

# Co-Creating a Culture of Engagement and Wellbeing



**A toolkit for Managers  
and Activity Providers**



# A Forward Vision: The impact of positive working relationships

## NAPA – National Activity Providers Association

NAPA supports the care sector to prioritise wellbeing. Central to this is providing the necessary knowledge and skills required by Activity Providers to enable positive practice.

A good working relationship between the Activity Provider and the Care Home Leader is therefore integral.

As champions of the roles of Activity Provider and Care Home Leader, NAPA and My Home Life England develop tools and create opportunities that enhance practice. Together we are able to gather evidence of what works well, share positive practice, and provide opportunities to explore new ways of working that will strengthen and help relationships flourish. This resource is intended to reflect current thinking, we hope you will find it encouraging.



**Hilary Woodhead**  
Executive Director –  
NAPA

## My Home Life England

At My Home Life England, we learn from Care Home Leaders every day.

We hear stories of great leadership in action, collect great examples of how positive cultures and connections with communities are created and how team members including Activity Providers have an essential role to play in creating and developing that culture. As a team, one of the things we really value about working with the team at NAPA is our shared common sense of purpose; to highlight positive practice and to support wellbeing and inclusion for those living, visiting and working in care homes. Over time, we have also learnt to acknowledge and learn from the differences we have and to recognise working well together takes time.

We know we have some different ways of working and different approaches, we sometimes see things through different lenses and that's to be celebrated.

In co-creating this resource with NAPA and the great people who have shared their experience and expertise with us in its development, we hope that there is at least one nugget or idea that will help people to build on what's working well, and to recognise and support the different roles people play in supporting a vision of wellbeing.



**Steph Thompson**  
Deputy Director –  
My Home Life England

# Why have we developed this toolkit?

This toolkit has been developed to support and build on positive working relationships between Activity Providers and Care Home Leaders, to enhance wellbeing and community connectedness for the care setting.

Both NAPA and My Home Life England have the privilege of connecting with people living and working in a wide range of care settings on a daily basis, seeing first-hand the hard work that goes into fostering caring, connected communities.

My Home Life England has been delivering professional leadership, support, and development programmes to Care Home Leaders for over 15 years, building an evidence base of positive practice, strengthened by insights from the community engagement programme, Care Home Friends and Neighbours (Care Home FaNs).

NAPA champions Activity Providers, supporting them to create cultures of engagement and wellbeing and advancing their professional development, making NAPA the leading organisation for engagement in care settings.

As the two organisations frequently collaborate, it became clear both audiences have the same vision for building positive, supportive working relationships in order to achieve better quality of life for all those who live in, work in, visit or interact with the care setting. This resource aims to give structure to that vision, enabling



Activity Providers and Care Home Leaders to work together, focusing on positive practice and what works well.

## Achieving a co-created practical toolkit

We began by running two webinars, inviting both Activity Providers and Care Home Leaders to attend, asking what was already working well in terms of their professional relationship.

Webinar attendees voted via a poll for a written toolkit, with a video element and interactive content to facilitate time to work together. We followed up by asking a small number of people to provide feedback as the resource was developed. Alongside this, both NAPA and My Home Life England aim to reflect the thoughts of those we come across in our daily work, ensuring the resource is relevant to challenges affecting both Activity Providers and Care Home Leaders currently.

## Who is the toolkit for and how might you use it?

This toolkit is focused on supporting Care Home Leaders, including Managers, Deputy Managers, Service Leads and Departmental Managers and Activity Leads, including Activity Providers, Engagement leads, and Wellbeing Facilitators.

It doesn't matter what your job title is, if you are interested in improving working relationships to enhance quality of life for those who live in, work in and visit the care setting, you will find relevant advice here. The aim of this toolkit is to help colleagues work well together by building on what works well now and finding new ways to work towards shared goals.



You will find examples of positive practice alongside activities to help facilitate conversations, helping you to understand each other better and move forward together.

# What do we mean by Activities and Wellbeing?



**Definition of Activities:** “A thing that a person or group does, has done or a recreational pursuit or pastime”.

## **Definition of Wellbeing: Person Centred Activity Provision:**

*“The state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy”*

Everyone should be able to live a content and connected life with opportunities to engage in meaningful activity. NAPA defines an ‘activity’ as an experience that is engaging and meaningful. This could be an active part of daily living such as getting washed or dressed, or a leisure or recreational activity conducted during our free time for enjoyment, or to feel like ourselves. Activity provision refers to any offer of engagement that is meaningful and intends to enhance physical, cognitive, and emotional wellbeing. This includes activities that promote expression, creativity, conversation, and connection. Activities can be planned or spontaneous, provided one to one or in groups.

The NAPA model of Activity Provision champions a person centred and person led approach to engagement. Founded on principles of inclusivity, this model treats everyone as an individual, appreciates difference, respects rights and wishes and promotes choice and independence.

- + Promotes wellbeing as a priority
- + Creates opportunities for conversation and connection
- + Enables individuals to live content, connected and creative lives



## **What is an Activity Provider?**

An Activity Provider is a social care professional dedicated to meeting the wellbeing needs of the person they support. The Activity Provider creates and implements individual wellbeing/ activity plans, incorporating person centred/led activities that reflect a person’s interests, hobbies, and cultural preferences and enhance their wellbeing.

# Activity 1: What does wellbeing mean to you?

My Home Life England use a tool called ‘The Senses Framework’ to consider what wellbeing might look and feel like for each of us; as individuals or as a team. It is based on six key ‘senses’ which are; security, belonging, continuity, purpose, achievement and significance.

You may like to complete this activity together with your Care Home Leader or Activity Provider. Score each section 1-5, where 1 is ‘a low sense of’ and 5 is ‘a strong sense of’ to show what’s working well and what could be better.

You could answer for yourself, talk it through with your team, or perhaps talk through with those living in your care setting, then bring it to a supervision for discussion.

The next step is to pick one area to work on, and to make an action plan to improve that ‘sense’ with small, manageable steps that you feel confident can lead to change.

## The Senses Framework

Sense of ...	Score 1-5	The plan - the 'how'
<b>Security</b> To feel safe		
<b>Belonging</b> To have a place and feel part of something		
<b>Continuity</b> Linking the past present and future		
<b>Purpose</b> To have direction		
<b>Achievement</b> To feel I am getting somewhere		
<b>Significance</b> To feel I matter		

This tool can be used to plan small, real-world changes which lead to better connectedness and in turn, greater quality of life. It also helps us to notice changes in our priorities and how we feel over time, as a sense of wellbeing cannot be fixed, but changes over time.

**Credit;** Nolan, M. R., Brown, J., Davies, S., Nolan, J. and Keady, J. (2006). The Senses Framework: improving care for older people through a relationship centred approach. Getting Research into Practice (GRIP) Report No 2. Project Report. University of Sheffield.

# Whose responsibility is it?

The key to positive working relationships, leading to better engagement is a ‘whole home’ culture. This means everyone is involved, every day, in promoting wellbeing and connections rather than it being the responsibility of one or two people.

Care Home Leaders are essential in promoting this positive culture, supporting the idea that engagement is part of a positive environment.

Community Connectors, also known as Community Brokers, can also offer valuable support in the community, creating and sustaining meaningful relationships between people who might not otherwise meet.

## Understanding each other's role

During the consultation process for this resource, it became clear that Care Home Leaders knew what they valued in Activity Providers and vice versa, but a good understanding of an Activity Providers role, and in return the Care Home Leaders' role, could be improved and built upon.

The Activity Provider role has traditionally been associated with large group sessions, providing support and entertainment for a few hours each week. The focus might not have been on involvement in the care service's senior management team, and time was rarely set aside to develop connections, training, or communicate what was working well and where improvements could be made. Similarly, Activity Providers may have been unaware of the challenges and pressures that Care Home Leaders are often under in terms of budgets, governance, and day-to-day responsibilities across a wide variety of tasks.

Those who have informed this resource told us that where this relationship was working well, regular communication was key. This meant



guidance and support could be given by Care Home Leaders and in turn Activity Providers felt trusted to act independently and with authority, confidently involving wider staff. The consultation process showed that those Care Home Leaders who had recognised the potential in their Activity Provider were able to embark on a development path with them.

*“I am encouraged to be open minded, and I feel lucky to have a relationship built on trust”*

Activity Provider – Round table webinar

within a time appropriate manner. There was a mutual understanding that support does not always need to be in person but can be given in other contexts, such as asking others to support. It also lessened the Activity Provider's sense of isolation and offered the Care Home Leader confidence that the Activity Provider could be better equipped when faced with obstacles.

*“It takes time to build a working relationship, but being a home manager is about being approachable and working together on the same page”*

Care Home Manager – Round table webinar

# Activity 2: What does it mean for you?

There is no one size fits all wellbeing and engagement programme for care settings. We listen to and work with a wide range of people on a daily basis and the common thread between successful programmes is a shared vision.



Similar to the 'whole home culture', a united vision of the values and desired outcomes shared who live and work in the care setting, makes for a strong forward plan.

Taking time out as a team to consider questions like the ones below can help you identify what you might do more of together to improve everyone's experience. You could consider the below questions as a group at a team meeting, or 1:1 in your supervision. You don't need to do them all at once, why not start each meeting with one question.

+ What does positive engagement and wellbeing mean to you, in your life now?

- + What does good engagement and wellbeing look like for people living in the care setting?
- + What does good engagement and wellbeing look like for people working in the care setting?
- + How can your local community contribute to your wellbeing and engagement aims?
- + What is already working well for your setting - what do you feel most proud of?
- + Can you think of someone who goes above and beyond their role to engage others?
- + If you observe the care setting at different times of the day, how does it make you feel?

- + If you were talking to a new team member, how would you explain your care setting's policy on wellbeing, engagement and connecting to the community?
- + What would you like to do more of; as a team? As a community?
- + How might we get there, what strengths do people have that might help us?

It's easy for the image of what we want to achieve to feel far away from where we're starting. The experience of those who have taken the time to build successful relationships, is to start small, keep communicating, keep asking what success looks like and importantly; recognise your achievements.

# Activity 3: Finding ways to connect

Care settings can be busy and complex places, for all who live there, work there and visit people there. For those involved in developing this toolkit, finding space to connect was deeply important.



Listed below are some examples of questions used between real Care Home Leaders and Activity Providers to explore how they support, or are supported in their role. You might

want to discuss them with your team and see how they could be developed within the care setting you work in.

- + Are all team members able to 'be in the moment' with someone whilst in the care setting?
- + Are you familiar with any of the hobbies or interests of those you work with in the care setting and would you be able to link them to others who share their interests?
- + How do you celebrate achievements?
- + How do you welcome new connections?
- + Do you take time to notice people coming into the care setting and to say thank you?

For those care settings where the relationship between Care Home Leader and Activity Provider was working well, being reflective was important; asking where we've come from, to understand where to go next. 'The Caring Conversations Framework' is another useful tool which helps us to use our communication skills to extend that person-centred care to colleagues, people visiting the care setting and the local community too.

## Having caring conversations

- Be Courageous**  
What would happen if we gave this a go?
- Connect Emotionally**  
How did this make you feel?
- Be Curious**  
Help me to understand what is happening?
- Collaborate**  
How can we work together to make this happen?
- Consider Other Perspectives**  
What do others think?
- Compromise**  
What is real and possible?
- Celebrate**  
What worked well?

www.myhomelife.org.uk

Dewar B and Nolan M (2013) Caring about caring: Developing a model to implement compassionate relationship centred care in an older people care setting, International Journal of Nursing Studies, 50(9):1247-58.

**Credit;** Dewar B and Nolan M (2013) Caring about caring: Developing a model to implement compassionate relationship centred care in an older people care setting, International Journal of Nursing Studies, 50(9): 1247-58.

# How does the language we use support positive relationships?



Creating change in a world where language is passed down can be difficult, and yet the language we use has a very real impact on the way that we work.

The words we use, alongside our unspoken communication, help to create the culture of a care setting. By having conversations in which positive language is used, we can inspire and motivate others' approach to inclusion and equality. This in turn helps to build the positive culture we all wish to create, in small, but constant positive steps.

*"We aren't just people here to work; we all value the support we provide each other, and we do so by beginning each day with small acts of kindness, which we anonymously place in the positivity pot each day and read at handover. Thank you for the 5 minutes you saved me."*

Activity Provider – Round table webinar

# Activity 4: What is our team language?

Take some time together as a team to notice the language you use on a day to day basis. This might be amongst yourselves as colleagues, when speaking with wider staff members, in talking to visitors to the care setting or when speaking with members of the care setting's wider community.

Nominate someone who is happy to make notes and start by drawing three columns; in the first column jot down one or two examples from your care setting for each of the below points.

- + **Clarity;** do you use abbreviations, or industry terms relating to someone's lived experience?
- + *Do you both understand what is being said? Why do you need to use the term?*

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- + **Culture;** is someone thinking in their mother tongue and speaking in English back to you?
- + *How can you help to accommodate cultural differences beyond spoken language?*

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- + **Body language;** body and facial expressions speak more boldly than words - they unite us all.
- + *Have you ever seen yourself speaking? Do you give people eye contact?*

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- + **Patience;** to consciously listen and answer without interrupting can be hard if we're busy.
- + *How does someone know you're listening? How can you politely draw a chat to a close?*



- + **Personalised;** do you speak to someone as they would like to be spoken to?
- + *Formalities and informalities are a personal choice; are you using them appropriately?*

In the second column consider the impact this might have on the person being spoken to or about and how they might feel. In the third column discuss some positive alternatives as a team asking if it were you being spoken about, what would you prefer to hear, or how could you be clearer.

Language that cares not only makes a difference for people living in the care setting, but it also makes a difference for your staffing teams, communicating that they are respected and should feel empowered, and supported. Positive, person centred language is central to a positive culture.

# The value of co-creating

Activity Providers and Care Home Leaders who worked well together were keen to talk about some of the positive impacts they'd seen, both in their work and for people living in the care setting.

According to Care Home Leaders who supported Activity Providers to develop community engagement initiatives under My Home Life England Care Home FaNs programme, the visibility of the care home in the community had increased local offers of support. For NAPA, Activity Providers who had support to undertake coaching and professional development anecdotally reported that CQC inspections were less stressful, and that their teams had been identified as well-led with effective approaches in place for the service.

In this sense, the value of working positively between Activity Provider and Care Home Leader can be felt more widely than the wellbeing of those living and working in the care setting, it also extends to making improvements on issues facing Care Home Leaders such as ratings, recruitments, and income.



## Case Study; Activity Provider

This toolkit has been developed to support and build on positive working relationships between Activity Providers and Care Home Leaders.

We acknowledge that this relationship is different for everyone, which is why the tools and positive practice shared so far is designed to facilitate conversations, helping you to identify what works well already and what could be better. It can sometimes feel as if others are starting from a better place or have a smaller mountain to climb.

This case study gives you a real-world example of someone who has recently started this process.

### Where is Lara coming from?

- + Lara was returning to an Activity Provider role following 4 years in a different career.
- + She had some experience in planning events and running a wellbeing programme.
- + Previously Lara had worked as the only activity team staff member for a small organisation.

### What was getting in the way for Lara?

- + Lara works with a wide range of individuals each with different support needs ranging from neurological rehabilitation to nursing and dementia, which can feel challenging.

- + Lara does not drive and uses public transport so can find it hard to get out into the community to make connections, or to carry out risk assessments for trips.
- + Lara finds time management stressful and challenging as she works across 3 busy floors.
- + Lara's own sense of wellbeing at work is low and Lara worries about work when at home.
- + Lara struggles with returning to this area after 4 years away and finds it hard to feel confident in knowing what is best for everyone.
- + Lara feels staff expectations are too high for her to achieve the outcomes she is set by her Line Manager, causing relationships to be strained at times.

## The value of co-creating (continued).



### What support did Lara find?

- + Lara called the NAPA Support Line, receiving advice on creating a stronger relationship with her co-workers and better time management.
- + The call highlighted the importance of open communication and transparency with her Line Manager, as well as the importance of setting realistic goals.
- + As a first step, Lara arranged a meeting with her Line Manager, noting down her feelings in advance and talking through them in a professional manner.
- + Lara arranged a free, basic E-Learning training opportunity for herself, her manager and the whole team (part of The NAPA Membership). This also asked the question; 'what is wellbeing'.
- + Lara scheduled regular meetings with her Line Manager to discuss a program of ideas. Less formal meetings were also arranged with the Kitchen Manager and Clinical Leads.
- + Lara's Line Manager suggested blocking out admin time for researching and contacting local organisations and offered to help with initial conversations.

- + Lara was asked to join handovers to relay what would be happening that day to the teams.
- + Lara's Line Manager recommended she schedule appointments to connect with the community on zoom wherever possible, and to say if she needed help with transport.

### What difference did this make for Lara?

- + Lara felt less worried, which enabled her to have a more positive attitude toward her job.
- + Lara felt her Line Manager was listening to her concerns more. Regular meetings dedicated to activities and wellbeing were helping them both to build a stronger working connection.
- + Lara's Line Manager felt the introductory training had been beneficial and now encourages Lara to participate in webinars as part of her journey to becoming an Activity Professional.
- + Lara stated that better communication and attending handovers had significantly strengthened her relationship with wider colleagues.

- + Lara has developed new interpersonal skills with the help of her manager.
- + Community ties improved as a result of her increased confidence and support to reach out.
- + Lara reported that her Line Manager was happy with the benefits it was providing not only to the individuals in the care setting, but in terms of enquiries and employee recruitment.

This case study is ongoing as Lara and her Manager continue to have positive conversations, building a trusting relationship, connecting one another to colleagues and the wider community and building a positive culture together for all who are living in, working in and interacting with the care setting.

# Further links and support

## NAPA

NAPA is a national charity and membership organisation. We support the sector to prioritise wellbeing, promote activity, arts and engagement and believe that everyone has the right to live content, creative and connected lives.



We pride ourselves on our inclusive approach and appreciate the contributions and ideas of all who work alongside us to prioritise wellbeing. NAPA services are led by our dedicated team, co-created with our members, subscribers and advisory panels and governed by the NAPA board of Trustees.

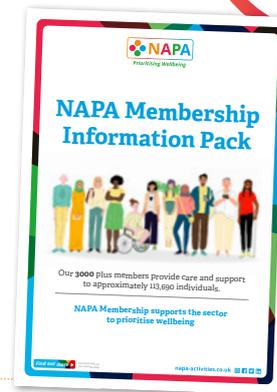
Find out more about becoming a NAPA Member – [Click Here](#)

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## My Home Life England

My Home Life England is part of an international initiative, working to support quality of life for all those who live in, work in and visit care settings across England.

We have delivered positive change in over 2000 care settings, working collaboratively to make a difference. As a part of City, University of London, ongoing research informs our evidence-based frameworks, underpinning all we do.

Our **Leadership, Support and Development programmes** run across the country for Care Home Leaders and we also offer an online **'Bitesize'** option. Programmes are tailored to your area, connecting you to other care services and the local community. Alongside this our **Care Home Friends and Neighbours** community engagement programme is great for Activity Leads, including a collaborative **intergenerational project**, supporting new relationships, new connections, and sustainable change.



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