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Quick guide to effective care planning with older care home residents

"The importance of a good care plan cannot be underestimated."

Deputy Care Home Manager



1.0, June 2025

Introduction

Care plans are the foundation of high-quality, person-centred care in older adult care homes. At their best, they are living documents that place the person at the heart of care and support—empowering an individual to live the fullest and most meaningful life possible, whatever their circumstances. A good care plan supports continuity of care, enhances well-being, and reflects each person's unique values, preferences, goals, and needs.

This guide is based on extensive research, including a review of care planning interventions, interviews with care home staff, consultations with family members, and feedback from more than 100 care professionals across England.

This guide aims to support care home staff to develop care plans that enhance a person's quality of life. Many of the principles come from how care homes are already approaching care planning, while others reflect how care staff would like to conduct care planning. You may find that your approach to care planning already aligns with many of the principles outlined here.

An extended version of this guide, which provides more information, can be found here.

By embracing these key principles, care providers can make care planning a meaningful and inclusive process—one that respects individual wishes, enhances well-being and quality of life, and empowers individuals to lead fulfilling lives.



What does “quality of life” mean?

"Quality of life" refers to a person's overall well-being and satisfaction with life. It relates to their physical, mental, emotional, and social health. It is more than just the absence of disease – it concerns how someone feels and functions in their daily life.

The things that can help someone to have a good quality of life will vary from person to person. Care plans can play an important role in helping care providers understand what matters most to each individual and tailor support in ways that respect their values, preferences, and needs.

What is the purpose of an effective care plan?

An effective care plan provides information about a person’s life and what matters to them. Care plans can empower a person to have as much choice, control and independence over their daily life as possible.

A meaningful care plan should help:

- Staff to support a person to live a fulfilled life.
- To identify a person’s care needs, interests, preferences and wishes each time staff provide support.
- To identify the views of the person regarding the care and support they receive.

A care plan should have a section setting out preferences and priorities for future care, including end of life care. This is sometimes a separate document called an advance care plan.





How can person-centred care planning improve a person's quality of life?

Person centred care planning affirms who a person is, values their dignity, and prioritises their individual needs and wishes over and above generic routines and institutional practices.

Person-centred care can:

- Ensure that a person's voice is heard, and that their wishes shape both the care they receive and the life they want to lead.
- Empower a person to have as much choice, control, and independence as possible in all aspects of daily life.
- Build trusting relationships between the person and the care team, grounded in understanding what matters most to them.

It will detail:

- The social, cultural, behavioural, environmental, emotional and health needs for which a person requires support.
- The person's beliefs, values and what is important to them.
- The person's abilities, to empower their independence and foster a sense of purpose, belonging and self-esteem.

What information should a care plan contain to support a person's quality of life?

Care plans should be tailored to each individual and should include information about:

1. The person's history
2. Their hobbies, interests, achievements and aspirations, past, present and future
3. The key risks that they may face
4. Forthcoming appointments – such as medical or social appointments
5. The person's health, and their physical, mental and social well-being
6. Their day-to-day care needs and preferences
7. Their preferred end of life care

When will a care plan be developed and updated?

A care plan should be reviewed regularly and updated as needed—particularly when circumstances change—to ensure it accurately reflects how to care for the person safely while meeting their needs, interests, and preferences

Collecting information and understanding the person can begin prior to the person's arrival to the care home.





Who should be involved in creating a care plan to support a person's quality of life?

- To ensure that a care plan promotes a person's quality of life, they should be involved in developing and reviewing it. A person's involvement will be informed by their capacity; for example, people with limited capacity may require someone to assist them.
- With the person's consent—or that of their attorney—family and friends can take part in the care planning process, as they can often offer valuable insights into what supports and enhances the person's quality of life.

Access to care plans, including digital care plans

A person should be provided with a copy of their care plan and any additional information required to understand the plan's contents.

The move to digital care planning is a sector-wide priority. They can make it easier for staff, families, and professionals to access and share up-to-date information. When adopting digital care plans, staff should consider how to enable residents, family, and friends, who may have varying levels of experience with technology, to contribute to them.

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We hope you have found this guide useful. If you have any comments or feedback, you are welcome to contact the team involved in developing this resource using the details below:

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