Daily life

“What’s happening today?”
“What shall I do?”
An important part of your role is to help the people you care for to enjoy their daily life and take as full a part in it as they can.

A shrinking world
A world that once involved holidays in distant places, visiting friends and family, facing challenges and enjoying all sorts of social and cultural pursuits is shrunk to just these four walls. Is that how it feels to someone moving into the home?

Declining physical and mental powers can make it hard to join in. But there are many ways to fight that shrinking world and keep opportunities open and alive for residents.

Getting to know you
The care plan can tell you about ways in which people might like to spend their days, matching their abilities with their interests. It tells you about their past and present life and their preferred routines. Do they like a particular newspaper? What hobbies and activities could they still enjoy?

Getting to know the person will help you see them, rather than just the tasks you are assisting them with, so that everyday help becomes a shared activity, rewarding for you both.

Look and listen
Find out what they might fancy doing today. Don’t assume you know. What would they like to wear? What about make-up, jewellery? Is it time for a haircut or a shave?

Suggesting a sweater and comfortable shoes might encourage that walk in the garden.

Do they have all that they need? Is their walking aid in reach and sight? Do they have their glasses; are they clean? Are they wearing their hearing aids, with working batteries?

They may want a change from routine or to avoid someone pestering them. They may opt out of joining a group because their hearing or sight is deteriorating or they feel unwell or upset. Listening to residents and acting quickly can stop people from becoming isolated and prompt the help they may need.

Try sitting down and joining in, rather than standing and watching, even if it is only for a few minutes. Watch to see if people need support to include
them in conversations or activities. A small group session, just reading out
stories from the day’s newspaper, can encourage discussion.

Be spontaneous. Not always easy, but doing something different, like eating
outside when it’s warm, can make a person’s day.

A helping hand
Involving residents in everyday activities can keep interest and
independence and bring pleasure. They may like to tend raised flower
beds, plant indoor bulbs and herbs or help prepare for mealtimes. Support
and encourage them to help themselves to snacks, make their own tea and
coffee, or for their visitors. At mealtimes, when you can, sit with people,
particularly those with dementia, as this will encourage them to stay
interested in eating and drinking.

Let’s get moving
However much support a person needs, it helps to keep moving. Just a
short walk around the home can provide stimulation, delay further
deterioration and help prevent possible pressure sores. A chiropodist can help
with foot care. A physiotherapist will advise on individual programmes, while
group sessions can be fun, a challenge
and something to look forward to. Help
in the garden, kitchen, a trip to the local
shop or pub can mean effort,
responsible risk, but a real boost to
morale.

Keeping connected
Residents may lose the ability to write,
use the telephone or modern technology, so they may look to you to help
them remain connected to family and friends, perhaps helping them to
send birthday cards and short notes.

Some people may have no visitors or can’t go out, so do welcome the
community in. Whether a rare treat or a regular date, it will be a pleasure
to see local leisure providers, libraries, schools, musical societies,
entertainers, pet owners as well as volunteers who may like to read to
them, befriend them and add life to the home.