

# enriching lives research

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## introduction







Sanctuary Care has been delivering care to older people since 1995, and is one of the largest providers of care homes for the elderly across England and Scotland.

We are committed to an ambitious mission to **enrich the lives** of all our residents. This means we want to go beyond the standard expectations of providing good care and support our residents to live fulfilled lives.

To understand what helps to enrich residents' lives, Sanctuary Care commissioned independent researchers from **Research Works**. Building on an existing peer-reviewed study, the researchers spoke to residents and staff in our care homes across England and Scotland. This document outlines the research results and the next steps Sanctuary Care will take to achieve our mission of enriching residents' lives.

## what we know **about enriching lives** from past research

To start understanding what helps to enrich lives of care home residents, the researchers first looked at past research on this topic. A very important piece of work in this area was carried out by Mike Nolan and his colleagues in 2006.<sup>1</sup> They found that residents needed to achieve 'six senses' to feel their lives were fulfilled. **This included:**

-  a sense of **security** – to feel safe
-  a sense of **belonging** – to feel part of things
-  a sense of **continuity** – to experience links and consistency
-  a sense of **purpose** – to have a personally valuable goal or goals
-  a sense of **achievement** – to make progress towards a desired goal or goals
-  a sense of **significance** – to feel that 'you' matter

Starting from this work, the researchers set out to find out what helps achieve each of these senses for Sanctuary Care homes' residents so that they can lead enriched lives.

## how residents and staff **viewed enriching lives**

Residents and staff highlighted similar things as important for enriching residents' lives to what Nolan and his colleagues described. **They also shared their views on what helped to achieve each of the six senses:**



### **security**

Getting the care they needed was felt to be most important for feeling safe and achieving the sense of security. For example, residents talked about the importance of staff being there to help them and follow-up on their needs and requests. In addition, some residents explained they felt safe from hazards that could cause falls. They also felt reassured intruders couldn't come in or residents leave the home accidentally.

“ I feel safe here because the staff look after me and make sure I take the right medication ”

Resident



### **belonging**

Friendly relationships with staff were seen as most important for feeling the sense of belonging. Residents enjoyed staff talking and listening to them, making them laugh and smile, and making them feel part of a family.

Other things were important for belonging too for some residents: having a homely environment, making friends with other residents, and maintaining relationships with friends and family. However, how residents felt about these things varied greatly. For example, some thought making friends was more difficult in later life or struggled to feel at home because they were sad they did not live with their family.

“ I like the banter and joking from the staff. We are very happy here ”

Resident



### **continuity**

Being able to carry on with activities, interests and routines that mattered to them was important to many. Residents appreciated they could do that at their care home. They also valued being able to choose what they do and when, for example, choose what they eat or when they go to sleep and get up.

Some also enjoyed reminiscing and talking about their lives to staff. All thought that staff knew their life story and that this was important, as it would enable staff to support residents better.

“ I've been able to carry on with my passion for exercise here and I do yoga in the mornings ”

Resident



## purpose

Having enjoyable activities was most important for the sense of purpose. For some, practising their religion and culture provided enjoyment and meaningful activity. Others talked about helping out at the home by doing some gardening, which they enjoyed.

Many residents also reported they enjoyed group activities organised by the home, while some preferred more solitary hobbies. Some residents, however, missed being able to have days out and stay over with their family, which they have been unable to do due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

“ We have a lady who’s really spiritual, and we took her over to the Black Isle church and we toured the village ”

Staff



## achievement

Many residents had limited expectations regarding achievement. This was either due to their perception that wanting to achieve things was less relevant in later life or due to health constraints, which they felt limited what they could do.

However, wider discussions revealed residents derived a sense of achievement from engaging in activities and contributing at their home. Residents thought staff supported them to do things they found fulfilling. Staff also noted a sense of achievement can come from little things, for example, in maintaining independence and mobility.

“ I’m not looking for excitement. I like my quiet life. I read my newspaper ”

Resident



## significance

Being treated with dignity and respect was key to residents feeling they mattered and for achieving the sense of significance. Residents mentioned specific examples of staff treating them with respect, for example, addressing them by respectful terms used for older people in Gujarati.

Residents also felt they were treated with dignity and respect because staff paid attention to their preferences and listened to them. Staff also stressed the importance of respecting residents’ privacy and choices, for example, being discrete when providing personal care.

“ The chef asked us all what we liked to eat and any other dishes we wanted, that was lovely ”

Resident

## how will we know if residents' lives are enriched?

To help Sanctuary Care monitor how well they are doing in enriching their residents' lives and what they could do better, the researchers have developed a short survey. The survey asks some simple questions about feeling safe, feeling part of things, having enjoyable activities, being treated with dignity and respect, and other things that residents and staff told us were important.

In developing the survey, researchers tested the questions with care home residents. This helped the researchers see which questions were clear and important, and which needed to be changed. The survey was then improved with the help of residents' feedback and is ready to be used to measure how much residents feel their lives are enriched.

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## what next for Sanctuary Care?

Sanctuary Care are now looking at using the survey with their residents in two ways. In each home everyone with an interest in the home would be asked if they would like to complete the survey once a year and this would help individual care homes see and celebrate what they are doing well and identify areas where they could do better.

In addition, the survey will be used in care review meetings with individual residents to start an open conversation about things that are going well in their life and any areas where they could benefit from more support from their care home. This would give residents another opportunity to share with staff their wishes, needs and what they feel would enrich their lives.

<sup>1</sup> Nolan MR, Brown, J, Davies, S, Nolan, J and Keady, J, 2006. The Senses Framework: improving care for older people through a relationship-centred approach. Getting Research into Practice (GRIP) Report No 2. Project Report. University of Sheffield.