in finding out more about this training please contact Alive on info@aliveactivities.org.

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Why build ties?

There are many reasons why working to integrate your care home with your community is a good idea:

Residents' wellbeing

Residents who are able to carry on activities that are important to them are happier and more contented. Community activities are particularly beneficial, as they are often held outside of the home. The fresh air and exercise that comes with heading out for the afternoon helps residents to relax and results in better sleep.

Reducing your activity workload

Some community-based activities can be carried out by members of the community with minimal or no input from the care home after they are set up. For example, setting up a knitting club in the home or a church service coming along on Sundays.

Staff wellbeing

More contented residents and a reduced activity workload will, of course, lead to a better work environment for staff. In addition to this, having a wider variety of the community visiting can bring a pleasant and lively atmosphere to the home.

Enhanced CQC rating

The CQC have started to look closely at what you are doing to keep residents' connection to the community alive once they enter a care home, as well as the variety of activities you are providing. In short, the more connections with the community, the closer you are to an outstanding CQC rating.

What can your staff and residents offer?

Does your manager know someone who is involved with the local church? Can your staff train the community to be dementia friends? Does Ron know everything about organic farming? Can your ladies knit blankets or your gents fix furniture? Use the exercise below to think about what contacts and skills the people in your home have to offer the community.

	Staff	Residents
Skills/Expertise		
Contacts		

What does your care home have to offer?

Your care home has more to offer your community than you might think. Are you able to let a local group use your spare room? Can you offer your garden to an allotment group? Do you have a minibus that is underused? All of these can be offered to the community to encourage them to spend more time with your residents.

Space

Transport

Funds

Equipment

Services

Who could you build ties with?

There is always so much going on around your care home, it can be hard to know where to start with making contact. The exercise below can help you think about organisations and groups that may be able to engage with your residents inside or outside of your home. Thinking about who is local and what your residents enjoy is always a useful start.

	Inside	Outside
Local institutions		
Residents' interests		

Where could you promote your care home?

Summer party? Putting on a carol concert? Looking for a volunteer with a special set of skills? Letting the community know you're out there and looking to make friends is crucial. Use the prompts below to think about how you might go about promoting events, recruiting volunteers and shouting about all the good work you do.

	Local	National
Offline		
Online		

Managing obstacles

There can sometimes be resistance to building ties with your community. This can come from the residents, staff or the community themselves. There are a number of things you can do to help put people at ease with what you are proposing:

Give them time

Let people think about the idea for as long as they need to. This helps them come to terms with what you are asking.

Offer them emotional support

It could be something as small as a chat, right up to holding someone's hand throughout the first time they try something. It is key that you try and understand why a person may be nervous to try something new or do something they have not done in a while. Offer them support from yourself - or a third party that they trust - to help ease them into a new activity.

Make allowances

Sometimes tweaking your plans slightly can make the world of difference to someone else. Find out what people might be worried about and renegotiate what you are proposing to accommodate their concerns. This will also help people feel like they have been part of the planning process and take ownership of the proposed activity.

Show them success

Showing examples of something similar working well elsewhere is the most effective way of putting people's mind at ease. Photos are particularly good for this.

Case study - Fishing Trips

Over the summer of 2018, the Making Pals project responded to gentlemen's requests to go fishing and to spend some time with other men. The project organised gentlemen's fishing trips which took place monthly over the summer.

The first trip had five men booked to attend. However, the day before the trip, one by one, they all dropped out. A mixture of reasons were cited, mostly due to anxiety about the day from either residents or staff.

Ahead of the second trip, the project team called all the homes to explain what would happen during the day. They sent photos of similar trips that have worked elsewhere to give more of a feel for how the day could look. The team also made adjustments to the day, such as making the day shorter, which made the trip more attractive to the residents and staff.

The remaining three trips were well attended, with an average of seven gentlemen per trip from a total of 12 homes.

The combined approach of making allowances, giving people time and showing them success, allowed residents and staff to feel comfortable in attending.

A little more effort at the beginning now means that word of mouth has spread and people are now confident to go fishing.



Stepping back

The benefit of working with volunteers and the community is that sometimes you are able to step back and let them lead activities. This can help you increase the volume of activities your home is able to run. In order to step back effectively, it is important to think about the following:

How will you decide if you can step back?

Who will manage the relationship?

What resources will they need?

How will you check the activity is still enjoyable?

Case study - Young Bristol Youth Club

Young Bristol has eight youth groups spread over central Bristol. One of these, the Hartcliffe Club for Young People, was paired with Bishopsmead Lodge in South Bristol.

At first, the visits were organised by the activity coordinator and the leader of the youth group. They consisted of planned trips to the care home or day trips out to the zoo and Weston-super-Mare.

During these activities, the residents and young people really made a special bond, with firm friendships being struck up between particular residents and young people.

This has resulted in the young people leading activities in the care home for the residents and visiting without the need for any organising from the home or youth club.

The young people visited to make decorations with the residents and hung them on the residents' Christmas tree. They now work together to maintain a garden at the care home.

As well as the bigger activities, four of the young people visit residents on a regular basis and one now volunteers as part of the activity team.

By making an effort to organise activities to help a bond develop, the relationships have continued organically.



Case study - Muddy Boots Nursery

In 2017, Alive and horticultural therapy charity 'Growing Support' launched the BAB funded Communities of Interest project. This project works to reduce loneliness and isolation among older generations by linking up care homes with their local community. By supporting staff and residents to form lasting friendships with community groups and volunteers, older people have been able to meet new people, form new friendships and participate in joint activities with others from the neighbourhood. A good example of this is the friendship forged between Stokeleigh care home and Muddy Boots day nursery.

At the start of the project, Stokeleigh and Alive asked residents what sorts of connections would be the most meaningful to them. Many people responded saying that they would like to spend more time with younger generations, particularly of nursery school age. Sam from Growing Support researched the area and found that there was a nursery just across the road. She felt that a face-to-face conversation might be more effective than a phone call or email, so she dropped in one day to say hi. The nursery staff were eager to get on board as maintaining a strong sense of community is at the heart of their ethos.

After Sam's initial chat, all correspondence took place between Stokeleigh and the Nursery itself. The nursery was so close, residents could walk to visit the children or the other way around. Kelly, the activities coordinator at Stokeleigh, has told us that it's a nice chance for residents to get some fresh air as well as meet people on a regular basis that live outside the home. The proximity to the nursery and Stokeleigh and Muddy Boots' positive attitude has ensured that the visits continue on a weekly basis.

Since this connection first came about, over 25 visits to and from the nursery to Stokeleigh have taken place. One of these sessions included a joint trip to Windmill Hill Community Farm - a third community link who later in the project provided a group tour and a cookery workshop.



Case study - Community Allotment

Like with the nursery, this connection came about in response to the request from residents to spend more time outdoors and to pursue their gardening interests. Alive's project officer, Abi Sweet, conducted a mapping exercise to highlight green community spaces in the area surrounding the care home. Abi noticed that there were a number of allotments right behind Bamfield Lodge. She walked around and spoke to someone who was gardening on their plot. They signposted her to Eric who manages the allotments and he suggested that staff and residents from Bamfield might like to visit the plots to see what's being grown.

Since the initial meeting, the residents have been over to the allotment on several occasions. One resident told us "just being out and about in the fresh air...feeling the sun on our faces makes you happy." The visits have been such a success that Eric and Pat, the activities coordinator from Bamfield Lodge, are planning regular visits so that the residents can get involved in growing. Some of the residents have suggested joint activities such as making greengage jam with the excess fruit from the allotment.

Alive staff have now stepped back from the allotment project and the communication takes place directly between Pat and Eric. Residents have been encouraged to suggest allotment activities to Pat, which she can then organise alongside Eric and the residents at Bamfield.

“

If I had a long hoe I could hoe away at the edges [of the plot] It's amazing what you can get done as a group. There's always a way!

Bamfield Resident

”





The
Henry Smith
Charity

founded in 1628

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