

Care home combats loneliness for International Day of Friendship

Monday 26 July, 2021

The staff and residents at Harleston House, a Greensleeves Care home in Lowestoft, are demonstrating the ways in which they prevent loneliness within the home, in time for International Day of Friendship on Friday 30th July.

'Chronic loneliness' is a pressing issue for many older adults worldwide, more so than for their younger counterparts, with 6% to 13% of people aged over 65 living in the UK saying that they felt lonely all or most of the time. Older adults who are socially isolated are also at a higher risk of both mental and physical health issues.

International Day of Friendship sees countries around the world celebrate the power of human connection. Many of us have spent so much of the last year apart, and care homes in particular have felt the effects of social distancing, as many residents rely on their daily visitors to strengthen their sense of social connection.

Harleston House is focusing on how the periods of lockdown actually strengthened friendships within the home, amongst its residents.

One inseparable pair is Jenny and Margaret (photographed). The two ladies have been a great comfort to each other at Harleston House, particularly during those long days of lockdown. Margaret described her friendship with Jenny, saying:

"It feels like we have known each other for years, I know everything about her".

Residents at the home are encouraged to interact through the many scheduled activities, as well as one to one time with both staff members and each other. However, most of the residents do not need encouraging, and will befriend others with no trouble.

One resident, Anne, said: *"I like to sit and talk to the other residents and give them my time and company. I do not like seeing people sitting alone so I go over and sit with them".*

Activities co-ordinator, Gareth, said:

"We have many residents that have formed great friendships within the home. We have supported this and ensured that they are with each other for fun and activities, and at mealtimes."

As Harleston House provides both residential and dementia care, there are some residents who are further along their dementia journey than others, but this does not stop close bonds from forming. Gareth describes several of these friendships, saying:

"One of our residents, Anne, is very fond of another resident who is further along on his journey with dementia. Anne sits with him and holds his hand providing care and comfort to him but at the same time she feels needed and has a purpose."

"Another resident, Margaret, used to work as a nurse and is a faithful Salvation Army member. She loves to support others that are less fortunate than her, and is great at providing support."

The care home environment can provide opportunities for older adults to regain a sense of inclusion that is often lost during later life, and initiatives like International Day of Friendship will hopefully encourage new friendships worldwide.

For more information about Harleston House, please visit <https://www.greensleeves.org.uk/care-homes/harleston-house-lowestoft>

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