

Human Right to Personal Expression



A Slice* about Elderflower Visits

* Over 20 different strands of work took place between March and October 2022 as part of Rights Made Real Phase 2. Each of these strands was situated under one of 4 Human Rights. This Slice offers a slice of insight into one of those strands.

HUMAN RIGHT TO PERSONAL EXPRESSION

A Slice about Elderflower Visits

This opportunity was a collaboration with the arts-in-health charity Hearts and Minds and Rights Made Real in Care Homes. Hearts and Minds run the Elderflowers programme, a team of carefully selected professional arts practitioners, who are trained to work with people living with dementia using the art of therapeutic clowning to engage, be playful and make a connection. During their interactions Elderflowers improvise, sing and play, and also tune in to the engagement level of each resident in order to tailor each visit appropriately. Respecting the dignity of participants is a central principal of the Elderflowers programme.

This opportunity enabled Elderflowers to make online visits, with the support of a member of care home staff, direct to care homes. During these visits ladies and gents (residents) living with dementia had the chance to enjoy moments of connection, joy and laughter. The last session took place in-person with the 2 Elderflower practitioners visiting the 2 care homes involved in the Opportunity. This allowed the ladies and gentlemen to have direct interaction and for the Elderflowers to meet more of the care home residents. These sessions were hugely pleasurable with lots of very positive engagements.

The Elderflowers had 6 online and one face to face visit each lasting 2.5 hours duration which took place between April and September 2022. The visits included a reflective discussion with staff in the care homes about what they valued, what impact this intervention seemed to have made for residents and the learning that they had gleaned in relation to making connections with residents in their own practice.

Creating Connections with the Right to Personal Expression and Principles from the National Care Standards

Some key elements of this opportunity connected with the right to personal expression and the National Care Standards Principles were:

- The Elderflower approach has a particular focus to make a positive impact on the lives of people living with dementia, touching their hearts and minds with kindness and joy when they need it most.
- It raises awareness of ways in which to tune into how to connect in a range of ways with a person, even if language is not present.
- It emphasises small and significant invitations to connect that are playful and build on where the person is at.

What we've Heard

Stories from staff about the learning and impact of the Elderflower Visits Opportunity:

“One lady liked to have a range of soft toys beside her. In the past we may have talked to her about which soft toys she liked etc. This did not always get a response. The Elderflowers began a

playful session with the lady and the soft toys animating them in their hands. There was much stronger connection with the resident who was animating the soft toys too and smiling”.

“Staff were surprised about how one small thing can lead to engagement and conversation. One gentleman noticed the bright colours on one of the Elderflowers scarves. He pointed to this. Rather than focusing on questions such as ‘do you like that colour?’ – there was more talking about colours in general, sharing what your favourite colour is – the Elderflower shared ‘I love yellow, not everyone can carry that colour it makes me think of daffodils’. The man pointed to a red rose in one Elderflowers hair. The Elderflower started reciting ‘my love is like a red red rose’. The man said some of the lines. He was animated and enjoyed this”.

“It has been a really valuable experience and we have learnt so much. We have realised the benefits of reminiscing through music and chat and the joy that brought to the residents. We have seen how one topic develops into a longer conversation that sparked memories. In particular the idea of developing a storyline and then exploring subjects that have generated a spark of memory i.e. going to a dance or garden party. We have seen how the use of colours and different fabrics i.e. flags/bunting, costumes, scarves etc. can create connections and how different objects or props sparked memories and connection to create a wider story. We noticed how spirits were lifted for everyone and there was individual pleasure at residents being able to remember the words of a song and sing along or not remember and laugh at this too. The introduction of using technology (Zoom) was a great learning experience for some of our residents. We hope that some will still have retained memory of that experience”.

1 Thing you Might Want to Do

Take a look at the resource – A Place in the Fun for ideas derived from the Elderflowers work on enhancing connection.

Also take a look at the short Film developed by Crossgates Care Home where staff share their learning from this approach.

To view these resources visit www.heartsminds.org.uk and search for ‘A Place in the Fun’ and ‘Say Yes to the Mess’ under Carer Resources

Something you Might want to Ask or Think more About

What did you like in the two stories above?

Have you or someone you know done something a little bit similar?

What has thinking about these stories sparked in you?

