



CAREHOMEDAY20

Wednesday 15 July



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Jesmond Aberdeen Home

Of my 18 years in care, I've worked at Renaissance Care's Jesmond Care Home for the last 12. Starting as a senior care assistant set me up well for becoming activities co-ordinator in 2013 and gave me a solid foundation for understanding individual care needs, a skill which is crucial in my current role.

As activities co-ordinator I'm focused on delivering personalised, individual care, and I've never seen it have such a profound and obvious benefit to the residents as it has during the Covid-19 crisis.

One of the key values we share at Renaissance Care is that we really 'see' our residents for who they are. True care is about respect and understanding, so all year round the team and I work hard to provide fun activities based on the range of hobbies, likes and dislikes of the individuals we care for.

However as lockdown measures came into place, our residents were no longer able to socialise together which for many is not only hard because they enjoy the company of the friends they have in the home, but a lack of stimulus can have a very negative effect on elderly people's mood, memory and general wellbeing.

We have a number of residents who live with dementia and we knew they would be particularly vulnerable as they can often find it difficult to understand or remember why they have to isolate, which can be very distressing for them.

Overnight, we went from group activities and regular visits from friends and family, to separating all residents into their own room with physical visits only from the staff in the home.

Spending that amount of one-to-one time with residents meant I got to know them even better than I did before which helped me come up with fun and exciting activities I knew would spark an interest in each resident. Activities in their rooms ranged from games of dominoes to pamper days – whatever tickled their fancy really.

We were lucky enough to also have some socially distanced activities, including performers who came to give us a show from the window. These types of activities really raised the spirits of the residents as it gave them a feeling of togetherness with their friends in the home, even though they weren't physically close.

Keeping residents and their families in good contact was one of my most important tasks during lockdown, not just for the benefit of the residents, but also their families. Thankfully, our management had supplied iPads to each home at the beginning of lockdown to ensure the essential communication between residents and their loved ones was not ceased completely during what was an extremely worrying time for many.

Being able to "meet" each other on FaceTime meant a lot to the residents and their families and also to the staff as it was fantastic seeing our residents' reactions to seeing their family - something we are looking forward to more of now socially distanced outdoor visits are permitted.

As you would imagine, delivering one-to-one activity sessions to 65 residents was quite the undertaking and I couldn't have done it without the support from the incredibly dedicated team here at Jesmond Care Home. From the kitchen team who have personalised diets for residents needing to get their strength up after falling ill, to the management and staff who have been a source of support to us all and of course to the residents whose smiles and words of encouragement have meant more than they could ever know.