



# Listening to Residents' voices: Help Shape Research

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**This Guide is for activity staff, care home managers and care home teams.**

*The Guide gives information about:*

- Residents' voices shaping research
- How you could use this as a meaningful activity

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*Case study: benefits of hearing residents' voices – for improved care and for research.*

Dawn, the wellbeing coordinator, is sitting down for a one-to-one chat with Pavel, who lives in the care home. Dawn has a 'Public Involvement' activity pack from a research project about sleep. She is going through some of the pictures and prompts with Pavel. Pavel tells her that he is sometimes disturbed at night when staff are hoovering the lounge across the corridor from his bedroom.

When Dawn feeds this back to the researchers, they will know that the home environment is relevant to understanding how residents sleep.

Dawn also plans to tell the care home staff team, so that changes can be made.



# 1. Residents' voices and how we hear them.

There are different ways that residents can give their views which can contribute to positive changes, for example:

- Residents' meetings
- Suggestions box
- Research



**“we’re the ones that have got to live this life, so it’s important that we’re listened to about what we think of what goes on”**

Quote from a resident who took part in public involvement in research

## 2. How can residents' voices shape research?

- If residents' voices shape research this is called Public Involvement.
- Public involvement is best if it's people who have first-hand experience – like people living in care homes.
- Not just as 'research participants' – but advising and shaping the project so that it focusses on the people who matter most.
- What you hear from residents can be fed back to researchers.
- This helps research projects to ask the right questions and work with care home people in the best way.

### 3. What is care home ‘research’?

Research in care homes aims to improve care and quality of life for residents. Research may be carried out by people working in health and social care, or by people based in universities or research institutes.

There is a network (ENRICH) to support care home staff, residents, their families and researchers. ENRICH has good information and resources about care home research and how to get involved in research.

ENRICH says the aim of care home research is to:

- improve the quality of life for people living in care homes
- reduce the burden of challenging later life illnesses for residents and their families
- collect peoples’ views on how care should be provided
- support care home staff and family carers
- improve connections between caring professionals, care home staff, residents and families
- introduce the idea that residents, even those with cognitive impairment, can have an effective voice and make a difference to their everyday lives.

<https://enrich.nihr.ac.uk/care-home-staff/>

Visit the NIHR Website [HERE](#) ↗

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## 4. Five reasons activity staff can do this:

*The National Activity Providers Association (NAPA) believes that Activity staff are ideally positioned to facilitate meaningful activities in which residents' voices are heard and can shape research.*

1. Activity staff have a deep understanding of residents' needs, preferences, and interests, allowing them to tailor public involvement activities in ways that are both relevant and engaging. Activity staff are good at facilitating participation in a way that accommodates diverse needs and preferences.
2. Their established relationships with residents create a supportive environment where individuals feel comfortable sharing their views and experiences. This personal connection is essential for ensuring that public involvement activities are conducted effectively and resonate with participants.
3. Activity staff bring valuable expertise in designing and facilitating a variety of activities, which can be directly applied to public involvement
4. Activity staff are committed to giving individuals a voice and valuing their contributions. This approach not only enhances residents' quality of life but also empowers them by involving them in research that may directly influence their care and wellbeing.
5. Activity staff have the communication skills to link residents' voices with researchers.

*NAPA advocates for Activity Providers to take a leading role in integrating Public Involvement into activity provision. Embracing Public Involvement not only enhances research outcomes but also enriches the lives of residents and strengthens the role of Activity Providers in the care sector. They will need the support of the care home manager and the rest of the team.*

[www.napa-activities.co.uk](http://www.napa-activities.co.uk)



### **Case study: involvement activity helps learn something new from a resident, and inform research**

Elina, the activity coordinator, has gathered a small group of people living in the care home. She is running an activity from a Public Involvement pack from a university research team.

The research is about how digital care records could be used to improve care. She helped plan activities that would work for the residents in her home. They are having a discussion about ‘What makes a good day for you?’

There are pictures and prompts in the pack to help spark conversation. One resident Joyce, tells the others she loves to walk in the garden. Another, John, has been very quiet, then says he doesn’t have good days now that his friend has moved upstairs.

When Elina feeds this back, it helps the researchers to appreciate the importance of being outdoors and of friendship for residents. Elina also speaks with her team about helping John to see his friend regularly.

## 5. Benefits for care homes and people living in them

*Hearing residents voices to shape research can be a new activity for you to share with your residents. It should be enjoyable for everyone involved.*

Taking part in research can be a way that homes demonstrate development and knowledge expansion to the CQC. It is also common for researchers to provide some financial reimbursement for people's time.

Residents who have taken part in public involvement activities said:

- They enjoyed sharing their views and hearing the views of other residents.
- They appreciated feeling they were helpful and their voices heard.
- They were pleased that their care home was linking with outside activities.
- They enjoyed thinking and talking about different topics with other residents and activity providers.

Activity providers who ran public involvement activities said:

- They learnt new information about their residents.
- They noticed a 'buzz' among residents about the activity.
- Their residents enjoyed the activities.



## 6. How to make hearing residents' voices a meaningful activity

### *a. Which residents might take part?*

No-one has to take part in public involvement. It is always a choice, and some people won't be interested.

- Some people might be interested because of links to their life experience. Others might be interested in the topic itself.
- Some people might find it hard to tell you what they think – but the researcher may be able to adapt the activity so that people can engage and respond to the topic.
- People will be individual in how actively they take part.
- Some may wish to just come and watch and listen.

There is no formal written consent for residents involved in sharing their views, but no information that identifies individual residents would be passed on to researchers.

### *b. Finding a research project to work with*

You, your team or managers could try these things to find a research project:

- Join the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) ENRICH Research Ready Care Home Network – participation will give you access to local researchers to influence and advise on future research, and provide the opportunity to become involved in important local and national research. <https://enrich.nihr.ac.uk/care-home-staff/#getting-involved-in-research>
- Contact NAPA who may know about current research projects with teams who would love to work with you <https://napa-activities.co.uk/about-us/contact-us>
- Talk to your care home manager who may know about research projects
- Contact local universities. Lots of universities have a Public Involvement group.
- Your local Healthwatch will be interested in residents' views, and may know about research projects <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/what-we-do>



## 6. How to make hearing residents' voices a meaningful activity - Continued

### *c. How could you work with researchers?*

- Check with your care home manager that they agree for the home to be involved
- Check that there are some residents who are happy to be involved
- You might meet researchers on a video call, or they might come to meet you.
- Ask what topics they would like resident input on, and you may have suggestions for researchers
- Researchers should have ideas about what sort of activity with residents could help the residents give their views
- Your ideas will help to shape the activity to be right for your residents

#### *Case study: activity coordinator meeting researchers to plan a listening activity.*

Charlie, the Activity Coordinator has met online with Paul and Jane, university researchers, to run through a Public Involvement activity pack together.



Charlie has noticed some changes he would like them to make in the pack before using it with his residents. Some of the pictures seem a little small to show to her residents and he has suggestions about the wording used.

Paul and Jane will adapt the Public Involvement activity pack and send it out to Charlie.

# 6. How to make hearing residents' voices a meaningful activity - Continued

## *d. Setting up the activity in your care home*

- Use your knowledge of your residents and your care home community to decide where and when the activity may work best
- Let residents know that the activity will be taking place, and that researchers are interested in their views – a research team may have information leaflets and posters that you can display, the Public Involvement activity could be added to the weekly activity plan, information could be given in residents' meetings.
- There is no group too small and one-to-one activities are fine too
- You know your residents best and you will become the researchers' window into the residents' world
- You will have good ideas about what works best for your residents in terms of group size
- Set up of the activity will depend on what it is. Examples could include discussion group with prompt cards, quiz, creative writing, collage.
- Residents may find it helpful to have a quiet space for the activity so that they can listen to each other and also their voice can be heard.
- You might hear different views from residents – there are no right or wrong answers, if people don't like a topic or if they have negative comments that will still be helpful for the researcher to know
- Hearing different views shows good person-centred relationships. The researchers are not judging the care home.
- Silence is still an answer – take space and time to hear and see each other during the activity and enjoy the natural conversation as it happens
- Make time soon after the activity to note down the key information that came from the residents

## 6. How to make hearing residents' voices a meaningful activity - Continued

### *e. Feeding back to the researchers*

- Ask the researchers how you can feedback to them, e.g. online call, email. You may also wish to collect items created during the activity to show the researcher later. There is no right or wrong way to do this, it needs to feel right for you.
- Researchers will be very grateful for your help, and should be interested in and respectful of the input from you and the residents. They will not be judging you or the care home.

### *f. What should you expect from researchers?*

- Researchers should provide really clear information about the research project for the whole team so that the manager, staff and residents can understand the project.
- This could include leaflets, posters, video clips.
- Researchers should give feedback to residents telling them how their voices were listened to and what the researchers did about it.

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<https://arc-oe.nihr.ac.uk/research-implementation/research-themes/inclusive-involvement-research/chappi-care-home-activity>

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