



#CAREHOMEDAY20

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Listening is key when delivering holistic and personalised care



Carey Whittaker

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Care nurse and acting home manager at Renaissance Care's Meadowlark Care Home, Casey Whittaker believes despite the difficulties faced during the Coronavirus pandemic, her team and the residents they care for have come out stronger and closer than ever before.

Casey said:

"To meet the needs of a person, we must know them. That goes without saying for my team and I, and across the Renaissance Care group.

Before the pandemic, the staff and residents were already a tight knit team – my colleagues and I spend a lot of time making sure we know the residents personally so we can assess not just their care needs but their personal needs, likes and dislikes which will help us deliver the best quality care for each individual.

Of course, when lockdown came in, our normal routines quickly changed and what was usually a very lively social life for the residents in the home became reduced to one-to-one visits by staff only, no family visits and no group socialising in the home. This was hard on the residents, but thankfully, our prior knowledge of each individual allowed us to react fast and implement activities and tasks for each person which would spark an interest or engage them.

We've had socially distanced sing-alongs – I'm a keen guitarist so I've performed for the residents quite a few times and they really get into it, even if sometimes they're not so impressed with my knowledge of 60s rock n roll; arts and crafts is very popular too, and sometimes, it's just a good chat which is the best medicine.

The effects of boredom and loneliness in elderly people cannot be underestimated. Seeing their loved ones is always a highlight for the residents, so when management swiftly closed the homes to visitors to keep residents safe, they also supplied iPads to make sure communication with their loved ones could be maintained.

Technology has played a key role in keeping everyone safe and connected during this time. It's been fantastic watching the residents take to modern technology and learn something new. I also know how worrying this time is for families, so we have regular FaceTime's so they can "meet" each other, as well as posting regular Facebook updates to our dedicated page has really helped in letting loved ones know what we're up to at Meadowlark and that everyone is safe and happy.

The most important thing when giving personalised and holistic care is listening. When we listen, we are taking the time to understand the individual and we even begin to hear to the things they are not saying through their body language which is sometimes more telling than the words they speak.

This also applies to the resident's families who we often have personal relationships with too. They have great insight into their parent, grandparent etc., so listening to them helps us continuously provide the best quality care for individuals and always improve.

I am a qualified mental health nurse, and personalised care has always been an interest of mine, so I make sure this is evident in each relationship my staff and I have with residents, their families and each other.

My training as a "sign off" mentor while in the NHS has equipped me with the skills to personalise the training I give to staff too. I love teaching and learning from the people I work with, everyone's opinion is valuable and will only help us develop a stronger and highly skilled team."



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