CARE HOMES: A PLACE IN THE FUN

IDEAS FOR EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION AND FUN IN CARE HOMES

A Place in the Fun

Ideas for Expanding Opportunities for Connection and Fun in Care homes

Background to A Place in the Fun:

In early 2020 a collaboration was formed between Crossgate Care Home, Hearts and Minds and Kinections.

Between January and early March 2020 two Elderflowers visited the ladies and gentlemen in Crossgate Care Home on 5 occasions. At the end of each visit a reflection session took place with the Elderflowers, care home staff and Kinections Project Lead. These reflections focused on considering ways in which elements of the Elderflowers approach could be adapted by care home staff.

A **Place in the Fun** Ideas have emerged from these reflection sessions, alongside observations during the visits and further discussions between the Kinections Project Lead and the Elderflowers and care home staff.

Crossgate Care Home: A large care home in Kilmarnock, Scotland which has a specialist unit for people living with dementia.

Hearts and Minds: Hearts & Minds is a charity which uses therapeutic clowning to bring playfulness, empathy and emotional connection in to health and care settings. Elderflowers (therapeutic clowns) use humour, improvisation and empathy to create connections with people living with dementia
www.heartsandminds.org.uk/elderflowers

Kinections: Kinections is a research project which has been working with care homes across East Ayrshire to explore what helps a sense of community to grow and flourish in care homes. The project is led by researchers in the University of the West of Scotland and has been funded by the Life Changes Trust, Dementia-Friendly Communities programme.
www.myhomelife.uws.ac.uk/scotland/kinections
Kinections is part of My Home Life- an international initiative which seeks to enhance quality of life for those who live, work, visit and die in care homes. www.myhomelife.org.uk

Ladies and Gentlemen: You will see that we use the term 'ladies and gentlemen' or 'ladies and gents' throughout these pages, when describing the women and men who live in care homes. When Elderflowers are visiting care homes, they use the term 'ladies and gents' and so we thought we would try it out here. What do you think about it?

A Place in the Fun

What do we mean by A Place in the Fun?

A Place in the Fun is about people together connecting, expressing emotion, using their imagination and trying things out. It doesn't mean everyone being happy the whole time, or people being treated like children- it may however involve laughter, surprises and sparks of connection.

A **Place in the Fun** is made up of 6 Ideas for enhancing connection and fun in care homes. The headings for these 6 Ideas are:

Sounds Like a Song
Hellos and Farewells
Objects
EyeCatchers
Small Acts Made Big
Figures of Authority

You will find in this pack a poster for each of these 6 Ideas.

If you are working with others, to think about how your care home is and could be **A Place in the Fun** some things to consider could be:

- To start with noticing the ways people currently create connection & fun in the home
- To promote the *Place in the Fun Ideas* as being about enhancing connection and fun for everyone i.e. residents, staff and visitors
- To take time introducing each of the *Ideas*- maybe picking one to try out first, and then exploring the other *Ideas* gradually over time
- To introduce people to the Pointers for Creating a Place in the Fun

Some Pointers for Creating a Place in the Fun

A Place of Fun Ideas have been inspired by the work of Elderflowers clowns- but we're not thinking that you need to become a clown in order to try out the ideas! Here are some pointers to consider when giving the *Ideas* a go.

Staying True to You

We'd encourage you to think about how you can try out the *Ideas* in ways that feel a good fit for you and your relationships with the ladies and gentlemen in your care home. These *Ideas* can be applied in amazing ways by people who see themselves as being quiet or shy, as much as by people who love being at the centre of things. Each person is free to find their own place in the fun.

Better (Banter) Together

The Ideas are proposing doing things that might feel a bit 'out-there'. Some people find it really helpful to have a partner-in-fun, another colleague, with them when trying them out. Having someone with you when giving these Ideas a go will hopefully make it enjoyable for everyone, with the chance to learn from each other and to share in the hits and the misses.

Hits and Misses

There is no pressure to be all polished or perfect when trying out the Ideas.

We predict that trying out these *Ideas* will lead to some great hits, where its obvious there has been connection and fun. And also, there may be some misses- where doing something a bit different doesn't work out quite how you had hoped. We believe it is important to have a chance to speak with others about these experiences, where you feel supported to share about the courage it took to try something out, and how it felt when it didn't quite work. We'd also suggest that if you think something hasn't quite worked, and still can stay open and go with the flow, that this can also lead to opportunities for connection and fun.

Familiar and New

We know that care home staff are very skilled and committed at finding out what is important to the ladies and gents who live in care homes.

These *Place in the Fun Ideas* are very much about valuing the 'familiar' i.e. what you currently know about what is important to people. So these Ideas are about starting with the familiar and adding something different by trying something just a little bit different which can then give clues as to how to add new elements to the familiar, to help things to be fresh and interesting for everyone.

In the Now

You will see that the *Ideas* don't give specific tasks for exactly what you should do. The *Ideas* are suggestions or starting points; staying in the moment (the now), going with the flow and following the lead of the lady or gent you are connecting with will be your best guide to showing you where to go or what to try next.

Well that was a Surprise

You will see that at the top of most of the Ideas posters is a section called 'Everyday Life in Care Homes'. This section recognises all the skilled ways in which connection and fun are already happening in care homes; and we also know that in care homes things are changing all the time and so people are constantly having to adapt. Some of the Ideas might feel that its what you do already, and you may have ideas now about who they would or wouldn't work with. We would like to suggest something really important to trying out **A Place in the Fun** ideas is to be as open to surprise as possible. Surprises about how there might be one small new idea to try out, surprised at yourself, surprised at others and surprised at what happens if you give things a go.

The Heart of a Place in the Fun

At the heart of **A Place in the Fun** is getting a sense of how the ladies and gents you are connecting with are feeling, and letting them see that you acknowledge their feelings. Tuning into the others person's emotions is the first step for connection, with the understanding that Places of Fun are places where people are free to feel happy, sad, content or anxious knowing that others will keep them company however they are feeling.

A PLACE IN THE FUN

SOUNDS LIKE A SONG

CREATING MOMENTS OF CONNECTION
AND FUN THROUGH WORDS, SONG,
RHYTHM AND RHYME

Song, Rhythm and Rhyme

Everyday Life in Care Homes

Music forms a huge part of everyday life in care homes, and brings enormous amounts of joy.
Care home staff have lots of insight into the types of music, particular singers and songs that are important to the ladies and gentlemen in care homes.
Care home staff often show guts by getting up to sing and dance because they know the positive effect this can have.

Learning from Elderflowers

There are a number of ways in which Elderflowers use song, rhythm and rhyme to create connection and fun.The focus is less on the meaning of words and more on what feeling and fun saying or singing different words and sentences can create.

- Singing words or sentences instead of saying them
- Picking up on a word and then playing around with other words that rhyme with it
- Sharing ,limericks and poems, and encouraging others to join in and make up new lines or endings
- Incorporating the names of the ladies and gentlemen into a song or poem
- Stopping mid-way through a song to tell a story
- Playing different instruments like the harmonica or ukulele
- Singing songs that use words from different languages
- Finding words that are enjoyable to say and saying them often, for example kerfuffle, or promenade

If you were to try out something a bit different out:

Looking at the list above of Learning from the Elderflowers, are there any of these ways of bringing in song, rhythm or rhyme that appeal to you?

Are there any different singers, types of music or rhyme that you feel would be fun to share with the ladies and gentlemen in the care home?

See Where it Goes

What do you notice:
About any surprises you see if you try something a bit different
About the way you move, talk, interact when using music, or words in different ways

Hellos and Farewells

Creating moments of connection and fun through the quality of our hellos and farewells

A Place in the Fun

Hello and Farewell

Everyday Life in Care Homes

Many times each day you will interact with the ladies and gentlemen who live in the care home, saying hello- asking how they're day is.

If its your first time seeing someone that day there may be a certain focus and energy to your hello; same for your final goodbye of the day.

Learning from the Elderflowers

Hellos and Farewells for the Elderflowers are a way of showing the person they are meeting how very important they are. Elderflowers tend to make a big deal of their hellos and farewells. Simple acts like setting down whatever is in their hands like a visitor would when they arrive to your home, or offering a hand to shake and introducing themselves by name each time are some ways in which they show the person that they have their full attention. Saying farewell can often take the Elderflowers a considerable amount of time. The Elderflower makes of point of expressing to the person what they valued about their time together, for example the Elderflower might thank a gent for how gently he held their hand, or thank a lady for how she had kept them company on the walk down the corridor .

If you were to try something a bit different out:

If you were to think about how you would like the ladies and gentlemen in your care home to feel each time you say hello and farewell, what would that feeling be?

What could you do during the first minute, and the last minute each time you are with them (for example in their room), that could help this feeling that you would like the ladies and gentlemen to feel, to grow even more?

See Where it Goes

It could be worthwhile to notice:

When people are stretched for time what are the creative ways they use to give substance to their hellos and farewells

Any difference you notice in people if they have experience a warm, rich hello or farewell

A Place in the Fun

OBJECTS

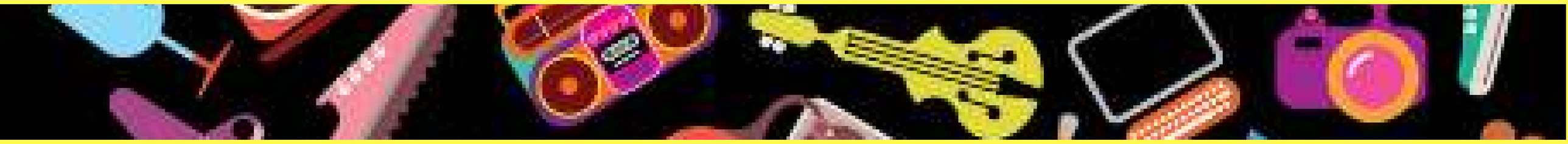
Creating moments of connection and fun by sharing 'not-so-random' objects that hold a story or feeling for the person who owns them.



An Object with a Story or Feeling Attached

Learning from the Elderflowers

Elderflowers use a variety of different 'not-so-random' objects to generate connection and fun. The emphasis is placed on the Elderflowers feelings and history with this object, more so than the object itself. When visiting care homes, each Elderflower brings their own objects that are important to them, so that when they show the object to the ladies and gentlemen they have a story to tell about the object. Examples of the types of objects Elderflowers might bring along include: a notebook full of lists, a conker they've had since they were 7, a family photo, a harmonica.



A Note about Objects

The object can be anything that creates excitement or interest or energy for you, and that is safe and you feel comfortable bringing into the home where you work.

So, an object could be : Your first Valentines card or a favourite hat.

For example, if the object was your first Valentines card you may want to share how you felt when you got it and hear what they think about the card, or imagine with others what your ideal Valentines cards would say.

if your object was a hat, it may be that you feel like singing a certain song everytime you wear it and you have a go at singing this song, or you may want people to let you know what they think about the hat on you.

If you were to try something a bit different out:

What object might you show and share with others?
What feeling do you get from this object? What story could you tell about it?

See Where it Goes

You may want to notice:
 how it felt to be sharing an object that you had a connection with
what others seemed to be interested in or enjoyed about you sharing your object
how the interaction developed.

Your Thoughts and Ideas about Using Objects

Eyecatchers

Creating moments of connection and fun through eyecatching clothes, accessories, hair or make-up

A Place in the Fun

EyeCatchers

Everyday Life in Care Homes

Ladies and gentlemen living in care homes often notice if there is something different about the way staff look, for example, a new haircut or different glasses.

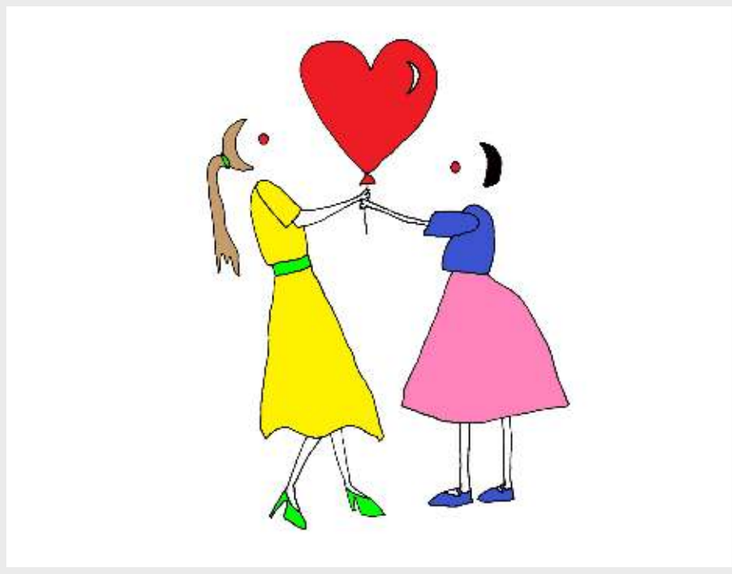
Parties and festivities are often times when accessories are worn by people and day-to-day, staff use opportunities such as wearing brightly coloured, or themed socks to bring a smile to people.

Learning from the Elderflowers

Elderflowers dress in clothes with bright colours and different textures, with accessories like belts, braces, bags, hats & shoes that are eyecatching. They also wear a red nose as a way of drawing peoples attention to their faces, which can enable eye contact.
Sometimes there may be a wee issue with they're clothes, it may be that there is a tear that could do with being mended or a skirt that's all askew.







If you were to try out something a bit different:

What simple, everyday ideas for eyecatching clothes, accessories or make-up can you and your colleagues come up with?
With health and safety guidelines in mind, what could feel possible to give a go in the next few days?

See Where it Goes

What seemed to help people to give something a go?
What did you notice about people's responses when you tried out wearing something eyecatching?

What Ideas did you Come Up with that you would like to Share with other Care Homes:

Small Acts Made Big

A Place in the Fun

Learning from the Elderflowers

Elderflowers see the extra-ordinary in the ordinary. Therefore, they view everything as being important and as an opportunity for connection and fun. Elderflowers take even the most simple things that are done 10's of times everyday and look at them with new eyes, as if its their first time ever doing it. For example, a simple handshake can turn into a full body shake. Passing someone a cup of tea can itself be as much of an event as enjoying drinking the cup of tea.

How are Small Acts Made Big

Ingredients

1 Small act you do everyday*
2 Fresh eyes
A splash of imagination
2 arms , 2 legs
1 smile.

*Examples of everyday acts- opening a door, setting the dinner table, turning on the TV, passing someone in the corridor.

Method

Take the small act you do everyday.
Look at it again with fresh eyes.
Add a splash of imagination to come up with a small change to make this everyday act that bit more like an important event
Use 2 arms, and 2 legs and 1 smile to make the small change

If you were to try out something a bit different:

Can you think of something you do everyday in the care home that you would like to look at with fresh eyes?



What support would you find helpful if you were to make this everyday act more like an important event?



A Place in the Fun

FOLLOWING YOUR LEAD

CREATING MOMENTS OF CONNECTION AND FUN, THROUGH PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN CARE HOMES EXPERIENCING THEIR AUTHORITY & SIGNIFICANCE

Follow Your Lead

Everyday Life in Care Homes

Care home staff support people living in care homes to have opportunities to exercise choice and independence. They are also sensitive to the ways in which choice and independence can be affected by communal living, and the impact of conditions such as dementia on a person's ability to express their preferences. Care home staff care deeply about finding ways to help ladies and gents in care homes to have a sense of achievement and significance.

Learning from the Elderflowers

The Elderflowers use a range of techniques to create opportunities for the ladies and gentlemen to have authority, significance and status. Some of these include:

Seizing opportunities to enter the world of the lady or gentleman they are engaging with, regardless if what the person is saying is 'true' or not. This involves not only not contradicting what the person is saying, also the Elderflower going further and using their imagination to really enter into the story and experience of the lady or gentleman.

A second technique the Elderflowers use to convey authority and status to the ladies and gentlemen is in their body language. They meet people at eye level, and also sometimes sit on the floor, so that the lady or gent is the person higher up looking down at the Elderflower. The Elderflowers always ensure that there is space for ladies and gents who are mobile to easily be able to walk away, and so the Elderflowers position themselves in ways next to the ladies and gents that do not block the persons ability to leave at any time.

Thirdly, Elderflowers if faced with a wee problem or mishap don't rush straight to fixing it immediately themselves. For example, if they have forgotten where they left their bag, they may involve others in the hunt to find it. The Elderflowers are constantly open to see their wee problems, mishaps or confusions as being an opportunity to seek advice, help and guidance from those around them.

What have you noticed happens if you:

Follow the lead of the ladies and gents in your care home and tune into what they are showing you they would like to happen next

Follow the lead of the ladies and gents and enter into whatever they are telling you, even if you know it to not be quite 'true'

Follow the lead of the ladies and gents and see what solutions to everyday harmless mishaps, they come up with

If you were to try out something a bit different:

When one of the ladies or gents you are supporting is saying things that aren't quite 'true' what ways do you use, or could you use to really enter their world?

How would it be to try to position yourselves so that the lady or gent you are chatting with is higher up than you?

How would it feel to turn natural wee mishaps, for example dropping some papers or wearing your top inside out, into opportunities for connection?