

## Notes from care home online forum – 27 July 2023

Hosted by Derry Nugent (DN)

DN opened the forum and all participants introduced themselves.

Armed Forces Case Worker explained her role, helping veterans get the support they need particularly around housing. This could include finding a care home or respite care for a veteran or helping a family with a relative in a care home. The service can also help veterans link in with the community.

Dementia Link Worker was unaware of this service and thinks it could be useful to link in with the Warm Hub in their area.

One attendee said a neighbour's mother had just moved into a care home. She raised the topic of care home food and what to do if you have an issue with the food being served to a loved one. She asked how much of the care home budget is spent on food and how does it all work?

Another attendee said her father's care home had just moved to a third party provider for food and suggested it could be 'a sign of the times' that a third party provider is cheaper than cooking in-house.

Dementia Link Worker said she had not received any complaints about care home food however a large plate of food can be overwhelming for older people and some care homes are working towards a more personalised menu in order to avoid food wastage.

DN suggested it comes back to the individual's care plan i.e. if someone is off their food, why? DN asked for ideas on how relatives can raise issues like this without making a formal complaint.

One attendee said she had eaten her own lunch with her loved one to encourage them to eat and so she could arrange the plate in a way that would make them more likely to eat. She was around the care home enough to know what her loved one was eating and how it was prepared. She recommends getting to know staff and other residents at the care home and finding out how things work.

Another attendee said they find it difficult to raise issues. The staff are busy with other residents and they don't want to annoy them. They have started to talk to their loved one's Key Worker so they can speak up for them.

DN highlighted that being a carer and caring for a loved one doesn't stop when they move into a care home. She asked what would help make a relative more confident about raising issues?

Dementia Link Worker said she would look at the situation from a manager's point of view e.g. 'I'm sorry that mum has wasted food again, what could we do to reduce the waste' and therefore save money for the care home.

DN asked if the food situation depended on the size of the care home and whether it is part of a chain.

HB (Engagement Officer – HWN) said it would be good to raise these kind of issues in a residents' meeting but she didn't know how many of these were going on.

One attendee said they had been to two meetings for both residents and relatives and food had been brought up at both. The meetings were mainly residents, not many relatives, but the staff had been responsive to what they said. They are only able to visit around twice a week and takes her loved one out so doesn't see much of what's going on.

One attendee said when her mother first went into a care home she felt she had to tread very carefully and gradually built up relationships with those caring for her mother.

DN asked if anyone had any other issues to discuss or any further ideas for raising concerns.

Dementia Link Worker said she has five people from two care homes in a dementia music group in Berwick. She has had two requests for singers. She asked how to raise the profile of the benefit of music to people with dementia. She said care home guidance recommends using music.

One attendee said her loved one's care home had musical sessions a few times a month. She suggested using music more to encourage residents to get up and ready. She said the CD player in her father's room is never used by staff.

Another attendee said she is involved in music and knows the power it can have on people. She suggested making an individual playlist of favourite songs and telling the care staff to stop playing war songs – people must be recognised as individuals. She is happy to speak to Dementia Link Worker about the choir she is involved in.

DN asked if the group would be interested in a CQC inspector coming along to a future meeting. The group agreed this would be useful.

DN concluded the meeting. In summary there needs to be a way to raise concerns rather than complaints and relatives feel they need to 'tread carefully' however this is not something they want to do regarding the wellbeing of a loved one.