



# Working with care homes

A guide for youth groups who  
are looking to collaborate with  
their local care home.

# Getting things started

---

Are you a youth group thinking about collaborating with your local care home? Then this quick guide should help you get thinking about things you could do and some of the practicalities you will need to consider.

## **Making Contact**

### **Who to talk to?**

Most care homes will have an activity coordinator or someone who oversees residents' activities. This will usually be the person you will need to contact to help you get something organised between your youth group and the care home. Other roles who may be useful to contact are the home manager or the home administrator, all care homes are slightly different.

### **How to contact the home**

If possible, it is always best to phone the care home and follow up with an email. Care home staff are very busy and sometimes emails can get missed if a person does not recognise your name. Try to call between 10 - 11.30am and 2 - 4pm. This is when the home is least busy, and the activity staff are most likely to be in.

## **Timings**

### **When is best?**

Activity staff usually work 9-5 Monday to Friday. So, depending on when your youth group operates this can make a meeting difficult to arrange. However, for the first meeting some activity coordinators will come in on a weekend until your group and the residents are comfortable with each other. Evenings are usually not as suitable for care homes as after dinner residents can be tired and likely to get less out of the visit. Otherwise, organising visits and trips during the school holidays usually works well.

### **How long should your visits last?**

You should allow around an hour for the visit. This is the optimal amount of time for residents and your youth group to get to know each other without the residents getting tired.

If you are interested in organising a day trip, residents and care staff are usually more comfortable with a shorter day out or the option to return home when they are ready. So it is always good to keep transport on hand throughout the day.

## **Numbers**

### **How many people should come?**

This will depend on the size of your care home. Large groups can sometimes be overwhelming for the care staff and residents. Groups of up to ten are usually a good number, although if it is a large home up to 15 can be accommodated.

If you have a large group sometimes splitting the group in two and visiting on alternate weeks works well.

## **Locations and transport**

### **Where is best to meet?**

Due to residents' limited mobility it is usually easier for everyone to meet and run activities in the care home. However, if you have a venue that is close to the care home and is suitable for the residents' needs, it is always very beneficial for residents to have the opportunity to get out into the community.

Think about if your premises are suitable for wheelchairs, are warm enough and have comfortable seating for the residents.

### **Getting out and about**

It is difficult for residents to get out and about all together as it takes a lot of care home staff to help push the residents' wheelchairs. This means your youth group can be a fantastic resource to help the care home run more day trips. We have had success with taking residents to the zoo, to Weston- super- Mare and to Remembrance Day parades.

You will need to talk to the care home activity coordinator to find out what transport they usually use, sometimes they will have their own minibus they can use but usually they use community transport minibuses.

## **Activities**

### **Deciding on what activities to do**

It is important that the activities decided on are relevant and enjoyable for both the residents and the younger people. It is recommended that on the first meeting some time is spent encouraging the young people and older people to chat with each other about what activities they enjoy and what they might like to spend time doing together. This will mean you have good attendance for the activities when you book them in.

# Case Study

## Third Thornbury Scouts

---



The Third Thornbury Scouts have been visiting care homes in Thornbury to contribute to their members achieving their Chief Scouts Gold Award.

### Setting up

The Third Thornbury Scouts were looking for care homes that would help them achieve their Chief Scout's Gold Award. For this you must spend some time helping and chatting to lots of different people in the community.

To help them find a care home they got in touch with Thornbury Volunteer Centre. Two care homes in the area had already registered an interest in volunteers and community groups coming in and spending time with their residents.

### Planning visits

An initial meeting between Alexandra Way's activity coordinator and the Scout leader identified that weekend meetups every six weeks would work the best for both groups. The Scouts now go into the care home and spend time with the residents on Saturday mornings every six weeks.

### Going out and about

For Remembrance Sunday the Scouts wanted to include some of the residents in the Thornbury Remembrance Day Parade. As the residents from Alexandra Way were unable to join them on the day, they contacted the other care home registered with Thornbury Volunteers Centre in the town, Beech House.

The Scouts pushed three residents from Beech House in the parade through Thornbury on the 100th anniversary of the armistice. The parade ended in a ceremony at St Mary's Church.

### Ongoing Connections

The scouts will continue to visit Alexandra Way care home on Saturdays and now have started talking to Beech House about helping them with their various Christmas events, including helping with their Christmas Fayre.







# Case Study

## Young Bristol Youth Clubs

---



Young Bristol has been working to pair their youth groups with care homes across Bristol. The charity works with young people aged 8-18 across the whole of Bristol.

### Setting up

The partnership was set up by looking for care homes closest to the youth groups. This meant that it was easy for the youth group to visit and for the youth club attendees to visit the residents independently of the planned activities if they so wished.

An icebreaker session was booked in for everyone to spend an hour or so getting to know each other. Because the Young Bristol youth groups are extra to school, all visits were carried out during the day on Saturdays or on weekdays during the school holidays.

### Planning visits

At the first meetings residents and young people came up with ideas of how they would like to spend time together. These ideas were then read out to the group and the group cheered and showed hands to let us know which ideas were most popular.

### Going out and about

The groups decided to go to a wide range of places including, Bristol Zoo, Weston-Super-Mare and Ashton Gate Stadium. The trips were organised jointly by everyone, and both care staff and youth group leaders were present on the day. Bristol Community Transport minibuses were used to get everyone where they needed to be.

The trips generally lasted from 10am – 3pm with an hour for lunch and refreshments in the middle. This was usually long enough as the residents were often getting tired by the end of the day.

### Ongoing Connections

In-between and after the day trips the young people from the youth group visited the older people for activities in the home, with about three in ten coming back in their own time to visit residents that they had struck up a special bond with. Some of the younger people have even begun work experience or volunteering at the care homes local to them and are considering a career in older people's care.









Making  
Pals

 **alive**  
Lighting up later life

The  
Henry Smith  
Charity

founded in 1628

W [aliveactivities.org](http://aliveactivities.org)

E [info@aliveactivities.org](mailto:info@aliveactivities.org)

T 0117 377 4756

Alive is a Registered Charity No.1132708