



Open doors, connected lives: Information pack for health and social care professionals

**Supporting positive, informed
conversations about care home life**

Context

Age Cymru is launching a campaign to change perceptions of care home life in Wales. **‘Open doors, connected lives’** aims to challenge outdated stereotypes relating to care homes, celebrate the real stories of residents, and support both care homes and communities to open their doors – literally and figuratively – to a more inclusive, engaged future.

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

Purpose of this pack

This pack is designed to support general practice staff, hospital and community-based teams, social care teams and other health professionals to have compassionate, honest and hopeful conversations with older adults and their families about care home living.

Whether in hospital discharge planning, community care reviews or family consultations, your voice helps shape perceptions and choices. You can make those conversations empowering, not daunting. You can provide much-needed reassurance and help people make informed, positive choices. You can help change the conversation and help make sure no one feels forgotten or afraid of what comes next.

Impact: Why this matters

- Older people who feel socially connected experience better emotional and physical health outcomes.
- Families feel supported and informed to make more confident, positive care choices.
- Staff in care homes report stronger outcomes when residents arrive with a clearer, more hopeful understanding of what to expect.

Included within this pack

- Information about different types of care homes
- Key messages to share
- Conversation prompts and guidance
- 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)

Understanding the types of care homes in Wales

A guide for healthcare professionals supporting informed choices

When discussing care options with people and families, it's helpful to understand the different types of care homes available in Wales. Each offers distinct levels of support and choosing the right one depends on individual needs – both now and in the future.

1. Extra care or assisted living

Focus: Independent living with some additional on-site, community or agency support

These self-contained flats have staff who can provide personal care and support services.

This can include:

- Washing, dressing, going to the toilet
- Medication prompts

Ideal for: People who wish to continue to live independently but need access to increased assistance.

2. Residential care homes

Focus: Day-to-day support with personal care

These homes support people who can no longer live independently but don't need regular nursing care.

Staff help with:

- Washing, dressing, eating, mobility and medication prompts
- Companionship, safety and structured routines

Ideal for: People who are frail, isolated or have mild to moderate needs but do not require medical supervision.

3. Nursing homes

Focus: 24/7 nursing care alongside personal support

These homes provide the same help as residential care, but with qualified nurses on site day and night.

They support people with:

- More complex or long-term health conditions
- Regular clinical needs (eg wound care, catheter care, medication administration)

Ideal for: People with chronic illness, disability, advanced dementia or recovering after hospital discharge.

4. Dementia care homes (residential or nursing)

Focus: Specialised support for people living with dementia

These homes (or designated units within homes) are tailored for people with cognitive impairments. They may also be called EMI care homes or units, although this term is becoming less common.

Features may include:

- Dementia-aware staff and environments
- Familiar routines, memory aids and sensory-friendly spaces
- Support with communication and emotional wellbeing

Ideal for: Those with Alzheimer's or other types of dementia who need structured, compassionate support.

5. Dual-registered homes

Some care homes are registered to provide both residential and nursing care. This allows residents to stay in the same home as their needs change, which can be reassuring for residents and families.

Key messages to share

Care homes can be

- **Connected:** Places where people maintain relationships and build new ones – with staff, fellow residents, family and the wider community.
- **Purposeful:** Residents continue to contribute, create and belong. Care homes often host events, hobbies, intergenerational projects and community partnerships.
- **Safe and supportive:** Access to 24/7 care, support with medication, nutrition, mental health and wellbeing.
- **Respectful of identity:** Many care homes celebrate individuality and work to ensure dignity, independence and choice.
- **Places to thrive, not just survive:** Life doesn't stop at the care home door – it can continue with meaning, joy and connection.



Conversation prompts and guidance

What does a positive, person-centred conversation sound like?

Before you begin

- Understand that this might be an emotional moment. Speak with empathy.
- Avoid making assumptions about what someone wants or fears – ask and listen.
- Focus on possibilities, not just problems.

Conversation starters

- “Some people find moving to a care home can be a new chapter – not an end, but a beginning. Would it be okay if we explored that together?”
- “There are care homes that feel very much like a community – places where people continue to grow, connect and be part of something.”
- “This move is about making sure you have the right support and can enjoy life safely.”
- “Let’s talk about what matters most to you and how a care home might support that.”
- “It’s important to feel safe, connected and valued – some care homes are doing amazing things to make that happen.”
- “You deserve a future that includes companionship, purpose and dignity.”

Further information

If you would like to know more, get involved or have any questions about the ‘Open doors, connected lives’ campaign, please email carehomes@agecymru.org.uk or call 029 2043 1555.



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