

Open doors, connected lives: Community engagement pack for care homes

Helping you connect, engage and
open your doors with confidence

About this pack

Care homes are not just places of care – they're vibrant, vital parts of our communities. Age Cymru's '**Open doors, connected lives**' campaign is about building stronger, more human connections between care homes and the people around them. It's about opening up, reaching out and showing that later life can still be full of meaning, purpose and connection.

Together, we're creating care home communities where everyone feels seen, valued and connected.

You will appreciate more than most that older people who feel socially connected experience better emotional and physical health outcomes.

This pack is designed to help you and your team confidently engage with your local community – whether that's a local school choir visiting for a singalong, neighbours popping in for tea or volunteers sharing a story or a skill.

You don't need a big budget or special event experience, just a willingness to open your doors and welcome people in.

Inside, you'll find:

- A checklist of **simple ideas** to bring the outside world in
- Easy-to-use **templates** to help you contact schools, community groups and potential volunteers
- **Content** for your website or newsletter
- **Social media** templates to help you share your events and success stories
- Tips for planning a successful **open day** or **on-site event**
- A **myth-busting factsheet** to display in staff and public areas: What today's care homes are really like (separate PDF)
- **Posters and leaflets** featuring care home residents – to display in public areas (separate PDFs)

Your home already has so much to offer – wisdom, stories, laughter, care and companionship. This pack is here to help you share that with your wider community and create new connections that benefit everyone.

We will also be contacting local community groups and schools to encourage them to open their doors and reach out to you.

Let's open more doors and build more connected lives.

Ideas checklist:

Ways to open your doors

Here's a checklist of simple, meaningful ideas to connect with your community.

Everyday invitations:

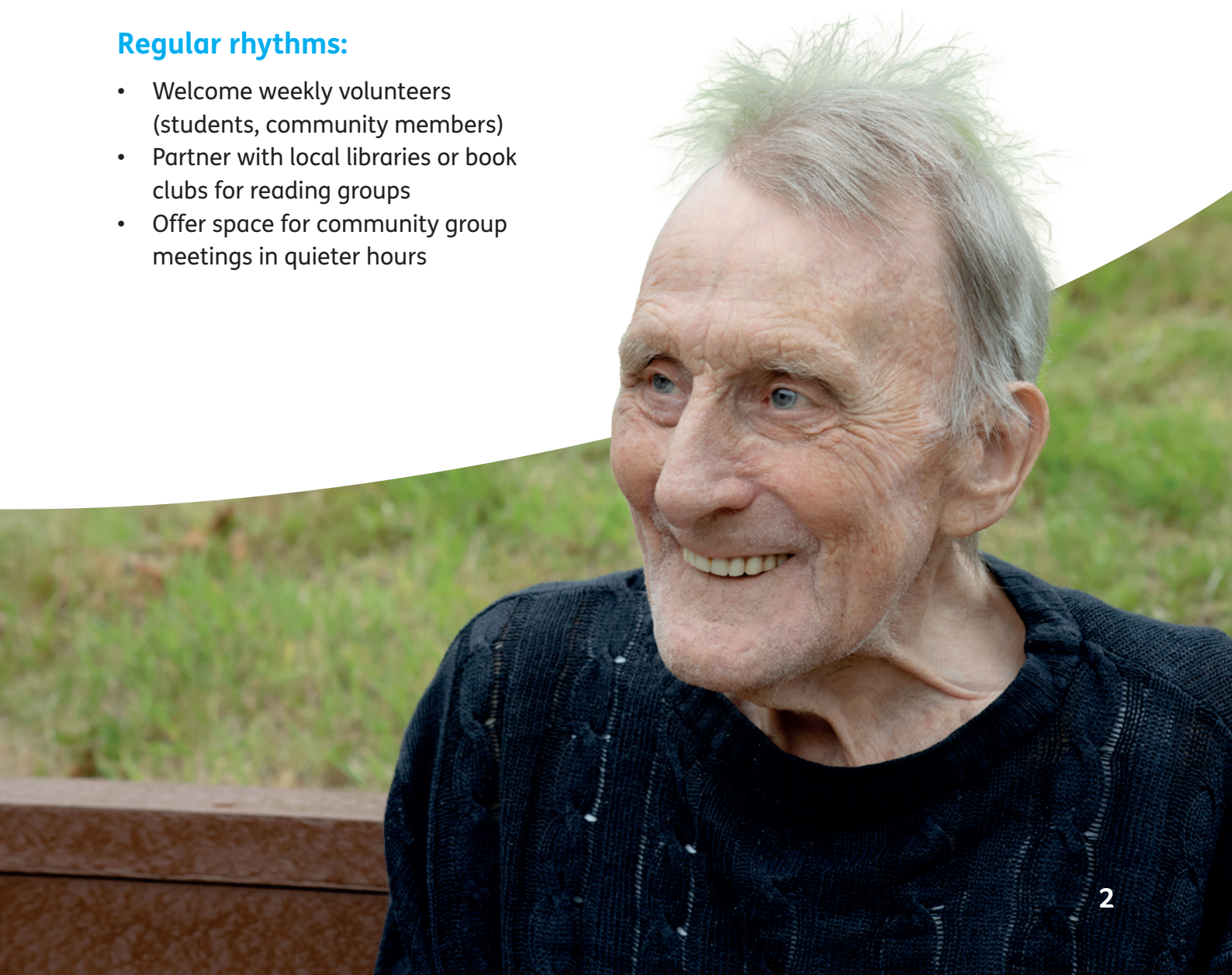
- Invite local people for tea, board games or gardening
- Hold a monthly 'open lounge' afternoon for neighbours
- Set up a 'pen pals and postcards' programme with local schools

Creative collaborations:

- Host an intergenerational art or storytelling project
- Invite musicians or drama groups to rehearse or perform
- Create a community memory wall with shared stories or photos

Regular rhythms:

- Welcome weekly volunteers (students, community members)
- Partner with local libraries or book clubs for reading groups
- Offer space for community group meetings in quieter hours



Template letters/emails

1. To schools/youth groups

Subject: Partnering for intergenerational joy – let's connect!

Dear [school/group name],

We're reaching out from [care home name] as part of Age Cymru's **'Open doors, connected lives'** campaign – a national effort to strengthen the bond between care homes and local communities.

We'd love to explore how we might work together. That could be anything from a student choir visit, art projects, shared storytelling or even pen pal letters.

Our residents have so much life experience to share and we know your students would brighten their days. Let's create something meaningful together.

Would you be open to a brief chat or meeting to explore ideas?

Warm regards,

[Your name], [Your role]

[Care home name]

[Contact details]

2. To community/volunteer groups and organisations

Subject: Let's connect our communities – partnership invitation

Dear [group name],

I'm getting in touch from [care home name] as part of **'Open doors, connected lives'**, an Age Cymru campaign focused on building meaningful connections between care homes and their local communities.

We're inviting local groups like yours to bring your skills, activities and services into our care home to bring joy, purpose and companionship to our residents.

Whether it's a craft session, musical performance, hairdressing services, gardening help or just regular visits for a cuppa and a chat – we'd love to welcome you.

If you'd like to explore how we might work together, I'd be delighted to talk further.

Warm wishes,

[Your name], [Your role]

[Care home name]

[Contact details]

Website/newsletter content

You might want to include this content on your website or in your newsletter to encourage community connections.

Community connections

Be part of our home – and part of something special.

At [care home name], we believe care homes should be at the heart of the community. As part of Age Cymru's '**Open doors, connected lives**' campaign, we're opening our doors to create meaningful connections between our residents and the world around them.

We know that when people come together – across generations, backgrounds and experiences – lives are enriched on all sides.

Whether you're a local group, a neighbour, a school or someone who simply wants to make a difference, we'd love to welcome you into our community.

For schools and youth groups

We love bringing generations together!

From school choirs and shared art projects to pen pals and storytelling, your pupils can bring energy, curiosity and joy to our home – and learn so much from the life experiences of our residents.

If you're a teacher or youth leader, get in touch – we'd love to collaborate.

For community groups and volunteers

Do you have a skill, service or story to share?

Whether you're a knitting club, gardening group, musician, hairdresser or simply someone who enjoys a friendly chat – your time can brighten someone's day.

We welcome:

- One-off visits or performances
- Regular volunteering
- Shared projects and partnerships

Let's explore what we can create together.

For neighbours and local residents

Come on in – you're always welcome.

Our care home is part of your community and we love meeting new people. Join us for tea, help out with an activity or just stop by to say hello. Little moments of connection can make a big difference.

Upcoming events

[Add details of open days, community cafes, performances or visits]

Get in touch

If you'd like to visit, volunteer or explore a project together, we'd love to hear from you.

Contact [name] on [phone number/email] or pop in for a chat.

Together, we can build a more connected, caring community – one visit at a time.



Social media templates

These templates aim to help you showcase connection, encourage visits and build community support using your social media channels.

You can adapt the content to suit you and to use on whichever channels you have (Facebook, Instagram, X or others).

Don't be afraid to add some emojis for a bit of fun or use photos you have consent to share online.

1. Welcoming the community

We love welcoming our community into [care home name]!

From [example local school performances] to [example neighbourhood coffee mornings], these moments of connection mean the world to our residents.

Want to get involved? We're always open to new friendships.

Contact us on [phone number/email]

#OpenDoorsConnectedLives #CareHomeCommunity #WalesCares

2. Promoting an open day or event

Save the date!

We're opening our doors on [date] for a community open day – and you're invited!

Join us for [tea, music, activities], meet our residents and see what life at [care home name] is really like.

All welcome!

#CareHomeOpenDay #OpenDoorsConnectedLives #VisitUs

3. Resident story / highlight

Meet [resident first name]

[He/She/They] joined us in [month/year] and [has/have] brought so much joy to our home.

They love [hobby] and recently [share story or achievement, eg painted their first canvas / started a quiz group].

It's stories like this that show how life in a care home can be full of purpose and connection.

#OpenDoorsConnectedLives #ResidentVoices #CareHomeLife

4. Partnering with local groups

A huge thank you to [local school/community group] for visiting us today!

The [choir / art group / volunteers] brought so much joy to our residents – and plenty of smiles too.

We love building connections that brighten lives.

Want to collaborate? Get in touch!

#OpenDoorsConnectedLives #Intergenerational #CommunityPartnership

5. Call for volunteers / visitors

Could you spare an hour to make someone smile?

We're looking for volunteers to [run craft sessions / join residents for chats / share music or skills].

Even a short visit can mean so much.

To find out more, call us on [phone number] or message us here.

#VolunteerLocal #ConnectedCare #OpenDoorsConnectedLives

6. Everyday life and connection

Just a regular day at [care home name] – full of conversation, creativity and community.

Our residents have been [activity – eg. baking, painting, gardening] and sharing stories together.

Care homes are not just about care – they're about connection.

#OpenDoorsConnectedLives #ThisIsCare #CommunityMatters

7. Resident quote

“[Short resident quote, eg “I’ve made real friends here”]” – [Mary, aged 89]

A connected care home is a thriving care home.

We're proud to be part of a community that values every voice.

#ResidentVoices #OpenDoorsConnectedLives #CareHomeStories

8. Call to action for local groups

Are you part of a community group, school or local organisation?

We'd love to hear from you!

Whether it's a visit, a shared project or a regular activity – we're always open to new connections.

Let's make something special together.

#OpenDoorsConnectedLives #CareHomeCommunity #GetInvolved

Event tips:

Planning an open day

Planning checklist:

- ☐ Set a date and time
- ☐ Identify a lead organiser or small team
- ☐ Invite residents to help shape activities or host
- ☐ Plan simple, inclusive activities (music, tours, tea and cake, memory lane wall, craft table)
- ☐ Send invitations to families, neighbours, schools, community groups and local press
- ☐ Prepare welcome signage and a friendly greeting space
- ☐ Designate staff or resident ambassadors
- ☐ Capture the day with photos (with permission)
- ☐ Follow up with thank yous and potential partnerships

Top tips:

- Involve residents early – their ideas and leadership make it special
- Keep it relaxed – it's about connection, not perfection
- Use the event to share stories, invite future visits or build new relationships

Share the joy

Age Cymru would love to hear about your successes, new relationships and partnerships developed as part of this campaign.

Please send your feedback, stories and photos to carehomes@agecymru.org.uk or call 029 2043 1555.



@AgeCymru Become part of our story