

Supporting positive peer relationships for people who live in care homes

This factsheet has been designed to accompany this webinar, which you can view [here](#).

[Research](#) has shown that meaningful connection is integral to promoting health and wellbeing. It is also a fundamental human right. It allows people to feel valued as individuals and enhances personhood. A lack of connection has profound negative consequences for people's emotional, mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Moving into a care home provides opportunities to develop new friendships which can enrich day-to-day life, supporting people to have a sense of belonging and to feel more at home. However, research has also found high levels of social isolation and loneliness among people who live in care homes. Many people said they would like more opportunities to socialise and form friendships within the care home. Everyone has their own "recipe for connection" and some people prefer their own company, but still need opportunities to spend time with others if they choose.



Here are some things that services can do to foster positive peer relationships.

- Finding out and recording people's social preferences and interests as part of person-centred [personal planning](#), creating opportunities for how these outcomes can be supported and addressing any barriers.
- Introducing people to each other who have shared interests/commonalities and creating opportunities for them to get to know each other.
- Introducing people to their neighbours when they move in and continuing to introduce people to others and in lounge areas when they may forget.
- Consider "buddying up" people to help them settle in.
- Intentionally looking for opportunities to bring people together in twos, or small groups.
- Identify and address specific impairments people have which affect their ability to interact.
- Ensure people are enabled to spend time with their friends even if their needs change, for instance by becoming less mobile.
- Provide opportunities for participatory group activities. Creative arts activities like music, singing, seated dance and reminiscence activities have been found to be particularly effective.
- Include family carers and friends in activities and in small groups as people may feel more confident to connect with others with support.
- Getting out and about on trips and in the community where possible.
- Trying things more than once and looking for new opportunities.
- Events, parties and celebrations which encourage interaction.
- Ensuring the [physical environment](#) is well planned with a range of options to encourage group and one-to-one socialising.
- Mealtimes are a natural point of interaction – consider how social connections can be maximised at this time.

Potential barriers can include:

- sensory, cognitive or functional impairments which affect people's ability to connect
- an organisational culture which doesn't prioritise meaningful connection
- a physical environment which is not conducive to meaningful interaction
- outside space which is difficult to access
- staffing allocation which is not supportive
- lack of person-centred personal planning.

Using a [self-evaluation tool](#) can help to identify strengths and challenges, fostering a culture where people experience meaningful connection which enriches their day-to-day lives and supports their health and wellbeing.

[More resources on meaningful connection are available here.](#)