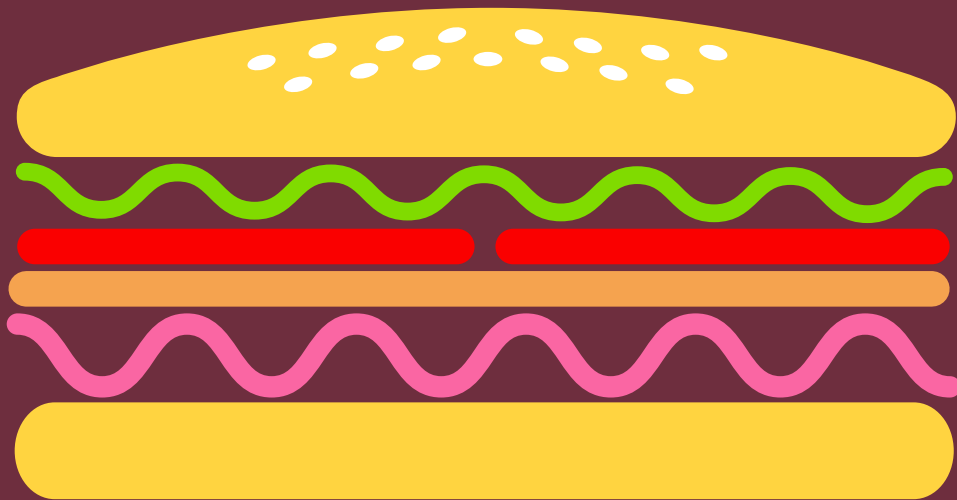


A Piece About

HUMAN RIGHT TO FAMILY LIFE



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.

A PIECE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHT TO FAMILY LIFE

Introduction

Welcome to this Piece.

In the context of the Rights Made Real Project, the Right to Family Life was explored in relation to everyday interactions that promote connections between the resident in a care home with dementia and their friends and family. The focus was on the perspective of the relative connecting with the person with a dementia. As someone enters the later stages of dementia their ways of connecting may change. A move to a care home can change the space, time and opportunities for connection for families. Supporting people to maintain and develop relationships with family and friends in a way that feels reciprocal and nourishing and meaningful was at the core of opportunities within the Rights Made Real Project that focused on this human right.

With reference to family life in the National Care Standards, the descriptive statements below tap into this human right.

2.18 I am supported to manage my relationships with my family, friends or partner in a way that suits my wellbeing

2.19 I am encouraged and supported to make and keep friendships, including with people my own age

About this Piece

The term 'piece' has been used for two reasons:

Firstly, the ideas and questions presented in this document are 'a piece' of the picture in relation to the human right to family life for people living in and visiting care homes; and we appreciate that there is much more to be said about this human right.

Secondly, the 'piece' plays with the idea of a Scottish sandwich, where between slices of bread there is a tasty filling.

The slices (structure) in the Rights Made Real project were 3 strands of work which took place under the theme of Right to Family Life. These slices are listed below. There is a full description of these slices available at www.rightsmadereal.org.uk under the Resources Tab.

The 'filling' are the key themes, learning, and further curiosities that emerged during the course of the project, this learning is also outlined below.

At the end of each filling is 'an open curiosity'; a question to which there is most likely no one neat answer and is designed to spark further conversation.

The Slices- Overview of the Strands of Work that Took Place to Explore this Human Right

Exploring and Enhancing connections: Suzie Ferguson, Therapeutic Clown Practitioner

Therapeutic clowning focuses on people as human beings; being with the other person in the moment, from a place of beginner's mind, free of expectations and with the hope to connect. A series of one to one visits with families and workshops for families took place.

A particular focus of the opportunity was with families of people living in the care home who have a dementia:

- To explore feelings, celebrations and curiosities about our engagement with people living with later stage dementia,
- To look at how we can recognise and build on current strengths we have in making connection and,
- To explore how we might use our experiences to develop some new ways to make connections that feel reciprocal and nourishing.

Exploring and Enhancing the Visiting Experience

This opportunity was supported by the Project Leads in the Rights Made Real Project and focused on exploring ways to hear from families, residents and staff about how they are currently feeling about the visiting experience, and how those in the care home community might like to come together to think about (small, real and possible) ways in which to enhance the experience.

Workshop attendees then were able to apply for a small grant (up to £500), to support them to take forward ideas generated from their conversations with residents, families and staff about enhancing the visiting experience.

We are Family

This opportunity was created after conversations from care home staff who recognised that some residents have no family and often see the care home staff as their 'family'. Care homes were offered an award of money to contribute towards enhancing the experience for those who have no visiting family. The monies helped to contribute towards a special experience for that person such as an outing or decorating their room.

Resource Development

Resources which explore the language of connection (Lingo of Connection) and personal expression (Express yourself!) Conversations that enable personal expression) can be found www.rightsmadereal.org.uk under the Personal Expression Resources Tab.

Creating Connections with the Right to Family Life and the Principles from the National Care Standards

A summary of the ways in which the 'well-being' and 'be included' principles were brought to life are listed below:

- The recognition that the visiting experience for families can be both rewarding and challenging for families.

- The importance of collaboration in creating connection, space and the sense of community for families visiting the care home.
- Supporting family members to celebrate how they make connections and how to develop connections with people living in a care home with a dementia.
- The significance of tuning into the person with a dementia and following their lead and going with the flow.

Right to Family Life- Creating opportunities for Reflection on experiences of Connection

Within the Rights Made Real project we specifically wanted to focus on the experiences of families in relation to this right being enhanced. Through the various workshops with staff and family members we were able to support each of these groups to have space, time and support to reflect on how people felt about connections between staff, families and the person in the care home living with a dementia.

These conversations helped people to share in an open way how they felt.

Staff reflections on making connections with families during COVID had resulted in many positive experiences. Staff had been meeting families at the front door of the home and taking them to the room of the person they were visiting – the ‘walk to the room’ gave them a longer, natural and deliberate opportunity to talk, not just about the person living in the care home, but the family member themselves.

Supporting families to reflect on their experiences of connecting with the person living in the care home enabled them to share deeply both positive and negative emotions. For example, exploring with families their hopes for connection when visiting often revealed feelings of being proud that the family member still remembers who they are, and a great fear about the fact that this might change. Supporting family members to find ways to engage with the person with a dementia’s sense of self, without it having to be about remembering was an example of what an opportunity for reflection could focus on.

A member of staff who attended the sessions with the families spoke about the value of such reflective sessions and wanted to explore what this could look like in the context of relative meetings where the focus was often on information giving and decisions about improvements in the home.

An Open Curiosity

This experience highlighted how much people valued deliberate opportunities for reflection and the support of experts to deepen these reflections. Given time and resource constraints how would it be to think that it is also possible to acknowledge that we are enough and we have enough to support families to maintain and develop relationships in a way that suits the well-being of everyone? What could reimagining support for families in relation to connection look like?

Right to Family Life- Collaboration in creating connection, space and the sense of community for families visiting the care home

A key strand across all of the opportunities in the Rights Made Real Project was collaboration. In the Right to Family Life strand there was a focus on spending time talking to others about what they value in enhancing connections with family, the visiting experience and connecting with the person with a dementia living in the care home, noticing more deliberately what works well and being curious about what could be possible. This collaborative approach often resulted in sharing small and significant celebrations, being surprised and energised when assumptions were challenged, and the co-creation of new opportunities for connection that they had not previously considered. The collaborative approach was weaved into conversations and noticings in everyday practices rather than having meetings or consultation surveys.

Staff in one care home were surprised when they heard that several of their family visitors really enjoyed when staff came into the room during visiting to spend time talking together. They had previously thought that it was important to give the family and the resident time alone together.

A family member had thought a successful visit was when the person they were visiting was engaged, responsive, could remember who they were and expressed happiness. Following an exploration about what a successful visit looks like with other families and staff she was surprised how relaxed and positive she felt when she decided to go in and sit alongside them while they were sleeping and, on another occasion, sit alongside reading her magazine or knitting.

An Open Curiosity

The stories we heard seemed to reflect a model of collaboration that embraces learning and co-creation rather than feedback and consultation – what everyday interactions help to open up conversations that embrace learning and co-creation?

Right to Family Life- Continuing growth of relationships

The Rights Made Real project purposefully sought to focus on the connection between family members and the person with dementia in the care home. The approach to connection used core aspects of the therapeutic clowning approach.

Learning that emerged from the focused work with families that helped people to continue to grow the relationship with the person with a dementia resulted in the articulation of some key pointers that may be helpful for families themselves and for staff in supporting families. These may be very familiar to you and to families and there may be some value in considering these again and adding some of your own. These included:

- Pausing and taking a breath before a visit to tune into how you are feeling and taking the time to consider what your hopes are for the visit.
- Taking the interaction at the pace of the person with dementia, and following their lead.
- Letting go of expectations which relates to how we respond when the response from the other is not what we expected – the letting go can make space for new responses or way of being.
- Considering moving from a question and answer approach which relies on remembering facts details and information to one centred on stories, appreciations, wonderings and noticing.
- Introducing fun and playfulness.
- Tuning into and validating whatever emotion the person with dementia is feeling.
- Asking the person with dementia for help or ideas about something.
- Noticing small things you value and saying these out loud in the moment during interactions.
- Not feeling hurt or disappointed when the person with dementia says or shows they do not want to connect/engage but seeing this as a strong and positive interaction that they are able to share what they would like or not like.

An Open Curiosity

The above pointers may feel familiar and also quite a lot for someone to remember or focus on. One relative felt that these pointers were quite a change from what she normally did and the pausing and trying to hold back from asking the person lots of questions was what she felt she could focus on going forward. Wondering what a slow, steady and real approach for continuing to grow the relationship might look like for each of us?

Saying Your Piece/ Sharing this Piece

Is there something else that feels important to you about the Right to Family Life for people living in care homes?

Was there anything in this Piece that stood out for you, that you might like to share and discuss with others?