



Passion for Life at Cartrefi Conwy: Putting Older People in the Driving Seat in North Wales

The Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN) is a champion of 'asset based community development' and the way better outcomes can be achieved in housing and housing related services if co-designed with older residents and users of services.

This case study takes a close look at an approach developed in Sweden, 'Passion for Life' and how it has been successfully tailored by north wales housing association, Cartrefi Conwy. The transformative programme aims to empower and enable older people to take control of their lives. This has proven to be especially effective in helping older people who have recently been through a life-changing event, such as retirement or bereavement.



Written for the Housing Learning and Improvement Network by **Claire Shiland**, Head of Neighbourhood Services, Cartrefi Conwy.

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The Concept

'Passion for Life' is a recognised framework for older people which enables them to make incremental changes to move them from where they are now to where they would like to be in their lives, and not let their age (or anything else) affect them, their independence or their quality of life. The programme has been tailored by Cartrefi Conwy to suit the needs of older tenants and promote independence.



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The idea of improving the health and wellbeing of older people by empowerment originally had its roots in Sweden. The participants of the pilot studies in Sweden were so keen to spread the word that they began running their own groups. They became ambassadors for the programme and are the basis of its success.

The Participants

Cartrefi Conwy embarked on bringing this concept into a life-changing project for their older tenants living in a mix of sheltered housing and general needs housing.

A pilot programme was set up in Old Colwyn in North Wales. Cartrefi saw this as an ideal opportunity to encourage collaborative working with other housing associations across the borough and invited them to put forward participants for the programme. They were selected on the basis that the programme could improve their health and wellbeing after being through a life changing event. Participants had experienced changes such as, moving home, recovering from long term illness, and recent bereavement.

How it works

The 'Passion for Life' programme is held over approximately 6 months with 7 sessions centred on 5 themes. The programme is set up to work with a small group of participants of approximately 15. There are 4 set themes which are –

- Health and Wellbeing
- Movement
- Social Networks
- Safety in the Home

A 5th theme is decided by the participants during the sessions and the content agreed by the group to encourage empowerment and creativity.

Each session is designed for the participants to be able to reflect on an aspect of their life that they would like to change to improve their general wellbeing. This is achieved through a mix of interactive activities, guest speakers and the sharing of personal experiences. The sessions are branded as 'life cafes' and the atmosphere is designed to make the participants feel comfortable enough to open up and share their concerns and hopes for their future. At the end of each life café the participants are encouraged to 'commit to a change'. This change is written on a postcard which is then sent back to them before the beginning of the next Life Café to remind them of their commitment. An example of how this works is given below.

Case Study: Life Café 1 – Health and Wellbeing

This session was aimed at not just healthy eating and general fitness, but also financial wellbeing. Cartrefi were keen not to teach the participants 'how to suck eggs' (after all, older people have a great deal more knowledge and life experience!) and therefore wanted to steer away from focusing entirely on healthy eating and introduce the wider effect of wellbeing.



Participants attended from Cartrefi Conwy, Wales and West, North Wales Housing and Clwyd Allyn. They were all over the age of 55 and of varying physical abilities. They enjoyed:

- An introduction to financial inclusion services offered by Cartrefi Conwy.
- Informative talks by the Red Cross on the different services they provide that encourage older people to remain independent in their own homes.
- A taster session of Armchair Aerobics.
- A healthy homemade lunch and an opportunity to share recipes.
- A game of 'fruit bingo'.
- Interactive discussion on how small changes in lifestyle can improve health.

Outcomes from this session were:

- Three new referrals to Cartrefi Conwy's Financial Inclusion Officer.
- Participants expressed surprise at the range of services offered by the Red Cross that were previously unknown to them – they also wanted to tell their own social circle about how the Red Cross could assist them and pass the knowledge on to others.
- As the Red Cross session was so successful a follow on first aid course was arranged to be incorporated at the next Life Café.
- Participants enjoyed the taster session of Armchair aerobics so much that they requested another session at a later date.
- Pledges were made to drink more water and take advantage of bulk buying deals by partnering up with a neighbour.
- Participants also expressed surprise that they were not aware of energy supplier deals for the elderly and declared that they would like to see if the discount applied to them.

Testimonials from a recent press release

Ann Wright, 76, a Cartrefi Conwy tenant of Y Fron, Old Colwyn, describes the Passion for Life sessions as brilliant. She said:

"I really look forward to coming along as I get to meet new people and the interaction is great. I'm also learning new skills and important little things about home safety and security that I never realised, simple things that can make a big difference when it comes to keeping safe."

Jessica Evans, 78, a tenant of Clwyd Alyn Housing Association's Hafan Gwydir, Extra Care Project, also really enjoys the sessions. She said:

"It's a good way to get out and socialise, meet new people while learning little things that are going to help keep us all safe. I particularly enjoyed the first aid instruction. It's wonderful that Cartrefi Conwy invite tenants of other housing associations along to the sessions. I have particularly enjoyed meeting and making new friends."

Hefina Jones, 84, a tenant of North Wales Housing's Taverners Court in Llandudno is a big fan of the project. She said:

"Although not a tenant of Cartrefi Conwy I do attend quite a few events, such as exercise classes, that are run by them. I think the Passion for Life sessions have been excellent and really helpful."

The future

- To continue running the programme through the county of Conwy, working with other registered social landlords and partner agencies such as Age Connect and Red Cross.
- To listen to the participants and shape the programme from their input.
- To empower participants to run their own sessions.
- To promote the programme to external agencies and to showcase the benefits of the sessions.

Intended Programme Outcomes

The main outcomes Cartrefi Conwy wish to achieve through delivery of this programme are to:

- Promote Independence.
- Enable our older tenants to remain in their homes for longer, thereby creating more stable communities with a lower move-on rate.
- Reduce pressure on the NHS, Social Services and GP surgeries by empowering older people to become more confident and raise awareness of different support services available.
- Empower our older tenants to take forward the 'Passion For Life' programme and run it themselves, keeping their social networks strong and improving their confidence.
- Encourage multi-agency working.

To conclude.....

We are living in an ever increasing ageing society with more and more restrictions on NHS budgets and older people's services. 'Passion for Life' has the ability to improve health and wellbeing and promote independence at a very low cost.

The feedback from participants and external agencies has been extremely positive which provides us with strong support to continue running the programme throughout our communities. It also demonstrates that the 'Passion for Life' programme has an exciting future within Cartrefi Conwy.

Note

The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Housing Learning and Improvement Network.

About Cartrefi Conwy

Cartrefi Conwy is a 'Registered Social Landlord' with over 3800 properties throughout the county of Conwy in North Wales.

Having achieved the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), we are recognised as one of North Wales' foremost providers of affordable, high quality homes.



We are dedicated to providing a first class service for all of our tenants. We do this by making sure that our rents are affordable, our homes are high quality and our services are efficient and of the highest standards.

About one third of the housing we offer is sheltered accommodation for the elderly or vulnerable. The rest of our stock is general needs, mainly made up of one, two or three bedroom flats and houses.

About the Housing LIN

Previously responsible for managing the Department of Health's Extra Care Housing Fund, the Housing LIN is the leading 'learning lab' for a growing network of housing, health and social care professionals in England and Wales.

Part funded by the Welsh Government, the Housing LIN is involved in knowledge transfer and innovation exchange on planning, commissioning, designing, funding, building and managing housing, care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults with long term conditions.

For further information about the Housing LIN's comprehensive list of online resources and to participate in our shared learning and service improvement networking opportunities, including 'look and learn' site visits and network meetings in Wales, visit: www.housinglin.org.uk/Wales

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Housing Learning & Improvement Network
c/o EAC, 3rd Floor,
89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7TP

Tel: 020 7820 8077

Email: info@housinglin.org.uk

Web: www.housinglin.org.uk

Twitter: @HousingLIN