

# Kindliness Toolkit



**Community life can be strengthened and enhanced by fostering Kindliness.**

**A pack compiled to offer some ideas for identifying and developing Kindliness within housing schemes**

## Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. What outcomes should you achieve by using this pack?
3. The background to kindness
4. How do you use this pack?
  - Think about the best approach
  - Organise the practical elements
  - Preparing for the session
5. What to expect and planning for the unexpected
6. Delivering a Kindliness Workshop
7. Some Options
  - Option 1. Forum Theatre – session 1
  - Option 2. Forum Theatre – session 2
  - Option 3. Poetry Workshop
  - Option 4. Facilitation Workshops
  - Option 5. Some ideas for follow on activities
8. Reflections
9. About the authors

### Appendices:

1. Participant Information Sheet
2. Participants agreement/contribution form
3. Background to Forum Theatre
4. Further Reading and useful information

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This toolkit should help to make sheltered housing schemes sustainable, self-supporting communities fit for purpose and fit for the future. The toolkit aims to help landlords enable residents to remain independent and valued members of the community.

Kindliness, in essence, is about peer support... a background hum of sociability, respectful regard and a willingness to help. It is only when people are aware of a need, or ask for help, that this latent potential moves into action.

The word 'Kindliness' reflects a wide range of informal helping. There is much overlap between kindness and the notion of neighbourliness - an awareness of the situation of other residents; respect for their privacy; but also a readiness to take action if help is needed.



- 1.2. The challenge of nurturing kindness in the sheltered housing environment should not be underestimated. It requires culture change and a willingness to review established policies which seek to regulate life in sheltered housing schemes. Some of the innovative activities proposed in this toolkit have been found to enable participants to reality check the current system and identify what is actually going on in the schemes they manage or live in.
- 1.3. The toolkit sets out the outcomes a culture of kindness can help to achieve, for instance:
- Allowing **staff** to step back as a result of increased resident peer support
  - Making a **scheme** a more cohesive community and place where people want to live
  - Enabling the **landlord** to deliver a more cost effective service, with fewer voids, less housing management issues and more motivated staff
  - Improving resident health, and reducing demand on the **NHS**, as a result of being more active and connected to the local community
- 1.4. The academic background to kindness is explored in section 3, this work culminating in, 'Landscapes of helping: kindness in neighbourhoods and communities', by Meg Allen, Helen Spandler, Yvonne Prendergast and Lynn Froggett and published by the Joseph Rowntree Trust in 2015.
- 1.5. This toolkit is intended to be a practical guide to culture change in sheltered housing and beyond.
- Section 4 illustrates some innovative methods that can be used to achieve this including the use of forum theatre, performance poetry and skilled facilitators. It stresses the importance of preparation before a workshop or similar activity takes place.
- Section 5 then considers how to be prepared for the unexpected, particularly, as happens from time to time, how to cope when a participant discloses a distressing aspect of their life.
- 1.6. The heart of the toolkit, section 6, examines how to run a kindness workshop.

It considers the environment and how to make participants feel welcome. It outlines the key interventions: theatre, poetry and facilitation. The performers and facilitators used during the development of the toolkit are detailed along with tips on finding people in your area.

As some of the suggested methods are relatively rarely used in work with staff and service users, the key interventions are then detailed, in section 7, along with exactly how a session could be organised.

- 1.7. The final part of the toolkit, section 8, reflects on learning and reactions of participants of the workshops run during the development of this toolkit.

Poetry reflects on kindness:

*Kindness is breaking into Mrs Bean's house after she has locked herself out  
Is when you make the first move in reconciliation  
Is taking someone to the shops  
Is asking if I can be of help  
Is putting the neighbours bins out  
Is noticing that Beryl hasn't shouted at the kids in the street for days  
and checking that she is ok*

*Kindliness is addictive and contagious*

*Kindliness is the vet writing a lovely sympathy card  
when my house bunny died.  
(The bill followed in the next post)*

Some participants found that the experience exceeded their expectations:

- *It was thought-provoking and interesting whilst offering practical ideas and new skills. These helped in terms of ways to encourage kindness.*
- *I got some great ideas on how to establish and enhance a kindness ethos in my schemes*
- *I learnt about funding opportunities, community support, housing allocations and telephone contact. It all needs thoughtful planning.*

- 1.8. Will this toolkit make a difference?

As a participant said during a poetry session:

*Kindliness is addictive and contagious*

- 1.9. This toolkit was commissioned from Bournemouth University by Dorset County Council with funding from Skills for Care, Dorset County Council, Magna Housing Association, Spectrum Housing Association and East Boro Housing Trust.

The authors of the toolkit are listed in section 9.

## **2. What outcomes will you achieve by using this pack?**

2.1. This pack has been developed partly in response to funding changes that present challenges to those providing supported housing for older people. Recent austerity measures have seriously affected the ability of local authorities to fund non-statutory service such as sheltered housing. However, the importance of these services and the community network afforded by sheltered housing should not be underestimated.

It is important that services are supported to develop holistically. Services that do more than just support older people, but actively empower them to develop vibrant, self-supporting communities where people feel able to ask for and indeed offer support.

This pack was developed by drawing upon on both research and anecdotal evidence. It used the concept of kindness and developed through innovative use of the arts a process whereby communities could identify what Kindness meant to them and come together to look at how they could nurture a friendly, supportive environment that offered reassurance to all its members.

The activities included in this pack have been developed by Bournemouth University in partnership with Dorset County Council through a programme of innovative workshops in sheltered housing communities in Dorset. These included residents and support staff in both urban and rural settings. Each community will have preferences for different activities and those who lead the sessions need to be mindful of this and discuss the potential activities that could be used with the community beforehand.

## 2.2. Outcomes

Embedding a culture of kindness should:

- Allow **staff** to step back as a result of increased resident peer support
- Increase **resident** wellbeing, empowerment and involvement as result of living in a mutually supporting community, where people are willing to help and support each other
- Make the **scheme** a more cohesive community and place where people want to live
- Enable the **landlord** to deliver a more cost effective service, with fewer voids, less housing management issues and more motivated staff
- Reduce the need for care and support delivered by the **Adult Social Care Authority**
- Improve resident health, reducing demand on the **NHS**, as a result of being more active and connected to the local community

## 3. **The background to Kindness**

3.1. Housing organisation case studies and anecdotes suggest that kindness is a concept that is increasingly been used to enhance the lives of residents. Research by Tickell (2015) suggests that encouraging residents living in sheltered housing accommodation to consider undertaking random acts of kindness represented an effective way to build a supportive resilience community.

There are a numerous ways in which the concept of kindness has been introduced to those living in sheltered accommodation. For example, residents and staff from Severn Vale Housing in Gloucestershire took part in Random Acts of Kindness Week in February 2016 (SVHS, 2016). Elsewhere young people have been encouraged to engage in community acts of care and kindness to build community spirit (Sanctuary Housing, 2014). It is suggested that these

individual initiatives have collectively had a 'ripple effect' on the wider community leading to greater likelihood of random acts of kindness such as holding open a door or helping with carrying things (Bucks County Housing Group's 2014).

Research by Galvin (2004) highlights that kindness needs to be offered in a sensitive and acceptable way to would-be recipients. Her study comparing recipients' views of care provided by paid carers and informal carers (family, friends and neighbours) highlighted the importance to the recipient of retaining personal control and not feeling indebted to others. Such findings indicate the importance of recognising the need for a range of different opportunities to offer kindness.

Not everyone will view an act of kindness in the same way. Hawkins (2010) identifies the key factors in creating friendly and kindly environments and has studied how these factors can be inter-related at times. The potential of older people to act as informal volunteers and undertake small acts of kindness is also increasingly recognised as something which sustains communities and intergenerational living (Warbuton and McLaughlin, 2005).

Existing research to date identifies the following factors as important in creating an acceptable and sustainable community that encourages kindness. These include:

- Offering acts of kindness that are wanted,
- Developing and encouraging acts of kindness by the members of a community, rather than imposing the concept;
- Developing change in a bottom-up way (Allen et al., 2015).

Community leaders should work to foster connectedness and belonging by encouraging involvement, ownership and voice amongst community members (Hill and Smith, 2015; Joseph Rowntree Trust, 2015).<sup>1</sup> The use of common areas within sheltered housing accommodation has been identified as crucial in building community spirit. (Allen et al 2015). These areas allow people to meet and develop relationships possibly through shared interests. Furthermore, a focus should be placed upon on what people can do rather than any deficits and newcomers into a community should be welcomed for what they bring and also what they might change – communities are living and organic entities (Warburton and McLaughlin, 2005; Allen et al., 2015).

## **4. How do you use this pack?**

4.1. Using it will require new thinking in terms of:

- hiring arts and community development facilitator
- embracing a different method of enquiry (Performative Social Science) and working
- locations for the sessions – comfort and accessibility
- timing of sessions to maximise attendance and outcomes
- catering for event

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<sup>1</sup> Landscapes of helping: kindness in neighbourhoods and communities, by Meg Allen, Helen Spandler, Yvonne Prendergast and Lynn Froggett and published by the Joseph Rowntree Trust, 2015.

#### 4.2. Think about the best approach

The key to a successful Workshop is careful planning and allowing sufficient time to ensure all the issues presented in the toolkit are considered

#### 4.3. Organise the practical elements:

- **Finding arts facilitators locally**

These can be found through:

- Local Authority Arts Services
- Local theatres
- Councils for Voluntary Service, Rural Community Councils

- **Identifying a suitable venue**

The most suitable venue is a common space within the sheltered housing location if this is big enough and/or suitable for the Workshop. Using a common space is going to assist the participants with a sense of ownership of the activities and also make them more relaxed when participating due to being in familiar surroundings.

- **Identifying a suitable time**

It is important that as many of the residents who want to attend are able to do so. To achieve this there may be several things to consider. Firstly, are there any regular external events that residents might want to attend, for example an arranged regular social event or perhaps a local fitness session. These times should be avoided.

Alongside considering regular events in the week it might be useful to consider the daily routine of residents. Perhaps there is a time when residents like to come together or are seeking an activity. This may be a good time to plan a Workshop session as it is a time when they feel motivated to engage with other people within their community.

- **Creating the right environment**

Sharing your personal thoughts can be a difficult thing to do so it is important that all the participants feel as comfortable as possible in their surroundings. This is a key reason that a common space that is familiar is a good venue for a Workshop. Having refreshments on offer can make the atmosphere more relaxed and encourage people to participate.

#### 4.4. Prepare for the session

Thorough planning is crucial to the success of the workshop therefore it is vital to allow sufficient time to make all the necessary arrangements as detailed within this section. For the session to be effective potential participants need to be made aware of the purpose of the session and what is involved. They need this information for several reasons. Firstly if not everyone is aware of the session there could be a low turn-out on the day. Secondly if not everyone is aware then not everyone will have the opportunity to contribute their views and sections of the community with particular needs will be missed out. Also talking to potential participants will help you gauge the type of arts intervention which might be most successful with the participants. So take time to explain how the session would work and the types of arts activities they could do. It is very important to listen to what you are told so you can get tailor

the session to the interests of the group. A motivated and engaged group will be more effective.

- **Introduce a Kindliness Box at the venue prior to session**

Encourage potential participants to think about what it is like to live in their community. A good way to do this is to place a Kindliness Box at the location and ask them to write down acts of kindness they have done or received and maybe how it made them feel. In this way they will begin thinking about and what are the positive aspects to their community life and what makes life better for them all.

- **Distribute Participant information sheets to potential participants.**

It is important that all potential participants are aware of the session and know what would be involved if they decided to take part. It is a good idea to approach them personally to introduce the idea but it is also good practice to give them written information about the session so they can think about it and reflect on whether they want to take part. It is useful to include how they can contact you to ask any further questions they might have about the session.

Appendix 1 is an example of what to include on an information sheet. Written information should be given out at least two weeks before the planned session to give potential participants a chance to think about what it would mean for them to attend the session.

## **5. What to expect and planning for the unexpected**

5.1. There are several aspects to consider but these can be divided into people and place issues.

In some instances e.g. if intending to publish the results of the event it may be necessary to use a Participant Agreement form. (Appendix 2)

As the Facilitator of the session it is a key responsibility to ensure everyone feels comfortable about speaking and has the opportunity. To do this the Facilitator needs to be aware of the louder people who might try to 'dominate' discussions.

It is important to be aware of the environment. The venue you are using may be the home of those participating and within the communal space you will be using there may be established 'ground rules' about how the area should be set out and even where particular people feel it is their 'right' to sit. The research team did come across people avoiding seats or expecting to use seats and there is an informal agreement between residents. Furthermore several residents actually spoke about how this evolved at one site. Therefore be mindful of this and observe during earlier visits how spaces are used and by whom. This way you will avoid upsetting your potential participants.

Think about what people might feel comfortable discussing and what might be more difficult. If you need to address more difficult topics begin by talking over easier topics and work towards more difficult issues. Having identified the more difficult topics think could you could defuse any awkward moments and establish 'codes' between you and other facilitators so you can alert them to the need to change tack. You should also consider what might happen if there is an emotional/personal disclosure or disagreement.

## 6. Delivering a Kindliness Workshop

For advice on running a workshop or on the use of elements of this toolkit contact Wendy Cutts, Senior Lecturer, Bournemouth University.

**Email:** [wcutts@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:wcutts@bournemouth.ac.uk)

### 6.1 Guidelines on welcoming participants

- Be there early to check the room layout and comfort and lay out any refreshments
- Be welcoming when potential participants arrive
- Offer refreshments to the participants arriving
- Be available to answer any questions
- Distribute Participant Agreement Forms if required
- Hand out evaluation sheets if necessary

### 6.2 Workshop Sessions

This Toolkit describes three types of activities that can be used during Kindliness Workshops.

**However it is not necessary to use all these activities as one may be more suitable than the other to the workshop participants.**

This is something the Facilitator needs to identify when planning the Workshop. It might be that the activities are used by particular groups of participants – possibly staff only or residents only and then the two groups come together to share their ideas. Therefore not only does the Facilitator need to think about what type of activity would be most appropriate but also how is it best to design the sessions in terms of participants.

The three activities are:

- Forum Theatre
- Poetic Enquiry using Performance Poetry
- Facilitation

### 6.3 Forum Theatre

This was a concept formed by the Brazilian theatre worker Augusto Boal in the 1970s, when working on a mass literacy programme with groups of peasants in Brazil. See Appendix 3.

Forum Theatre has since become a worldwide theatre form, taking many different approaches, but still rooted in humanistic, egalitarian principles.

#### State of Play

State of Play, an informal company of Dorset based freelance community and educational theatre practitioners ([www.stateofplayarts.co.uk](http://www.stateofplayarts.co.uk)<<http://www.stateofplayarts.co.uk>>) has used Forum Theatre for more than thirty years, in training sessions for community and school groups, as well as for council employees and NHS staff. For more information, contact Tony Horitz, State of Play, [info@stateofplayarts.co.uk](mailto:info@stateofplayarts.co.uk)<<mailto:info@stateofplayarts.co.uk>>. Or phone 01202 882740 / 07584 163 876.

#### 6.4 Performance Poetry

Performance poetry, in particular, with its focus on “diversity, inclusion and democracy” is “verse to which, at least theoretically, anyone can have access and whose worth anyone can determine” (Somers-Willett 2009: 5).

Embracing all types of poetry and spoken word, performance poetry can become a form of social action which reaches out to touch the hearts and minds of the audience in a direct and transformative way as the poet/performer becomes the educator enabling the audience to access another world, and the performance setting itself may also provoke social interaction and dialogue to generate new questions or to inspire the audience to themselves become an agent of change (Hodges, Fenge and Cutts 2014; Moxley, Feen-Calligan and Washington 2012; Sherry and Shouten 2002)

##### Jon Seagrave / Jonny Fluffypunk

Jonny has been a poet, writer and performer for over twenty years. A regular headline performer on stage throughout the UK, as well as at festivals such as Glastonbury, WOMAD and Latitude, he has also performed at the Albert Hall and frequently on national radio.

Alongside his writing and performance work, Jonny runs writing and performance workshops with people of all ages and backgrounds. He works regularly in schools, youth clubs, pupil referral units, further education, prisons, care homes, sheltered accommodation and with marginalised and excluded people in many different settings, and he prefers to be working at what he sees as the 'creative front line'- working with people with zero experience of their own creativity, or who don't think they've got what it takes for art. He likes proving them wrong. Seen but Seldom Heard, a long-term collaborative spoken word project with Bournemouth University working with severely-disabled young people, led to an invitation to perform to MPs at the Houses of Parliament in Westminster and as part of the Paralympic celebrations, and his long-term work with older people and people living with dementia was the subject of a feature on Radio 4's *Front Row*. Jonny was also invited to teach the art of performance poetry to the presenters on BBC TV's *Blue Peter* for National Poetry Day. He can be contacted through [www.jonnyfluffypunk.co.uk](http://www.jonnyfluffypunk.co.uk)

#### 6.5 Facilitation

An important tool for organisations is that of facilitation. This process can be used to guide and direct organisations and the work that happens within them. It can be used with groups of people in meetings, planning sessions, and training.

The idea is that the group is facilitated in the process of working together so that they may set the agenda and identify goals. One person in the group or someone brought in from outside will need to concentrate on how the process is going and make sure that the ground rules are adhered to. This is the person is the "facilitator."

The role of the Facilitator is to support everyone to do their best thinking. To do this, the facilitator encourages full participation, promotes mutual understanding and cultivates shared responsibility. A facilitator enables group and group members to work efficiently and effectively in searching for and achieving inclusive and sustainable solutions and agreements. Facilitation sessions have been used with Housing Association staff to identify their understanding of kindness, how they perceive it as part of their skills set and job role and how they or their organisation might facilitate kindness amongst residents. As part of this

process barriers to kindness were also identified e.g. how health and safety might hamper cooperation and mutual assistance.

#### Caroline Walker

Caroline worked as a facilitator in international development in India and in education in the UK before joining the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative in 2003 as a community facilitator, working with community groups to prepare regeneration strategies in more than 16 towns across Devon and Somerset until the end of the programme in 2007.

She is a part-time facilitator for short courses at Schumacher College, Devon, is a trustee of two local charities and chairs Transition Town Bridport. Contact email :

[beechlands51@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:beechlands51@yahoo.co.uk)

#### Network of Wellbeing (NOW)

The Network of Wellbeing (NOW)'s vision is of a world where everyone's wellbeing needs are met within the planet's natural limits. By wellbeing, we mean happy people, healthy communities, and a sustainable planet. Research over the last 40 years shows clearly that people's health and happiness depends in part on the health and fairness of the communities in which they live and work. Investing wellbeing can improve physical and mental health, life satisfaction, longevity and productivity, reducing health care costs and pressure on health and social services, increasing community engagement and employee retention and many other benefits. NOW is building up a collaborative network of people and organisations who share our vision, we're supporting community action to improve wellbeing locally, and we're aiming to further the wellbeing agenda nationally.

Contact: Dr. Larch Maxey, Community Projects Manager, Email:

[larch@networkofwellbeing.org](mailto:larch@networkofwellbeing.org)

**It is advisable for all three types of session to recruit an experienced Facilitator to support the artists as they deliver their sessions.**

To recruit a suitable Facilitator may take some time and there may be various ways to identify a suitable person. This could be someone from a university, a community development worker or a freelance facilitator. You can find details of these from:

- A local University
- Local Community Councils
- Local Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS)
- Local Authority

## 7 Some Options

### Option 1. Forum Theatre (session 1)

This session format can be used for a mixed group of residents and staff or for single groups. Requires two actors and one facilitator who is willing to participate in the acting as required.

Resources: Flip chart, paper and felt pens

Duration: 45 minutes

### Introduction

The introduction should include the following points:

- Explain aims of workshop
- Allay concerns participants might have about the use of drama/theatre as a means of learning how best to support clients through 'kindliness';
- Explain that Forum Theatre can be seen as a Dress Rehearsal for Life; and therefore the will feel;
- Emphasis the need for confidentiality about what is shared with the group during the session and also remind participants to only offer material they wish to share with the others in the group.

### Imaging Kindliness (Warm Up)

- Distribute paper and pen and ask the participants to write down a few things that they think illustrate what they think of as kindness. (2 minutes)
- Read their lists of 'What is Kindness'

### Forum Theatre

- The Case Study – based on true story from a resident about unresolved worries about family, adapted for purposes of anonymity.
- The 2 actors act out story of a key event set in a public space at a supported living centre.

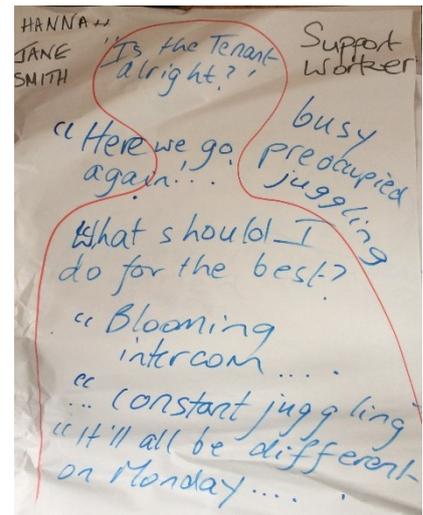
### Scenario Outline

- A Sheltered Housing Support Worker enters tidying up and displaying fliers in large shared room
- A resident enters communal area, to ask for help with her phone.
- The resident asks the member of staff to help her make her mobile phone work.
- The Worker then carries on working in the room and half overhears the resident, we called her Hannah, speaking to daughter on phone.
- The daughter it seems is apologising for not being able to get down for Easter.
- Hannah, the resident asks daughter on phone if she's heard from her brother yet.
- The overheard conversation hints that there is a problem between the Mother and her son – but this is not spelt out.

- At the end of the phone call, the resident, Hannah is clearly upset.
- The Worker asks if there is a problem, but doesn't stop to sit down.
- The resident Hannah is quiet.
- The Worker says the 'right kind of thing' but does not probe and after a while leaves the room
- The resident, Hannah, sits quietly

### Thought Tracking – Developing Empathy

- Facilitator asks spectators to imagine what is going on inside the Resident's head at the end of the scene?
- The Facilitator asks the audience to make any immediate suggestions of her hidden feelings - making a short script for a monologue of phrases the character might be thinking of e.g. "Why does she treat me like a child? I'm so fed up! Should I tell her about my son's problem?"
- Facilitator writes down the audience's suggestions on a flip chart – or large sheet of flip chart paper.
- Actor playing Resident acts these out spontaneously.



### Reflective Sociogram – Human Graph

- The Facilitator places a prop belonging to the Care Officer in the scene on a chair/stool. This symbol represents her (and gives safe distance for spectators).
- The Facilitator asks audience to go and stand either close/far back or in the middle - in such a way as to show their attitude to the Care Officer with reference to their behaviour in handling the Resident's problem i.e. *Did she do a good job of showing kindness, an average job – or a bad job?*
- The Audience is invited to share opinions to support their choice of position.

### Hot Seating

- The Facilitator invites audience to take their seats again and invites them to question the Actor in role as the character of the Resident, asking any questions they may have to help them understand the problem better.
- The Resident character answers in role – not making it too easy by giving them too much information, unless she feels they are really earning it. (i.e. if they show good 'kindness' skills)

### Reflection

- The Facilitator asks if the audience think they did better than the original Worker in the Scene then the group discuss this.

There is a feedback and review session after break which models trying to support the resident in achieving a positive outcome.

### END OF SESSION

#### Workshop extension

If you use this session for a single group of participants and you want to explore how others see the same Scenario using the ideas of another group of participants then use the guide for session 2 which follows. Allow another 45 minutes for this extension session.

## Option 2. Forum Theatre Session 2

Session 2 is to be used when the Facilitator wishes to explore the different views of two groups that have already completed session 1.

#### Forum Theatre – A Dress Rehearsal for Life\*

- Bring two groups together
- Facilitator. reminds audiences of the issues behind the story
- Facilitator asks joint audience to re-run the original Forum Scene, this time making the character of the Care Worker more effective – by suggesting & role-playing alternative ways of supporting the resident, such as including residents in sharing the problem-solving.

#### Key Questions

- *In what ways could the Care Officer demonstrate a **kinder and more effective approach to the resident?***
- *How can other residents offer support her?*
- *How can the partnership work better as a whole?*

#### Make a list of ideas

- Make the list concrete – i.e. step by step; gather context for scene – when? Where? How?
- Try out alternatives spontaneously, encouraging **spectators** to become **spect-actors**, ‘performing’ their ideas themselves to test them out in a supportive environment for learning.
- Facilitator assesses them positively each time, inviting first the volunteer who comes out to try her approach out and then asking for feedback from rest of group watching.
- Conclusions – what have we learnt from this experiment? How best can we put new findings into practice?

## Option 3. Poetry Workshop

This session needs to be led by a community poet with experience of working with groups to develop a poem.

## Introduction

- Reading a few selected poems of different styles but related to kindness
- Discussion of what poetry means to the participants

Invite participants to talk about poems they like

The most effective approach I found to be twofold; firstly an upfront, in the open discussion, with me encouraging participants to consider the concept of kindness and what it might mean to them, whilst simultaneously creating a simple list poem by shaping the contributions on a flipchart.

Every so often, I would perform the evolving work-in-progress. This was generally lively and fun and the initial, hesitant contributions would soon give rise to an ever-more-detailed litany of perceived kindnesses and unkindnesses, with much spirited discussion.

The only drawback of this open-session group work is that on occasion people had contributions which they preferred to share anonymously; in a sheltered accommodation



environment, people obviously have to live around each other and discussing, for instance, a perceived 'unkindness' might cause tension.

So the second approach involves me collecting contributions on strips of paper, to collate later into a poem. This approach is also a good one if time is very short, or the situation involves a multitude of participants drifting in and out of a session. The drawbacks are 1) obviously that there is no 'discussion', so participants are not bouncing ideas off each other, and 2) you end up with a lot of repetition.

## Option 4. Facilitation workshops

### Resources for sessions:

- Name labels
- Flip chart paper
- Sticky notes
- Pens
- Seating and tables for each group of people (no more than five people per group)

### Welcoming the participants

- Distribute name labels
- Distribute evaluation forms

### Introduction to session (15 mins)

- Suggest that people sit where most comfortable sit anywhere
- Outline what will happen during the session and explain the ground rules for the session.

## SESSION ONE

### Following introduction (see above) activity begins

#### **Question 1: What is kindness? (30 mins)**

Participants are seated in groups and have a table Carousel activity – passing sheets round the tables for groups to add comments. Put sheets up round room

#### **Question 2: What are the barriers to involvement with local community life or the creation of more social events within the Sheltered community? (20 mins)**

Ask each group to write their ideas on sticky notes, one idea per note.

Arrange all the notes onto three large sheets on wall under the following three themes:

- physical barriers – e.g. lack of meeting room;
- systemic - including people, e.g. club organisers;
- other

#### **Break (20 mins)**

**Restart** the activity by inviting the participants to move around – choose a theme: sheets of sticky notes on tables: Cascade activity: rank the sticky notes on each sheet by order of importance. Generate one top idea per sheet (15mins)

Choose one idea to role play – ideally equal sized groups. Groups prepare 2 minute role play

Each group has an opportunity to show everyone else their role play



### **Open Forum**

Pose questions to the participants:

- How can we overcome these barriers?
- What training/support do you need to help you and to develop activities/ideas around kindness with your residents?

Ask participants to complete their Evaluation forms

## **END OF SESSION**

## **SESSION TWO**

This session looks at the emotional and practical needs and improving communication to address these.

Following introduction (see above) activity begins

### **Ice breaker**

Read a poem from the residents or staff on the topic of kindness

### **Activity One**

Form small groups and ask that participants try to work with people they don't normally work with.

Ask the participants to keep notes of their group discussion

Within their groups participants tell everyone about one example of kindness they have experienced during the last week (15 mins).

Set the groups a discussion topic as follows: (15 mins)

- Group one: What kinds of emotional support do residents need?
- Group two: What kinds of practical support do residents need?

### **Feedback on Group work (15 mins)**

Look at results.

Suggest additions to list through group

Discussion

### **Break (15 mins)**

Recap of discussion to emerge from Activity One

Revisit aims of session and what we have done so far.

### **Activity Two:**

Outline that this part of the day is about Promoting independence and improving quality of life.

Explain capacity building.

Discuss and reflect upon communication

- How do staff communicate with residents?
- Are there any problems with this?
- How do residents communicate with each other?
- Issues and concerns?
- Noticeboards?
- Internet use?

Consider the opportunities which exist for residents to be more self-sufficient?

These could be community groups committees or clubs. Are there any examples? Issues and concerns? Are there more active residents who do things for others? Are there any examples of good practice? Examples of support given to more active residents? Gather comments (15 mins)

### Activity three (30 mins)

Undertake a mapping exercise: for each scheme represented.

Map the networks and organisations used by the residents currently and issues that may arise: e.g. hospital/GP: may have transport issues; church: there may be members of congregation who pick less mobile members up to take them, POPS Wayfinders, CVSs, Local Community Council, CABs, Age Concern



**END OF SESSION**

### Option 5. Some ideas for follow on activities

- Random Acts of Kindness Boxes
- Interviews with staff/residents
- Newsletter
- Follow up sessions

## 8. Reflections

The following section provides reflections from individuals who have delivered the sessions that this Toolkit will help you organise. This section is design to help you formulate your ideas and think about how best to develop your own Workshops with residents. There are also reflections from people who attended the Kindliness Conference on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017.

### 8.1 Reflections from Forum Theatre Sessions

*We have now performed the session in residential centres three times. The Scenario was created through a Drama workshop at the first session, which also began by asking residents to share one story of kindness followed by one of unkindness.*

*Various powerful stories were told. We asked the group to choose the one they felt resonated most with everyone. It was a moving account of turbulent family fallout, leaving the resident very troubled. It transpired that she had not told anyone in the Residential Home about this incident.*

*Through Forum Theatre, Residents and Care Officers showed great empathy and understanding to the Storyteller. In the session of Forum Theatre towards the end, various practical suggestions were made to support the Storyteller Resident in dealing with the ongoing problem. Both the Senior Care Officer and fellow residents offered to work alongside her in this.*

*Both State of Play and Bournemouth University felt conflicting emotions and thoughts after the session. On the one hand, the open-ended nature of the drama form had enabled a Resident to share a very important problem in her life which staff and resident pledged to support her with after the session. It had brought everyone together in a very positive way and cleared the air for other residents to share their own stories.*

*On the other hand, we felt it had been risky and possibly unfair to probe into such sensitive area in a public context. The storyteller herself told us that while she was fine, her friend was very upset because she had indeed recalled an incident of great unkindness which was not dealt with then and there. In short, we had opened up unhealed wounds which the Drama frame did not enable us to deal with.*

*So for the ensuing workshops, we decided to protect the group into the issues through asking for the stories of kindness but not for those of unkindness. We then present a scenario ourselves, based on the original story but fictionalised to give protective distance while being universal enough to engage audience interests and empathy.*

*Since this development, we have felt more relaxed with the format. Responses have been positive and honest – and feedback good. We may not have probed so deeply into the lives of the residents, but we enabled them to contribute fully in a safer environment.*

### 8.2 Reflections from the poetry sessions

*What is I suppose is clear but nevertheless worth noting is that this is not a session where the construction of 'great poetry' is the aim; it is more using a simple artistic technique to facilitate a discussion. The participants need have no knowledge of poetry or its techniques; indeed, it*

*needs stressing throughout that the participants need not worry about whether their contributions are in any way 'poetic'. But the simple shaping of the contributions; the use of repetition and rhythm and the lively leading of the session, and 'performance' of the evolving work, do result in 'poetry' – and a fun and 'different' atmosphere that is hopefully more satisfying and successful than a more 'standard' approach.*

Poem 1: A poem written by the residents and staff from one Sheltered Housing Community.

**About 50 Definitions of Kindliness**

Kindliness

Is caring for others

Is genuine love for one's fellow man

Is sharing my vegetables with next door neighbours

Kindliness

Is getting a Christmas card from someone you've not known long

Is being helpful to those who really need it

Is taking the rubbish out for someone

Kindliness

Is a cup of tea with a friend

Is giving someone a lift

Is helping a disabled person across the road

when there isn't a car coming

Kindliness

Is an unexpected gift from someone you love

Is lending an ear

Is when my husband finally screwed the toilet to the floor

after eight years

Kindliness

Is doing something for somebody

And not moaning about it afterwards

Kindliness

Is a surprise birthday cake with a picture of my cow on it  
Is taking someone out to lunch  
Is holding open a door for someone with a walking frame

Kindliness

Is being taken care of when you are ill  
Is taking the dog for a walk  
Is when someone does your shopping because you can't

Kindliness

Is collecting Rose's pills  
Is taking you to hospital in an emergency

Kindliness

Is happiness in a close community  
Is being a good neighbour  
Is joy and long-suffering and making someone smile

Kindliness is addictive and contagious

Kindliness is the vet writing a lovely sympathy card  
when my house bunny died.

(The bill followed in the next post)

*By The Piece Poets*

Poem 2: Written during a staff only session

### **Kindness Part I – Sheltered Housing Staff**

Kindness is being compassionate;  
showing you care and taking the time  
to listen.

Kindness is letting someone

through at a junction

Is watering his hanging baskets  
while he is in hospital

Is listening to someone  
who just needs to talk  
even if their life story  
is boring you to tears

Kindness is when I wrote down  
a postcode for a neighbour who  
has trouble reading and writing

Kindness is breaking into Mrs Bean's house  
after she has locked herself out

Is when you make the first move  
in reconciliation

Is taking someone to the shops

Is asking if I can be of help

Is putting the neighbours bins out

Is noticing that Beryl hasn't shouted at  
the kids in the street for days and  
checking that she is ok

Kindness is giving a warm hug;  
Kindness is colleagues sharing pain killers;  
Kindness is sharing a pizza

Poem 3: Written during a residents only session

**Kindness Part II - Residents**

Kindness is

Kindness is natural

Kindness is helping one another  
but not asking for rewards

It is giving of yourself;  
it is visiting friends in hospital  
Helping others at times of loss

Kindness is my friends and neighbours  
when my husband died

Kindness is just part of life.

Kindness is.

**8.3 Reflections from the facilitation sessions**

*I think my observations are that any change towards kinder behaviour has to be systemic, that is, organisation-wide. It means that everyone treats each other with kindness; we can't just expect residents in sheltered housing schemes to exhibit kindness with each other, or expect the staff who manage the schemes to promote kindness, without a positive lead from the top down.*

*Senior staff have to model the behaviour they want from other staff and all staff have to model good behaviour to the service users. Sounds so obvious but, as we saw, not always practiced! Where staff feel undervalued, disrespected, disempowered and thus prevented from providing an effective service, it is difficult for them to feel confident about promoting kinder behaviour amongst residents. Nevertheless, we did see examples of staff doing great work despite being stressed and in less than optimal working conditions.*

*How to achieve system-wide change is the challenge. It has to do with involvement, true consultation, respect; as so often, this is a leadership issue.*

#### 8.4 Reflections from pilot session staff and resident participants

- Very informative certainly got the brain working
- Just to give time to the residents take time to listen to people, not new but great to be reminded
- Need to encourage to residents to participate more in the sessions
- Might use with the tenants
- I could use similar facilitation methods to gain residents views
- Interesting to hear views of others from different fields
- I have got better insight into engaging
- Found out about new contacts and organisations I was unaware of signposting is great in a different role it would be lovely to organise activities
- Learning how I feel
- Good to meet other team members and discuss together topics that are relevant to us all
- A good team building exercise
- It has shifted my attitude towards change
- Restored my confidence has been a bit wobbly recently
- Knowing that I'm not the only one with reservations
- Stop and think more
- Laugh and smile more
- We could all be more aware and working together
- How to overcome barriers and encourage kindness encouraging community links as there are people who would benefit from sharing and receiving kindness
- Fun entertaining thought-provoking I will be spreading the word on how community can benefit from the idea
- The interactive sessions are a lot more engaging and entertaining
- I've now got a broader understanding of kindness
- Very interesting in the poetry session. He did a grand job
- I've learnt to stay tolerant of others when kindness is challenged
- I might make a board with practical suggestions
- Remember you get out what you give so always be kind and thoughtful

#### 8.5 Views on using the Kindliness approach

*The positive impact of group identification on health could be due to multiple reasons. However, special emphasis has been placed on the possibility that stronger group identification increases one's likelihood of receiving moral and instrumental support from other in-group members, thereby reducing the damaging amount of stress associated with everyday problems (Haslam, Reicher, & Levine, 2012*

*This is the conclusion I draw from touring England over the past few weeks, talking about loneliness and mental health. Everywhere I have been so far, I've come across the same, double-sided story: stark failures of government offset in part by the extraordinary force of human kindness. George Monbiot, Guardian 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016*



*It's brilliant to see a local authority working with a university and housing association to use Kindliness as a means of building community and tackling our loneliness epidemic. I strongly believe that the Kindliness initiative's use of poetry and theatre offers creative ways to raise awareness and bring people together. Kindliness is not dead.... The Kindliness Conference can help to unleash it."*

George Monbiot, February 2017.

#### 8.6 Kindliness Conference – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017

A draft version of this toolkit was launched at this conference held at County Hall on Dorchester and attended by over 35 representatives of sheltered housing landlords and other stakeholders.

There was some initial cynicism, however, the overwhelming majority of the delegates were impressed by the potential of Kindliness:

- *I wasn't sure how helpful I would find the conference having read the information emailed. I was a bit fearful of the anticipated performance aspects. I was also a bit cynical about some of the ideas. However I would describe the sessions as fun and thought-provoking.*
- *It was thought-provoking and interesting whilst offering practical ideas and new skills. These helped in terms of ways to encourage kindness.*
- *I've picked up a lot of good ideas and I will be talking to staff at the next team meeting about stealing some ideas for a mini workshop.*
- *It has changed some of my attitudes towards engaging with staff and residents in developing community activities.*
- *I haven't learnt anything new today but it has changed my attitudes and given me some ideas for engaging with staff and residents in developing future activities.*

- *I got some great ideas on how to establish and enhance a kindness ethos in my schemes.*
- *I learnt about funding opportunities, community support, housing allocations and telephone contact. It all needs thoughtful planning.*

## 9. About the authors

### Dr. Holly Crossen-White

Holly has undertaken qualitative research for many years and the main focus of her work has been upon issues related to personal health and wellbeing. She has a keen interest in research which gives a 'voice' to individuals who may feel excluded or marginalised within the community. Finding ways to engage these individuals with the research process is a further area of interest to Holly and this has led her to adopt a variety of arts and media based approaches to data collection. Holly particularly enjoys undertaking research with partners from outside academia. For example, She is currently involved with the RSPB on research that evaluates how contact with the natural environment can benefit an individual's health and wellbeing.

### Wendy Cutts

Wendy is a Senior Lecturer in Community Development at Bournemouth University. Wendy qualified and worked as a Social Worker before moving into Rural Community Development at Dorset Community Action. There she set up and managed many innovative projects from a youth advice centre to build and train schemes for young people. Her work at BU has focused on homelessness and supported housing. She has carried out work with local authorities in Dorset helping to initiate the Stepping into Nature Project in the Dorset AONB area working with Dorset County Council. This aims to help people with Dementia to enjoy nature. She uses performative methodologies to identify an authentic voice most notably in the 'Seen but Seldom Heard' project, which developed a toolkit for schools and a film.

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq7\\_qtnixig](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq7_qtnixig)

### Robin James

Robin is a Service Development Officer at Dorset County Council. Robin commissions services for older people including extra care, sheltered housing and a home improvement agency. He has overseen deep cuts to the supporting people programme whilst seeking to protect preventative services for older people. He was formerly Managing Director of Purbeck Housing Trust, Housing Services Manager at Purbeck District Council and Equality and Diversity Coordinator at Bournemouth Borough Council. During his career he has managed Careline Services for Havant, Ashford and Purbeck Councils. He has been Chair of Broadway Park Housing Association and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Housing.

### Dr Jonathan Parker

Jonathan is Professor of Society & Social Welfare at Bournemouth University, and Visiting Professor at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. He was one of the founders and director of the Family Assessment and Support Unit, a placement agency attached to the University of Hull, and Head of Department of Social Work. He was Chair of the Association of Teachers in Social Work Education until 2005, Vice Chair of the UK higher education representative body, the Joint University Council for Social Work Education from 2005- 2010, and is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute. He has published widely on disadvantage,

marginalisation and violence, Southeast Asia, religion, social work and welfare education internationally and is author of the best-selling book Social Work Practice.

Sample

**Participant Information Sheet**

**Kindliness Workshop**

You are being invited to take part in a learning session. Before you decide it is important for you to understand what will happen and why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like any support with participating in this session. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**What is the purpose of the session?**

Recent research has found that people living in sheltered housing believed that having good friends and neighbours was of great importance to ensuring that they felt part of the community, and that communal rooms and activities were an essential part of reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness, especially within those situated in rural areas. The findings suggest it is important to develop and maintain a vibrant community with strong connections among those living in the accommodation but also for them to have good links within the surrounding area. It also suggests that creating an environment where residents support one another helps to make individuals feel more confident about managing their own daily needs and being more independent.

This research project wants to know how residents feel about offering and/or receiving help from other residents, what might be thought of as doing a good deed for someone or being the receiver of a good deed. Of particular interest is knowing what residents feel makes a kind deed and how they would feel about someone offering to help them. By thinking about these things it is hoped that we can all understand what makes a strong positive community that is able to offer its members mutual help and support.

**Do I have to take part?**

Involvement is entirely voluntary. There will be no negative consequences if you do not want to take part. Also if you do decide to take part and then change your mind that is fine too. Just tell the Facilitator you no longer wish to be involved. You do not need to give a reason.

**What would taking part involve?**

There will be activities to encourage you to think about 'kindliness' and what it means to you. Some of the activities may lead to a group discussion. Other activities might involve you writing about your thoughts. The event will last no longer than three hours but during that time there will be comfort breaks and tea and coffee.

**Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All the information shared at the session will be kept strictly confidential. The Facilitator on

the day will explain Ground Rules for the session. One of these is not to share anything that another person says with other people.

**What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?**

You will only be asked about your views on kindness.

**Contact for further information**

If you have any questions or wish to discuss the research further then you can contact:

[Insert facilitator's contact details]

This information sheet is for you to keep and if you decide to take part you will be asked to complete a **participant agreement form** which you can also sign and keep.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet and considering whether you would like to take part.

**Sample Participants agreement/contribution form**

There will be some people who won't want to complete a Participant Agreement Form and it can be explained to them. This can be explained as a procedure which ensures that people behave fairly and do not share information that should remain only with the members of the session who contributed. This is why it is also good practice to develop Ground Rules for the session and share them with all those taking part in the session.

Each person taking part should complete a Participants Agreement Form **before the start** of the session.

**Participant Agreement Form**

**Facilitator's contact information**

**Please Initial  
or  
Tick Here**

I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above research project	
I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary.	
I understand that I am free to withdraw <i>up to the point where the data are processed and become anonymous, so my identity cannot be determined</i>	
During the task or experiment, I am free to withdraw without giving reason and without there being any negative consequences.	
Should I not wish to answer any particular question I am free to decline.	
I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the outputs that result from the research.	
I agree to take part in the above research project.	

Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*This form should be signed and dated by all parties after the participant receives a copy of the participant information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated participant agreement form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.*

## Background to Forum Theatre

This was a concept formed by the Brazilian theatre worker Augusto Boal in the 1970s, when working on a mass literacy programme with groups of peasants in Brazil. He was very influenced by the work of his colleague, Paulo Freire, whose renowned book 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed', quickly became a key text for educationalists all over the world.

Together, they created an artistic framework for change, based on the philosophy that people could only develop educationally when they were fully involved in the process of learning themselves, grounded in their own experience and environment. For Freire, this holistic approach meant giving cameras to participants and asking them to take photos of things and people that were important to them. They then labelled these photos, displayed them and shared them, quickly learning to read and write.

Boal took an even more social approach, using the gathering of people at a performance as a forum for shared experience, debate and discussion. Instead of just watching the play, spectators were invited by a facilitator (or Joker), to respond to what they had seen, critiquing the outcomes and proposing alternatives, which were taken very seriously. These suggestions were then acted out spontaneously, at first by actors. The next stage was to invite spectators to become spectators by coming out and demonstrating their alternatives themselves. Finally, the forum reflected on what they had learnt from the creative process and drew up plans of action. Boal called the process "A Dress Rehearsal for Life".

## Further Reading and useful information

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Hawkins, R.L (2010) Fickle families and the kindness of strangers: social capital in the lives of low-income single mothers, *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 20(1): 38-55.

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Seen but Seldom Heard [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq7\\_qtnjxig#](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq7_qtnjxig#)

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