



Feeling at Home Toolkit

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Introduction



About the Feeling at Home project

We can all relate to the idea of **‘feeling at home’**. It is about belonging, feeling safe and comfortable, knowing your home is organised the way you want it to be. And we have probably all had times when we did not ‘feel at home’ where we were living and have experienced how unsettling and difficult that can be.

The goal of the Feeling at Home project has been to find out what helps people with learning disabilities who live in group homes to feel at home, because we think this aspect of residential care often gets forgotten about. We wanted to develop ways to make where people live feel more like their home, not just somewhere they have ended up living.

We started with what ‘feeling at home’ means to people with learning disabilities themselves, rather than deciding for them. We used a research method called photovoice, where people tell their stories, share their experiences and work towards improving their lives through photography. The photography and interviews that we had with staff and people’s family helped us understand what was working well and what people feel gets in the way of feeling at home. We used these findings to create the Feeling at Home checklist – which allows people with learning disabilities to report how far different aspects of their living situation help them feel at home – and this Toolkit.

You will see some of the photos that people took in this Toolkit as well as quotes from the interviews.

We know that making changes in people’s homes is not easy. Support staff have to cope with so many demands and it can be hard to juggle people’s needs and preferences when a number of people live together. We hope this Toolkit will give you practical and achievable ideas to work on making a staffed residence for people with learning disabilities a great place to live and work.



Introduction



What the Feeling at Home toolkit is for

The toolkit has lots of ideas, activities and conversation-starters about how people living in group homes, their staff and supporters can work together to help people feel at home where they live. You can pick and choose bits of the toolkit to use...

Who the toolkit is for

- People with learning disabilities
- Housemates
- Advocates
- Support staff
- Family
- Service managers
- Social workers

How to use the toolkit with the checklist and plan

The toolkit is designed to be used with the Feeling at Home checklist. You can go through all or parts of the checklist first to find out what you want to work on.

We suggest that you decide on the changes you want to see. You can use the Plan template on page 114 to write these down, and then choose which activities in the toolkit you want to do.

Using the toolkit with people who do not use verbal language

- Imagine stepping into the person's shoes and seeing the home through their eyes.
- Think about how much at home you would feel if you lived in this home and used the different rooms.
- Involve the person's friends, family and advocate to understand what the person likes.
- Observe the person carefully at home, watching how they react to changes.
- Take your time.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



1. Is this Toolkit only for adults with learning disabilities in group homes?

The Toolkit was based on research that was done with adults with learning disabilities living in group homes with staff support.

However, there are parts of the Toolkit that could be used by other people who use services, such as older adults, people with dementia and other cognitive impairments, young people.



2. Can housemates with learning disabilities use the toolkit on their own?

The Toolkit is designed for supporters and housemates to use together so we have tried to use easy to understand language. Some housemates might like to read parts on their own.

There are also parts just for staff, such as sections on helping people make decisions, ideas for supporting housemates to sort out arguments and disputes, strategies for helping people move into a new home, and supporting people through losses and bereavement.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

3. How do I use the Toolkit?



The Toolkit is designed to be used with the Feeling at Home Checklist. The Checklist will help housemates identify aspects of their home they would like to work on, so they can feel more at home where they live.

You can then go to the linked part of the Toolkit and look at the activities that are listed there. Together with the housemate, you can choose activities to work on. We suggest you tackle one at a time.

You and the housemate might also get ideas of what to focus on from key worker meetings, annual reviews or from relatives, friends or advocates.

There is a visual 'Quick Start' on page 11 to get the conversation going.

4. Do we have to work through the whole Toolkit?



NO! The Toolkit has lots of sections and activities. It is something for you and the housemates to dip into and choose the things to work on that are most important for you. And remember that people's tastes change, so you may want to revisit sections over time.



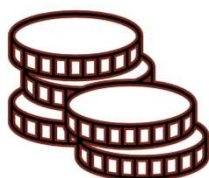
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

5. Has the Toolkit been tested in real life settings?



Yes. We have tested out the Toolkit with staff teams who support people with learning disabilities in group homes. Their feedback has helped us revise and improve the Toolkit.

6. Is there any charge to use the Toolkit?



No. The Toolkit is free to download and use. However, we do ask that if you refer to the Toolkit in your organisational communications you mention the Feeling at Home research team as the authors.



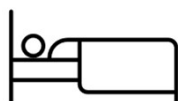
Quick start

What do you want to change the most?



Making decisions

Go to [page 12](#)



Bedroom

Go to [page 20](#)



Shared spaces

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Garden

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Cooking and cleaning

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Getting on with people

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Community

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Planning sheet

Go to [page 114](#)



Checklist

Go to [website](#)



1. Making decisions

Making decisions



What's in this section



Many of the toolkit activities involve making decisions together. People with learning disabilities often need support to make decisions. They might not know what choices are open to them. Or might find it hard to make a choice.

Here we make some suggestions for staff and supporters about how to give support to make choices and decisions:

- Page 14 Activity: Helping one person to make a decision
- Page 15 Activity: Effort/Impact - a guide to decide what to work on
- Page 16 Activity: House meetings - making decisions in a group
- Page 17 Activity: Brainstorming for ideas
- Page 18 Activity: Making an activity wheel - a choosing game.

Making decisions



Helping one person to make a decision

Stage 1: Setting the scene



It helps to find a quiet place and set aside time without distractions.

The persons need to be sure that the choice is up to them, and they do not need to worry what other people think.

The person might like a reminder that it is ok to change their mind a few times before making a final decision.

Stage 2: Making a decision



People find it easier when there are not too many options to choose from.

It helps if the person can see the different options (either the real thing or a photo).

People can express their decision through words, through pointing or sorting into a 'yes' and 'no' pile.

If someone is finding it hard to make a choice, they can look at the Impact/Effort chart on page 15.

Stage 3: After the decision



Making a choice can be hard - the person deserves some congratulations.

The next step is to make a plan to make the choice into a reality.

Making decisions



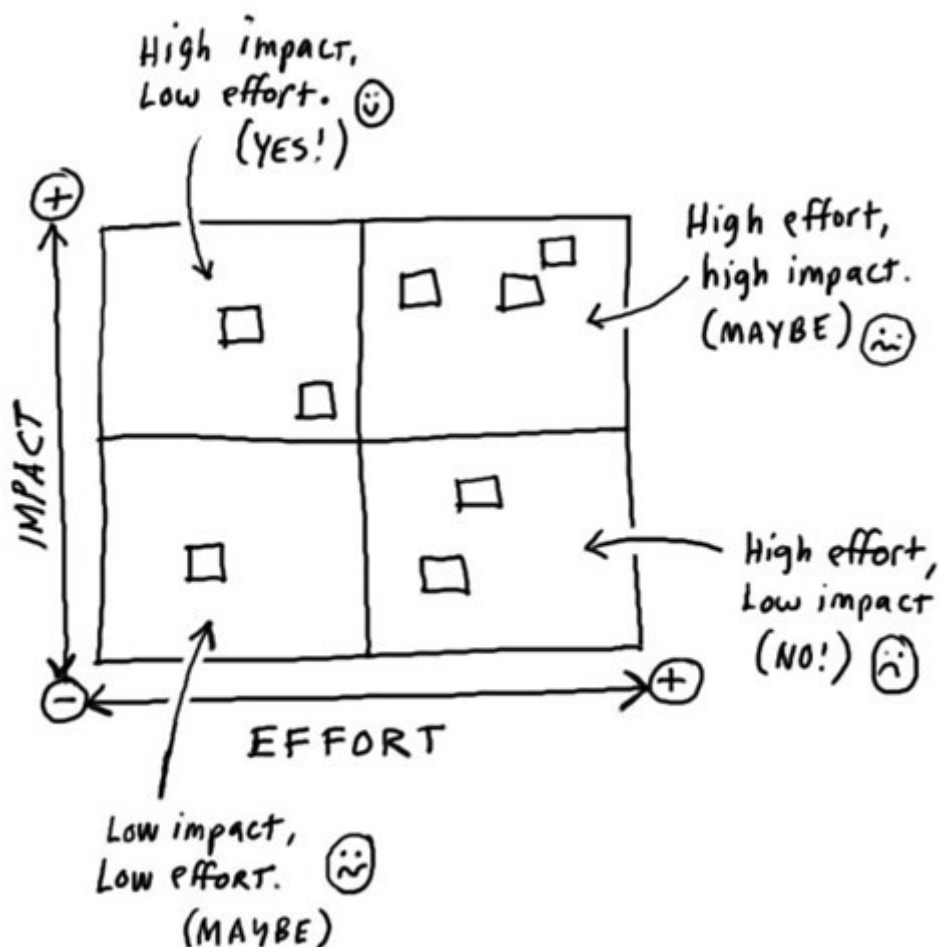
Effort and Impact chart

When deciding what things to do, it's useful to think about:

- How much impact something will have
- How much effort something will take

If something is high impact and low effort, perhaps do this first.
If something is low impact and low effort, perhaps do not do it.
If they are somewhere in between, have a think about it...

Plotting the activity on the chart below, might help you.



Matrix from: <https://gamestorming.com/impact-effort-matrix-2/>

Making decisions



Activity: Making decisions in a group

One way of making decisions together is by having a meeting of all the people living in the house.

This can give everyone a chance to say what they think.

Here are some things you might want to think about before you have a house meeting. They might help it to go more smoothly...



Ideas for setting the scene

- How long is the meeting?
- Will everyone be comfortable?
- Can everyone focus for that long?
- How often will you meet?
- When and where will you meet?



Agenda

- How will people put things on the agenda?
- Will the agenda be written or spoken or both?
- How will you record what happens?
- How will you decide on actions and goals?



Chairing the meeting

- Who will chair the meeting? Will you take turns?
- How will you support people to chair?
- How will you vote on things?
- How can people say if they are not happy?
- How will you check if people do not understand?



Ground rules

- Will you set some ground rules? Like one person speaks at a time, be respectful...

For resources there is a helpful factsheet for chairing meetings here:
<https://www.nypartnerships.org.uk/sites/default/files/Partnership%20files/Learning%20disabilities/Being%20a%20great%20chair%20notes.pdf>

Making decisions



Activity: Brainstorming for ideas

Sometimes housemates will face a problem in the house. Or will have to decide on something together. You can use this brainstorming approach to get creative, explore different ideas, and support housemates to decide what to do.

Bring people together - housemates, staff and family.

1

Step 1

- What is your challenge or problem?
- Who is taking part?
- Does anyone need help to take part?



2

Step 2

- Choose someone to be the **facilitator** – this is someone to support the group to share ideas.
- The facilitator asks people to think of as many ideas as possible to fix the problem.
- Everyone writes down their ideas on post-it notes and sticks them on the wall. You can use drawings too. Some housemates may need support.
- It helps to encourage creativity and be supportive.

3

Step 3

Look at the ideas together. You can ask people to:

- group any similar ideas together
- choose their favourite ideas
- talk about the ideas and see if any are popular
- Housemates choose one or two ideas to try out.

You can use the chart on page 15 to think about which actions might be best to do first.

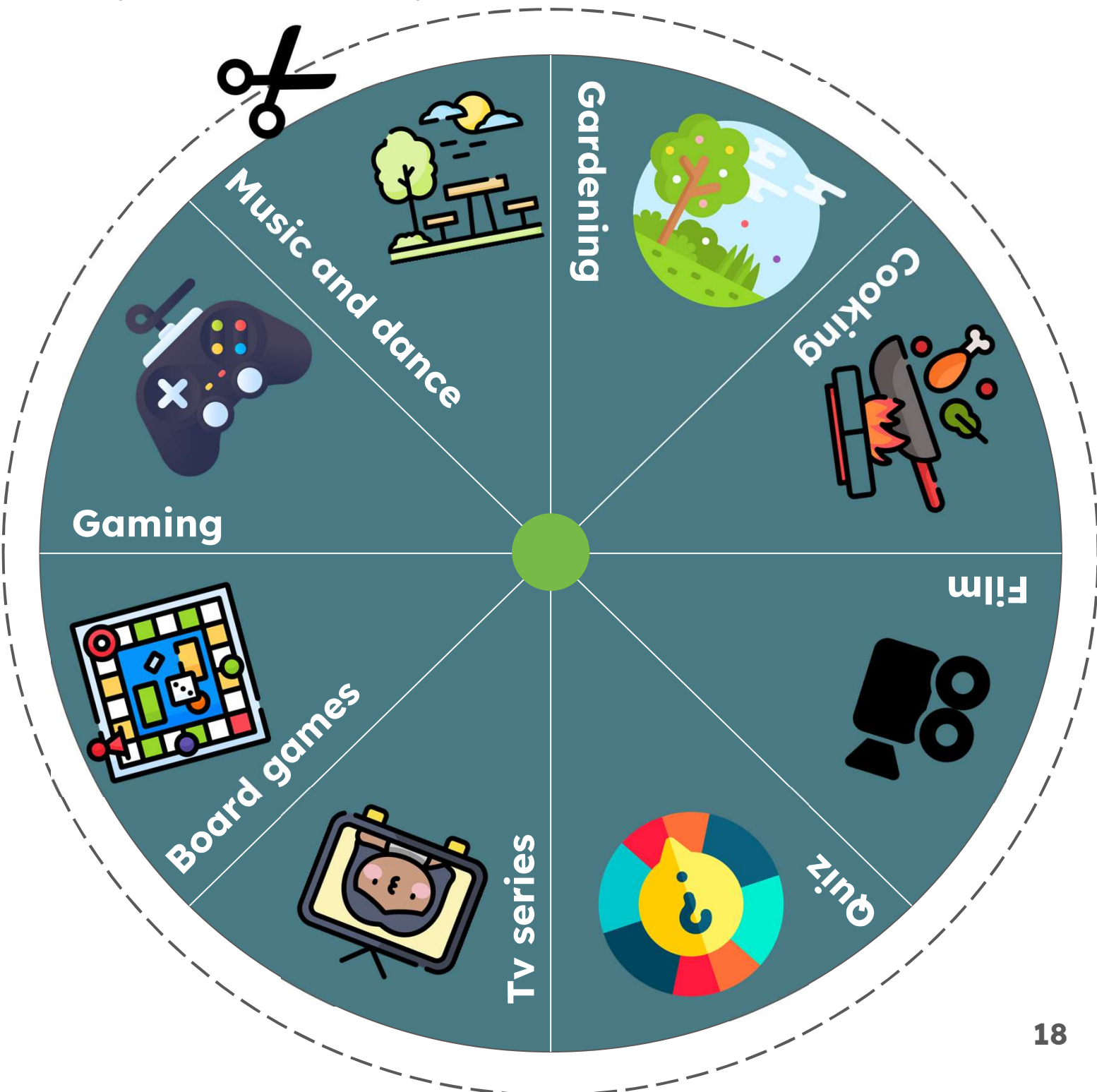


Making decisions

Activity: Wheel to decide activity

Sometimes it's difficult to decide what to do when you are a group with different opinions. You can always leave it to chance...

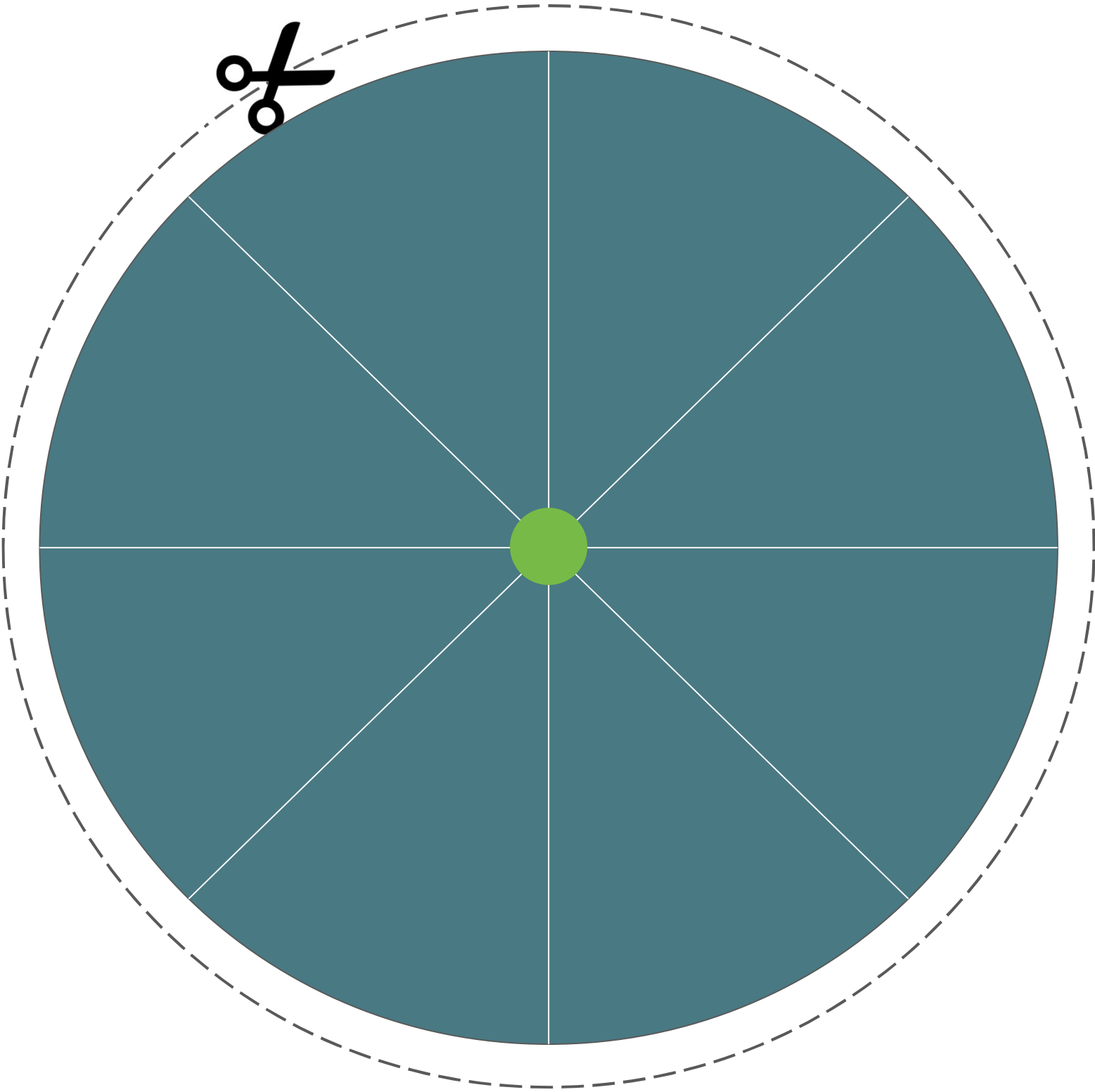
Here is a decision wheel to help you decide. Cut out the wheel and make a hole in the middle for a stick or a pen. You can spin the wheel and go ahead with the activity that ends up facing the person who made the spin.





Making decisions

Activity: Make your own decision wheel





2. Bedroom

Bedroom



What's in this section



- Page 22 Our research – what we found out
- Page 23 Worksheet – to help you decide what to change
- Page 24 Worksheet – we filled in a worksheet to give you ideas
- Page 25 Activity: decorating your bedroom
- Page 26 Activity: painting your bedroom walls
- Page 27 Activity: finding furniture
- Page 28 Activity: VIP photo – photos of important people
- Page 29 Activity: using bedroom walls to express yourself
- Page 30 Activity: storing and organising your things
- Page 31 Activity: making rules for your bedroom
- Page 32 Activity: example of rules for your bedroom
- Page 33 Activity: sensory ideas for your bedroom
- Page 39 Advice for staff and supporters – Hoarding or collecting?

Page 114 Planning sheet

You can use this to help you record what you want to do.

Bedroom: our research findings



For many people, their bedroom is the most important room in the house, where they can relax, express their identity and be surrounded by things that are important to them. Some people are not able to express their preferences for how their bedroom was organised and have to rely on staff to make it somewhere that fitted their personality and likes.

What helps people feel at home in their bedroom?	What gets in the way?
Having familiar and treasured possessions and reminders of family and friends	Nowhere to store possessions
Having things that reflect their hobbies and interests	Having to live with things that are broken and need fixing
Privacy, and security for their possessions	Having staff tidying or clearing up against the person's wishes
Furnishings that are comfortable and soft	Noises intruding from outside
Having things that show their achievements	Decorations that are old and do not reflect the person's current interests

Case study: Lillian

Lillian had to move house when the house where she was living was closed down. She was happy in her old place which she still calls 'my real home'. In her new bedroom there were no cupboards or shelves for her treasured furniture and possessions. A year after moving in lots of her possessions were still in black plastic bags on her bedroom floor.



Bedroom worksheet



This worksheet can help you think about your bedroom in more detail and think about how you want it to be.

How I would like my bedroom to...

Sound



Feel



Look



Smell



Things that I want to get for my bedroom



Furniture

**Somewhere to store
my things**

**Things that are
important**



Things that are important to me in my bedroom



Rules

**Things I like doing in
my bedroom**

**Doing things
with others**



Bedroom ideas



This worksheet can help people think about how they want their bedroom. We have filled this one in with some ideas.

How I would like my bedroom to...

Sound



- Quiet
- Full of sounds (music, voices)

Feel



- Soft throw
- Cushions
- Blankets
- Cuddly toys
- Rugs
- Bean bag
- Comfy chair

Look



- Duvet cover
- Tidy
- Messy
- My things
- Cosy
- Bright
- Low light
- Colours

Smell



- Fresh
- Flowers
- Incense
- No smell

Things that I want to get for my bedroom



Furniture

- Shelves
- Cupboards
- Double bed
- Bedside table
- Wardrobe
- Chair



Somewhere to store my things

- Shelves
- Boxes
- Display cabinet
- Bookshelf

Things that are important

- Television
- Radio
- Photos
- Music player
- Cuddly toys
- Bedside lamp



Things that are important to me in my bedroom



Rules

- I like alone time after dinner.
- Knock first.
- Don't tidy without asking.



Things I like doing in my bedroom

- Have a cup of tea
- Crafts
- Reading

Doing things with others

- Chat with staff
- Be with family and friends
- People stay the night



Bedroom



Activity: Decorating your bedroom walls



- Plan together a visit to Homebase or B&Q to choose the paint colour for your bedroom.
- You can look at colour cards from these shops and using them to choose the colour you would like.
- Or you can use the colour wheel below, and then find a matching colour at a paint shop.



Bedroom



Activity: Painting your bedroom walls

If you want to change the colour of your walls, talk to staff about how you can do this.

- Your housing organisation might agree to do it for you.
- Or you could pay someone to paint your bedroom.
But this can cost a lot of money – about £350 for one room.
- You can also do it yourself. You might need support from staff.

Doing it yourself

To paint your wall, you will need money for supplies. You can do a simple budget with a supporter. You will need about £100 to do it yourself.



You might need

- old clothes or overalls that are OK to get messy
- paint rollers and brushes
- sugar soap
- old sheets or plastic to cover the floor and furniture
- masking tape.

Steps

1. Shop for supplies.
2. Move furniture and things you do not want to damage.
3. Cover the floors and furniture that you cannot move.
You might want to tape the sheets down.
4. Clean walls with sugar soap if they are dirty
5. Use masking tape to cover the edges, like skirting boards.
6. Paint the walls. They might need 2 coats of paint.
7. New paint sometimes smells a lot.
You might need to air the room before using it again.
8. Tidy up and enjoy the new look.

Get some rollers too - these make painting quicker and easier

Bedroom



Activity: Finding furniture

Together, staff and housemates can look for furniture for the bedroom. You can also try this activity for shared spaces too.

Second-hand furniture

Here are some places you can find cheap or free furniture online.

- Freecycle
- Freegle
- Trashnothing
- Facebook Marketplace
- Gumtree Freebies
- Nextdoor



You can also look in charity shops for furniture.

New furniture

Staff and housemates can go on a shopping trip for new furniture. Some shops are: Homebase, Ikea, Dunelm, The Range.

Top tips

1. Find out the size of the furniture.
2. Measure the space you have and make sure it will fit.
3. Think about how you will get the furniture home.
4. ...and through the front door and up the stairs.
5. Check if second-hand furniture is from a pet and smoke-free home. Otherwise it could smell.
6. Never give anyone your personal details.
7. Always go with staff or family to collect or see the furniture.
8. Remember – it is OK to change your mind.
9. Sometimes you have to put the furniture together yourself.

Read the item description carefully

Bedroom



Activity: VIP photo

A VIP is a Very Important Person (or Place!)

Is there someone who is important to you? Or somewhere?

You can do the activity on pages 86- 87 to help you think.

Find a photo of that person or place to display.

If you do not have a photo, you could ask for one, or take a new photo.

To display the photo, you could.....

- Buy a photo frame
If you have enough money, or you can have a look around some charity shops to find one.
- Buy an electronic photo frame
These can be expensive but they show several photos.
- Make a photo montage
This means getting putting photos together in a frame.
- Buy a photo album
Easy to see lots of photos at the same time, like a book.

You can get photos printed on all sorts of things...

stickers, cushions, mugs, bags, mouse mats....

You can visit www.Boots.com or www.snappysnaps.co.uk for ideas.



Bedroom



Activity: Using your walls to express yourself

Having things you made yourself or things you like around the home can make it feel more like yours.

There are lots of ways you can show your work and interests in your home. You can use the ideas below to put something up on your bedroom wall.

Print out a **poem** you have written or that you like.

Print out one of your **photos**.
You can print it big like a poster.

Put up one of your **certificates** on your wall.

Put your **art** work on the wall in your bedroom.
You can get it framed.

Quotes from people you like.

Posters of your favourite films, music, hobbies.



Bedroom



Activity: Storing and organising your things

You might want to make more space or reorganise things in your bedroom so you can enjoy your things more.

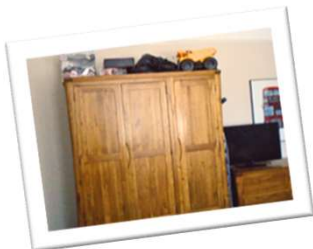
Here are some ideas...



- Shelves can make more space and can be decorative too – you might need staff support to put them up.

- If your bed does not have drawers underneath, you can get special storage bags or boxes that fit under the bed.

- You can use baskets to keep odd items tidy.



- Putting up hooks on the walls, doors, or furniture can create more space. Choose some hooks that **you** like.

- Sometimes new furniture can help, like a bigger wardrobe or cupboard. See page 27 for ideas.

- Drawer dividers can help organise drawers.

- Have a look on www.pinterest.com for some creative ideas.



Or have a clear out of things you do not want or need anymore.

You could sell them on www.ebay.com or www.vinted.com. Or take them to a charity shop.

You could even give them online – see websites on page 27.

Bedroom



Activity: Making rules for your bedroom

If it helps, you can think about some rules you want for your bedroom.

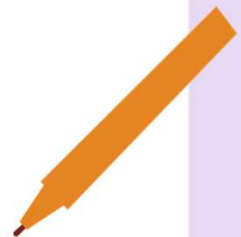
You can see some example rules on the next page.

- **Who do you need to talk to about the rules to decide them?**
- **Who do you want to share your rules with?**
It could be family, staff or housemates.
- **Where do you want to keep your rules?**
It could be in your drawer, on your wall, or in a folder.



Here are my rules

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.





Bedroom

Example rules for your bedroom

Here are some ideas of rules that people might make for their bedrooms.

Here are my rules

1. People should always take off their shoes before they come into my bedroom.
2. Everyone should knock and then wait for my answer before they come in.
3. I do not want people to move my drawings when they clean my room.
4. I do not want people to let themselves into my room when I am not there.
5. Please cannot talk loudly outside my bedroom door after 10pm.





Bedroom

Activity: Sensory - smell

People said that smells were important to feeling at home.

There are lots of ways you can change the smell in your bedroom. Here are some ideas how to do this...

Change your **washing powder**.

You can get unscented too.

Use an **air freshener** or **room spray**.

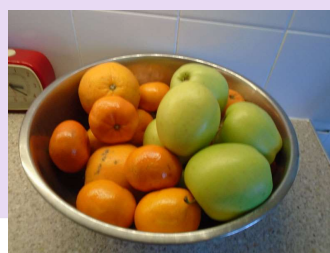
Keep a fresh **bowl of fruit** in your room.

Get some **flowers** or a **plant** for your room.

Get a **pillow spray**.

These are often lavender.

Change the **cleaning products** you use in your bedroom.



Bedroom



Activity: Sensory - taste

Some people told us that they liked to have drinks and snacks in their bedrooms. But some people were not allowed, and staff did not know why.

Activity – staff reflection

Do housemates have food and drink in their bedrooms?

If not, spend a little while thinking about why not. Is there really a risk?

- Maybe people do not want food or drink in their bedrooms...
- But maybe they are not allowed?
- If not allowed, who says so? Staff? Manager? GP? Family?
- If not allowed, do you know why?
- If not allowed do housemates know why?
- If they **do** want food or snacks in their bedroom but can't, are there small steps they could take towards it?

For example, a water bottle, a bowl of fruit, a cup of tea at bedtime ...



I like the
smell of
fruit.... there
is always
fruit in the
house



Bedroom



Activity: Sensory - sound

People told us they listened to music

- to help them relax
- to connect with their culture and language
- to remember people who they were close to.

Think about how someone can listen to music in their room.

What's stopping them from listening to music more?

Broken
stereo or
radio?



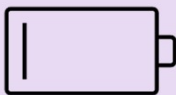
No access to
the internet or
device to play
music on?



Needs help
to find music
from cultural
background?



Batteries
dead?



Too noisy for
housemates?



Does not
know how to
find new
music?



How can you address these problems now or in the future?
Choose one or two to do now. Plan some for the future.

For example, a library trip for new CDs, fix the stereo, buy rechargeable batteries, time with staff listening to music....

Bedroom



Activity: Sensory - sound

People told us that noise stopped them from feeling relaxed. Noise can be painful and upsetting for people who are neurodiverse or people who have a hearing impairment. Here are some practical steps people can take if a bedroom is too noisy.

Fit furniture pads on noisy chair and table legs.

Check if equipment is noisy, like computers, taps and lights.
Get them fixed.

Front doors and hallways can be noisy.
Ask visitors to be thoughtful.

Sound dampening curtains can cut down noise from outside.

Carpets, rugs, and soft furnishings can stop echoes.

You can use house meetings to talk about noise problems.



Bedroom



Activity: Sensory - lighting

Bright lights, flickering lights, and strong reflections can make it hard for some people to relax.

It can be fun to try out different lighting too.

There are lots of ways you can change the lighting in your bedroom. Here are some ideas...



Try a new bulb to stop flicker.
LEDs can stop big reflections.

Try a new bulb, lampshade or lamp for a different feel.

Put up twinkly fairy lights or a light projector.

Try black out curtains or blinds to stop light coming in.

Try thinner curtains if you like some light.

Try a dimmer switch to get lighting just right.



Bedroom



Activity: Sensory - touch

Cuddly toys and soft things were important for people to feel comfortable in their bedrooms.

There are lots of ways you can change how your bedroom feels. Here are some ideas...

Soft toys

Cushions with
different
textures

Comfy chair,
not just the
bed

Soft bedding
and throws

Electric fans
and draught
excluders

Hot water
bottles and
microwave
wheat bags





Bedroom

Hoarding or collecting?

For staff and supporters

What is the difference between 'hoarding' and 'collecting'?

- A **collection** is usually organised and easy to get to.
- **Hoarding** is usually not organised or accessible. Other people might see the things as 'rubbish'.

But both 'collectors' and 'hoarders' are attached to their possessions. They think their possessions are interesting and useful and do not want to get rid of them.

People might get really attached to their possessions if they are feeling worried or lonely. They can get more worried at the thought of losing their things.

Having lots of possessions can be an important part of feeling secure and in control - and feeling at home.



How to support people who have lots of possessions:

- Try to understand what the possessions mean - maybe they remind someone of the past or they feel they will be useful.
- Help the person organise their possessions. Do they need better storage?
- Spend time sorting through the possessions. Perhaps some could be given away or recycled?
- If there is no space for more things, would the person agree to a 'one in, one out' rule? If they want to keep a new possession, an old one must go.



3. Shared spaces

Shared spaces



What's in this section



Page 42	Our research – what we found out
Page 43-44	Activity: Living room planning worksheet
Page 45-46	Activity: Living room mood board
Page 47	Activity: Decorating the living room
Page 48-49	Activity: Choosing objects for the living room
Page 50-51	Activity: Rules in the living room
Page 52	Activity: Hobbies and interests in the living room
Page 53	Activity: Share your writing, art, story...
Page 54-55	Activity: Worksheet - front door, hallway, stairs
Page 56	Activity: Ding dong! Who answers the door?
Page 57	Activity: Noise in the hallway
Page 58	Activity: Making the hallway more homely
Page 59-60	Activity: Kitchen planning worksheet
Page 61	Activity: Kitchen design and look
Page 62	Activity: Sensory kitchens
Page 63	Staff and supporter advice: unwritten rules
Page 64	Staff and supporter advice: eye care
Page 114	Planning sheet
	- to help you record what you want to do.

Shared spaces: our research findings



Shared spaces are living rooms, kitchens, bathrooms, hallways. Compared to bedrooms, shared rooms lacked character. They often did not provide a central point for housemates to get together to enjoy joint activities. Staff also used shared spaces for their paperwork, but family members sometimes felt uncomfortable about this.

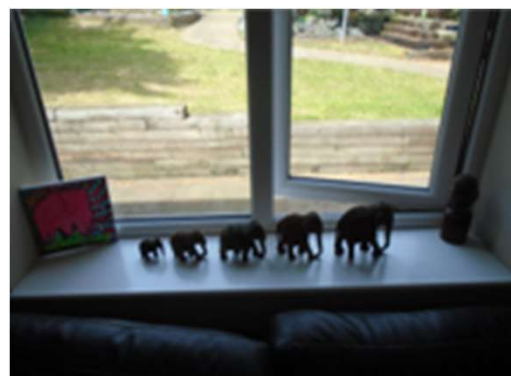
For many housemates, their kitchen is the place where they come together during the day, to eat or drink together and chat. People can feel comfort through familiar routines, smells and tastes. Sometimes there are issues in the kitchen like people taking food that someone else has bought just for themselves, or staff needing to restrict housemates' access to the kitchen.

What helps people feel at home in the shared spaces?	What gets in the way?
People have comfortable places to sit.	The use for some rooms in the home is not understood by people who live there.
There are options for individual and shared activities in the living room – magazines, TV, snooker table etc.	People are surrounded by decorations and pictures that they did not choose and do not like.
There are different 'zones' for different people and activities.	People do not have a front door key to their home.
People have chosen ornaments and decorations for the living room and hallways.	People don't get to watch the programmes they like on the living room TV.
People feel happy with the way that staff organise doing their paperwork in shared spaces.	Family feel uncomfortable when they visit because staff are doing paperwork in shared spaces.

Case Study: Daniel (living room)

Daniel lives with four other men. He told us about the decorations and objects in his living room:

'It just makes it homey, it's not just an ordinary care home. Each thing is chosen by housemates, so like Peter painted that, I chose the head [sculpture], a staff member chose the elephants'.



Living room worksheet



This worksheet can help you think about your living room in more detail and think about how you want it to be.

How I would like our living room to...

Sound



Feel



Look



Smell



Things that I want to get for our living room



Furniture



Things that are important



Things that are important to me in our living room



Rules

Things I like doing in
our living room

Doing things
with others



Living room ideas



This worksheet can help you think about your living room. We have filled this one in for you with some ideas.

How I would like our living room to...

Sound



- Lively
- Quiet

Feel



- Cosy
- Tidy
- Calm
- Busy
- Party

Look



- Tidy
- Some of my things
- Cosy
- Photos

Smell



- Fresh
- Flowers
- Incense
- No smell

Things that I want to get for our living room



Furniture I would like

- Comfy sofa
- Coffee table
- Bookcase
- Footrest



Things that are important

- Television
- Radio
- Music player



Things that are important to me in our living room



Rules

- I like alone time after dinner
- We share the TV.



Things I like doing in our living room

- Jigsaws
- Crafts
- Painting my nails

With others

- Conversation
- Physical affection



Living room



Activity: Mood board

Thinking about shared spaces in a home is really important. How do people want to use these areas? What do people usually do, and can these activities be done in the shared areas? How do housemates want these areas to look?

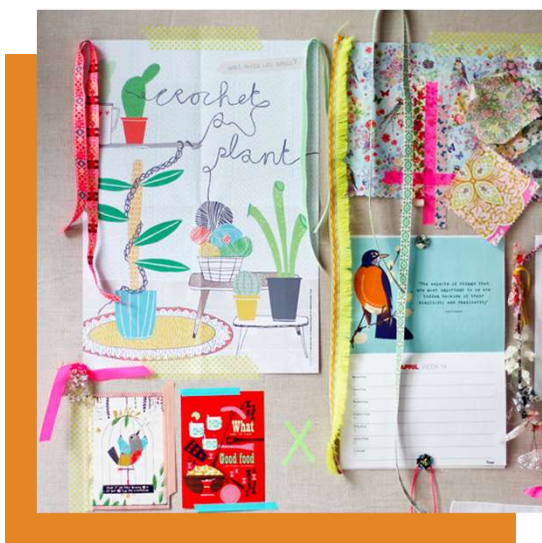
Does anything need to change?

- Use a house meeting to talk about what people would like to have in the shared rooms in the house.
- You can plan a creative activity so that housemates can make mood boards for how they would like their home to look.
- You can fill in the mood board on the next page. Or use a big blank piece of paper or paper tablecloth.



You will need

- A3 paper or worksheet in this toolkit
- collect old interior design magazines
- colour wheel palette from Homebase, B&Q or other shop
- collect scrap magazines
- anything else fun and creative.



Living room



Activity: Mood board

Mood board

Get creative. Use magazines, newspapers or pictures you like to show how you want your living room to look like.



Living room



Activity: Decorating

This is something that everyone decides together.

After exploring what the housemates would like their home to look like, follow the instructions to make the changes with housemates that they would like to do.

Furniture

- After talking together about what people would like in the house, plan a trip to **Ikea, Dunelm, Homebase, or other big store** so that housemates can choose furniture for the shared rooms together.
- You can also use **Freecycle, Facebook Marketplace, and second-hand charity shops. See page 27.**



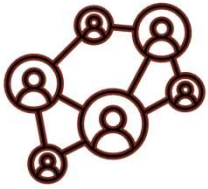
Notes

- **If there is no budget** for furniture, existing furniture can be updated or the feel of the room changed using blankets, rugs, lamps, and plants.
- **Making decisions together** can be hard. See section 1 for support with this.

Living room



Activity: Objects



The objects that are important to people and that people use can be a way of connecting with other important parts of the home life.



We found that people have pictures of important people and times in their lives in their homes, precious things that have been passed on to them from people in their family, and awards and achievements.



Some everyday objects, such as kitchenware, pillows and furniture may be important because they say something about what someone likes or what they find comforting.



Some objects may be important for cultural or religious reasons.



Objects can give you clues about what is important to someone.



Have a look at the activity on the next page to help you explore this together.



“Art in the family

Under the sea. My mum made it at a glass class. It makes me feel like I’m closer to home”.



Living room

Activity: Using objects to feel at home

Choose an object to discuss with a housemate and use these questions to help you think about how this object can help someone feel at home.

- What is this object? Where did it come from?
Was it a gift, was it made, was it bought?

What does this **say** about:

- The persons interests?
- How they see themselves?
- What is most important to them in life (their values)?
- Which kinds of relationships people value the most?

What does this object **do** for the person? For example, connect them to people? Give them independence? Feel good about themselves?



All colours are welcome here...It's nice to see other housemates sharing their artistic skills here...

What ideas has this activity given staff and housemates about

- activities to try or places to go?
- things to make or buy?
- people to get to know?

Note: People may talk about difficult experiences such as loss. It is important to give this enough time and to feel confident in responding to more difficult feelings that housemates express.

Living room



Activity: Rules in the living room

You can use section 1 to help you have a group discussion about rules that you want to agree for the living room. You can find some ideas for rules on the next page.

Think about...

- **Who do you need to talk to about the rules to decide on them?**
- **Who do you want to share your rules with?**
It could be family, staff or housemates.
- **Where do you want to keep them?**
It could be in your drawer, on your wall or in a folder.

Here are our rules

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.





Example: Rules in the living room

Here are some ideas of rules that people might agree together for their living room. See page 44 for ideas on how to write these.

Here are our rules

1. Always take shoes off in the living room.
2. Take it in turns to choose a film on Friday night.
3. Don't play music when the TV is on.
4. Tidy cups away at the end of the day.
5. Switch off the lights when we leave the room.



Living room



Activity: Hobbies and interests

Doing hobbies like watching TV or spending time in others' company was quite relaxing for people.

Here are some ways to make that happen.

Get a box for games, puzzles and jigsaws everyone likes.

Get a box for craft things to use in the living room.

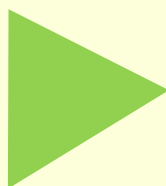
Hobbies exchange: tell each other what hobby you do, and why you like it.

Try out some video games.

You can do this on a tablet, laptop or games console.

Make a bookshelf for each housemate.

Hang musical instruments in the living room. Have a jam.



Living room and shared spaces



Activity: Share your writing, art, story...

Having things that you have made around the home can make it feel like yours.

There are lots of ways you can show your work in your home. You can....



Print out a poem you have written or that you like.

Use Velcro strips to make a stairway gallery.

Print a photo you like on a cushion or mug.

Frame your art and put on the walls in shared rooms.

Make a calendar of artwork from different housemates.

Cheer up a forgotten corner with housemates' artwork.



Make sure all housemates are happy with putting up artwork. Have a house meeting if people cannot agree. See section 1 for ideas to help make decisions.

Front door, hallway and stairs worksheet



This worksheet can help you think about these shared spaces in more detail and think about how you want them.

Things I would like in these areas

Feel	Sound	Look



Things that are important to me in these areas

Rules	Things I want to change



Front door, hallway and stairs ideas



This worksheet can help you think about these shared spaces in more detail and think about how you want them. We have filled this one in with some ideas.

Things I would like in these areas

Feel

- Can answer the door
- Cosy
- Safe

Sound

- Peaceful



Look

- Tidy
- Lots of my things
- To change the door furniture



Things that are important to me in these areas

Rules

- No loud sounds
- For staff to ring the bell before they come in

Ideas

- Choosing rugs, pictures
- Not having lots of staff signs
- Better handrails on stairs
- Help me know what to say when I answer the door.
- Help me recognise who is at the door.



Front door, hallway, stairs



Ding dong! Who answers the door?

Have a chat and think about who answers the door



- Do housemates want to answer the door?
- What support do housemates need to help them answer the door? Like what to say or do...
- Do people need a visual reminder of who visits?



- What kind of doorbell do you have?
- Did housemates choose the doorbell?
- Are there different chimes? Can housemates choose one?
- Do housemates want a video doorbell?



- Who has a key?
- If staff have a key, do they ring before coming in?



- Do you have a signing in book?
- What does it look like?
- Who chose it?
- Who looks at it?
- Who asks people to sign?
- Does everyone understand what it is for?



Front door, hallway, stairs



Activity: Noise in the hallway

Fit furniture pads on noisy chair and table legs.

Carpets, rugs, and soft furnishings can cut down noise.

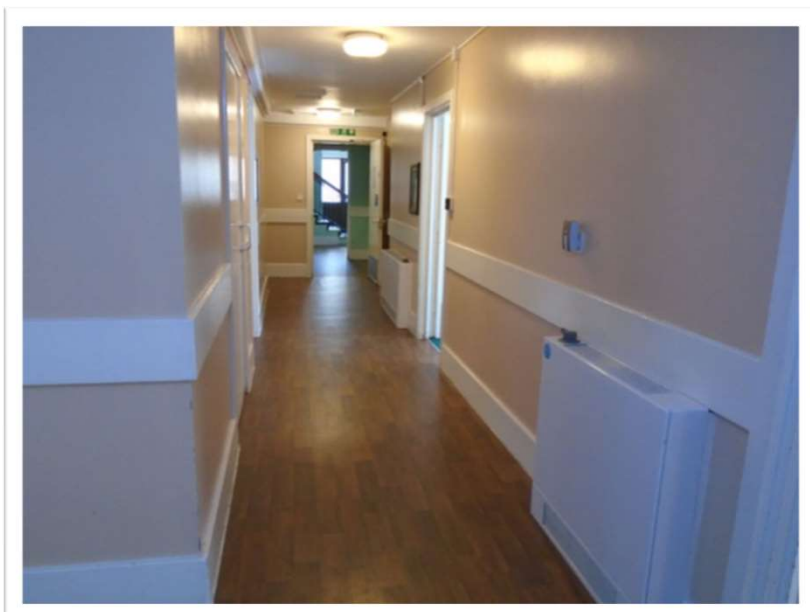
Ask visitors and delivery people to be thoughtful.

Do not let doors bang.

Sound dampening curtains can cut down noise from outside.

Have a house meeting about noise if it causes arguments.

Add panels to the ceiling to cut down noise and echoes.





Front door, hallway, stairs

Activity: Making the hallway more homely

Some houses had a rule that people could not hang pictures up in the hallway.

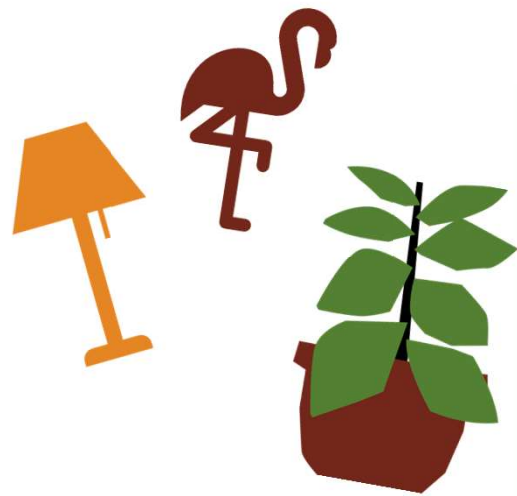
If so, there may be other ways of making it more homely. For example,

Rugs

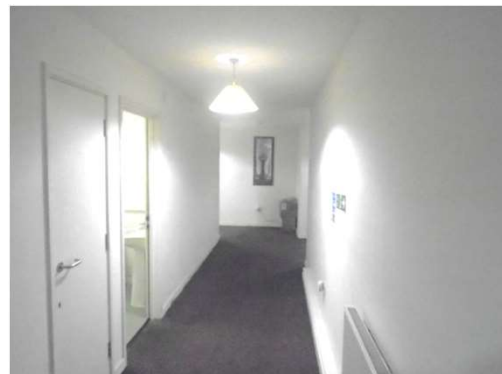
Potted plants

Small table and lamp

Free-standing ornaments



Have a think about **signage on hallways and doors** in the house. Are signs worded sensitively? Who is allowed to put up signs? Who are the signs for? Are the signs needed at all?



Kitchen



Name:

Date:

With help of:

What I would like to do in my kitchen



Things I would like to get for our kitchen



Things that are important to me in my Kitchen...



Kitchen



Here are some ideas of what people could write...

What I would like to do in my kitchen

- Make snacks
- Make a cup of tea
- Do the washing up
- Make family a meal
- Make housemates a meal
- Put away the shopping
- Organise the cupboards
- Listen to the radio



Things I would like to get for our kitchen



- Microwave
- Smoothie maker
- Popcorn maker
- Cake tins
- My own mug
- My own plate
- My own cutlery



Things that are important to me in my Kitchen...



- Staff to help me with washing up
- Don't use other people's mugs without asking
- Taking turns
- Respecting my things
- Having good conversations

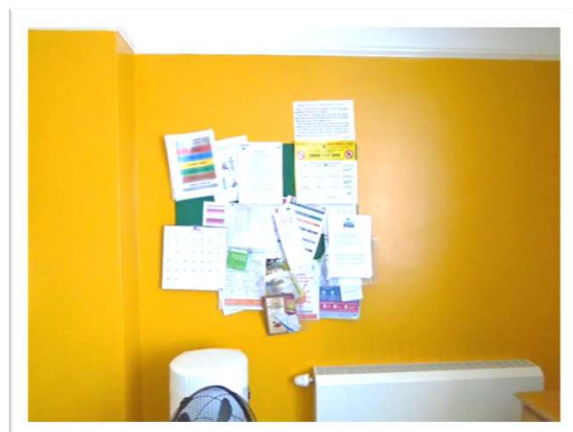
Kitchen



Activity: kitchen design and look

It is not easy to change a lot about the look of the kitchen as it is very expensive to change kitchen units or floor. But using the mood board activity on pages 45 to 46, or the list below, think about how you would like your kitchen to be.

- **Colour:** what do you think about the colour of the kitchen? Could you paint a wall? It could be an 'accent wall' in a different bright colour. Or could you paint a cupboard door?
- **Decorations:** Indoor plants can look great in a kitchen. Or you can grow some [cress](#), [herbs](#) or [microgreens](#). Some people have a calendar in their kitchen. What would housemates like for a calendar – sports, animals, cars, local places to go? You could choose this in a house meeting - see section 1.
- **Plates, cutlery, mugs, placemats:** Who has chosen them? Can you choose a personal mug? Or get a photo printed on a mug?
- **Fridge magnets:** Some people like to collect these. You could ask friends and family to buy one for you when they are in an interesting new place.



Kitchen



Activity: Sensory kitchens

Kitchens can be sensory places...

- **Smells:** Do you have a spice rack or drawer?
What smells do you like? Consider filling a spice rack together or growing some herbs.
- **Tastes** – see **Section 5 Cooking and Cleaning** for activities.
- **Sounds** – what sounds do you like in the kitchen?
People talking on the radio? Music? Silence?
- [Make your own compost](#) and the plants in your garden will be very happy! You can put kitchen scraps in a compost bin or heap in the garden. No meat or fish though.



Kitchen



Activity: Understanding unwritten rules

For staff and
supporters

Sometimes there are issues in the kitchen that can be difficult to understand. There might be some unwritten rules around what happens in the kitchen and when.

It can be frustrating for people not to understand why there are these rules, or who made them.

Kitchens were also places where staff could find space for meetings. At these times, shared spaces could feel 'out of bounds' for housemates.

It can be useful for staff to reflect on these issues:

- What are the rules in the kitchen?
- Are there worries about safety?
- What are the rules about housemates coming in and out of the kitchen?
- Are there any rules about getting a snack without having to ask staff?
- Is there scope for giving people more control and choice?
- Is there a rule that only one person at a time can use the kitchen?
- Who decides what signs and folders are in the kitchen?
- Who decides what goes on the noticeboard?
- Are there rules around taking other people's food?
- Can people choose to eat alone or together?



Shared spaces



Advice: eye care and accessibility

For staff and supporters

Making the home accessible is essential for people to be able to enjoy their home. Here are some ideas for staff to help create a safe environment for people.



- **Assess sensory needs**

Housemates' sensory needs should be assessed when they first move in, and the home adapted appropriately. **Seeability.org** has great resources to help you.



- **Living safely together**

Make sure any changes are suitable for everyone. For example, is low lighting good for everyone?



- **Does everyone have an eye test once a year?**

If not, suggest a team and house meeting to explore together how you can encourage this.



- **When should someone use their glasses?**
And where should someone's glasses be kept?

Make sure people know where their glasses are kept. Keep them in the same, easy-to-find place.



- **Use functional examples**

Use real life examples to explain to others what housemates can read or do. For example, 'Sarah can read text on her iPad, but she cannot read a medicine bottle'.

For more resources, visit:

<https://www.seeability.org/resources>

6 out of 10
people need
glasses



4. Garden

Garden



What's in this section



Page 67

Research: what we found out

Pages 68-69

Activity: Garden planning worksheet

Page 70

Activity: Creating a garden

Page 71

Activity: Outdoor activities

Page 72

Activity: Grow your own food

Page 73

Activity: Sensory garden

Page 74

Activity: Rules for the garden

Page 75

Activity: Getting help in the garden

Page 114

Planning sheet

You can use this to help you record what you want to do.

Gardens: our research findings



Quite a few people were lucky enough to live in houses with gardens, often large ones. However, gardens tended to be underused. Some staff we talked to had great ideas for developing the garden but felt they needed more time, more money and some support with gardening skills.

What helps people feel at home in their garden?	What gets in the way?
The garden is somewhere where people can sit and enjoy sounds and sights to of nature	The garden is rather bare and there are few flowers
The quiet of the garden helps people relax and escape from sad thoughts	The garden is untidy and there are broken and unwanted things
People enjoy using the garden for barbeques in the summer	The garden is not accessible to all of the housemates

Case Study: Gavin

Gavin has enjoyed collecting things from the local beach or things left outside local houses to decorate the garden in his house. He has created an area in the garden with shells and driftwood scattered around and has hung up wind-chimes that were left outside a neighbour's house for people to pick up for free.



Shared space: Garden

Name:

Date:

With help of:



How I would like my garden to...

Feel:



Sound:



Look:



Smell:



What do I want in my Garden...

Items that are important:



Things that are important to me in the Garden...

Rules



Things I like
doing in the Garden



Shared space: Garden



How I would like my garden to...

Feel:



textures
safe
soft
Sheltered
comfortable
seating

Sound:



Quiet
Birds
Windchimes
Running
water

Look:

Colourful
Green
Tidy

Smell:



Roses
Flowers
Herb
grass

What do I want in my Garden...

Items that are important:



- **Furniture:** seats, table, hammock, swing ball, games, rounders, croquet
- **Plants:** Flowers, herbs, vegetables, fruit
- **Things to do:** bbq, games, picnic, drinks
- **Sensory pod:** somewhere to go when I am feeling overwhelmed
- Watch aeroplanes

Things that are important to me in the Garden...

Rules



- Peace and quiet

Things I like
doing in the Garden



- Gardening
- Weeding
- Reading
- Listening to music
- Seeing visitors

Garden



Activity: Creating a garden

Gardens were often underused. There are lots of things you can do together to make the most of them.



- **Organise a house meeting** (see section 1) to talk about what housemates want their garden to look like, and what activities they want to do in the garden.

TIP: bring the Garden worksheet to the meeting to start a conversation with housemates.



- **Plan a trip to a garden centre**, where housemates can pick up some plants that they would like to have in the garden and look after. Buying small plants can be easier than growing from seed - check out B&Q or Homebase.



- **Growing in a container** can be a good start - you can use an old bucket (with holes in the bottom) or an old sink.



- There are some **good websites** to get advice on planting flowers and vegetables. For example, the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) have great pictures on their website and a guide for beginners:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/beginners-guide>

They offer a free gardening coach as well.



- **Organise a day** where the household create the garden as they would like to see it. This can include tidying the garden and making space for new plants.



Garden



Activity: Take it outdoors

What do you normally do inside that can be done outside for a change?

Once you have somewhere comfortable to sit in the garden, there are plenty of things you can do outside.

Here are some ideas. Can you think of any others?





Activity: Grow your food

Growing vegetables does not have to be hard and does not need to take up much space. It can also be very enjoyable, a way to connect with people, spend time outdoors, and enjoy fresh fruit and vegetables.



There are so many things you can grow.
Here are some ideas for starters...



- **Make a herb garden for the year round**

Find a corner of your outdoor space for a herb garden. Rosemary, oregano, parsley and sage grow easily here.

- **Grow a wigwam of delicious mangetout or beans**

Make a wigwam out of bamboo sticks. Sow mangetout seeds in late spring and then pick whole pods regularly when they are still young.

- **Tomato hanging basket**

This is great for smaller gardens and balconies. Plant tumbling cherry tomatoes in a hanging basket. Water well and enjoy fresh tomatoes within weeks.

You could also join local gardening groups, local seed swaps, or swap seeds and plants with neighbours.





Activity: Sensory garden

A sensory garden is a garden which stimulates all our senses... through smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing. Sensory gardens can be a way for people with profound or multiple disabilities to enjoy the outside space.

Here are some ideas. You do not have to do them all in one go. Look through with housemates, then choose one or two to try.

Sight

- Try different colour plants, like maples and holly berries.
- You can try solar fairy lights and lights to mark pathways.
- You can decorate trees with ribbons or wool.

Smell

- Grow lavender, mint, rosemary, jasmine, or other highly scented herbs and flowers.



Feel

- You can choose plants with different textures – prickly, smooth, furry.

Taste

- Grow things to eat – see page 72.



Sound

- Water features can add a new sound to the garden.
- Hang up some wind chimes. Or try making some.
- You can attract birds to your garden with a birdfeeder or bird bath. Feeders that stick to the window can be great for people with mobility disabilities. You could also take part in the Big Garden Birdwatch: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch/info>

Garden



Activity: Rules for the garden

You can use Section 1 to help you have a group discussion on rules that you want to agree for the garden.

It might be helpful to think about...

- Who do you need to talk to about the rules to decide on them?
- Who do you want to share your rules with? It could be family, staff, housemates, gardeners.
- Where do you want to keep them? It could be in your drawer, on your wall or in a folder.

You can write down your rules here...

Here are our rules

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Here are some ideas for rules for the garden

1. Take turns to water the garden.
2. Do not leave rubbish in the garden.
3. Keep the paths clear so people are safe.
4. Tidy away things at the end of the day.
5. Keep the shed door shut.



Garden



Activity: getting help



How to find volunteers



- You can put an advert in the local library
- You can post an advert on NextDoor
- You can ask family or friends if they know anyone who would like to volunteer.



5. Cooking and cleaning

Cooking and cleaning



What's in this section



- Page 78 Research: what we found out
- Page 79 Activity: Looking after shared spaces
- Page 80 Activity: Making cleaning more fun
- Page 81 Activity: Getting involved in cooking
- Page 82 Activity: Cooking together

Page 114 Planning sheet

You can use this to record what you want to do.



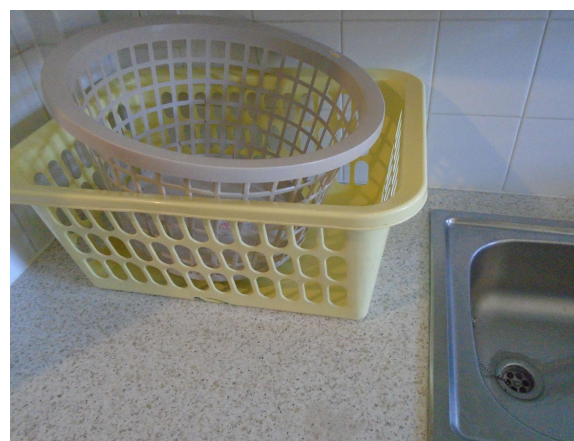
Cooking and cleaning: our research findings

For some people their homes are a bit like a hotel and staff do the cooking and cleaning for them. People can get used to this and might not be very keen to change. But when people **are** given the chance to learn and practice cooking and cleaning skills they feel very proud of themselves and their ability to contribute to running the home.

Cooking and cleaning: what helps people feel at home	What gets in the way
Choosing and cooking meals that remind them of their family or culture	Staff not having time or support to help housemates learn to take part in cooking and cleaning
Making a meal just for themselves when they want to	Not having the right tools for cooking and cleaning that housemates can use
Doing cleaning jobs at their own pace and joining in any way they can	Housemates having a mindset that they are not good enough at cooking or cleaning
People choosing jobs that they enjoy	

Case Study: Orchard House

There are six people living in Orchard House and all have mobility and sensory support needs. The house manager, Gloria, has a policy that everyone should engage in domestic jobs as much as they are able to. She told us: *‘We encourage them to like, try to help us, like with laundry. They’ll usually put the clothes inside the washing machine and we will give them the tablet. So like we will help them do all these things’.*



Cooking and cleaning



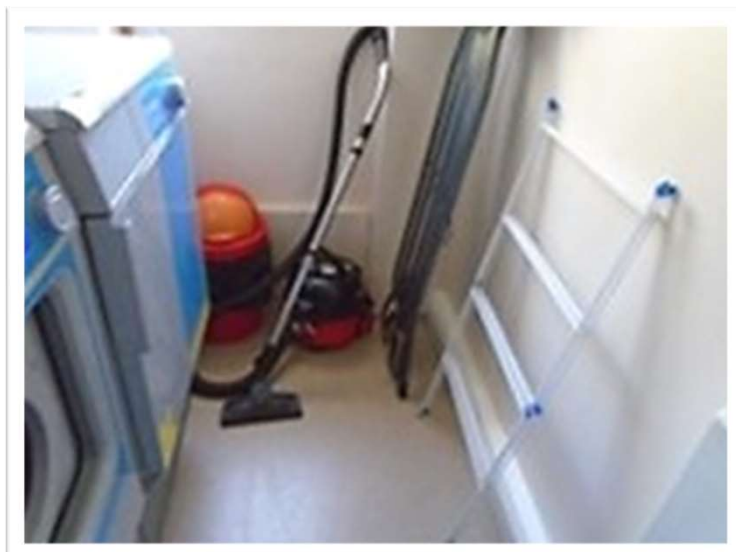
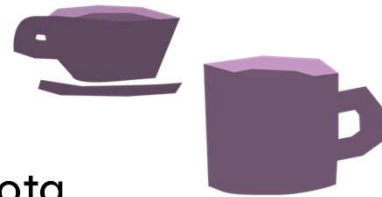
Activity: looking after the shared spaces

1 Call a house meeting. See section 1 for support with this.

2 Use a task board as the basis for discussing with all housemates what tasks you would each like to do as a weekly chore.

3 You can discuss within the meeting:

- If people want to have a house rota
- If people want to do things separately or together
- If people want to do the same task or change each week
- If people need specific equipment to carry out the task.



Cooking and cleaning



Activity: Could cleaning be more fun?

Not everyone likes cleaning. Here are some ideas to help liven it up. Can you think of any more together?



- Set a timer for 15 minutes and see how much cleaning you can do in that time.



- Do it with housemates or staff for more fun.



- Listen to the radio or your favourite music while you clean.



- When you are waiting for the kettle to boil, tidy the kitchen, even if it is just one thing.



- Use the **Magic To Do** website to help you break down tasks.

Just 3 things

If tidying your space feels too much right now, choose just 3 things to do.

Like...

1. empty the bin
2. make your bed
3. pick up your clothes.

Alex likes putting on fancy dress when hoovering. He says it makes it more fun!



Cooking and cleaning



Activity: Getting involved in cooking

Some people might not be able to make complex cooking tasks. But they can join in with some of the smaller tasks.

Think about if and how people can get more involved. Here are some ideas...

- Adding herbs and spices
- Beating or whisking
- Taste if things are seasoned right
- Cracking an egg
- Putting ingredients into a bowl
- Peeling the vegetables
- Looking through cookbooks
- Choosing a recipe in a book or online
- Checking the timer
- Making tea
- Putting in the sugar or milk
- Putting out the biscuits
- Keeping the chef company



Would it help someone to have a **cooking kit**? They could get this out every time you did the cooking together.

Put in it the kitchen implements for jobs that people like doing in a box. For example, peeler, stirring spoon, grater, egg timer.

The activity on the next page gives you more cooking ideas....

Cooking and cleaning



Activity: Cooking together

Plan 5 easy-to-cook dishes to make

- You can find recipes for these 5 dishes or use your own.
- You could ask housemates who they want to cook with
 - staff, housemates, family or maybe friends?
- You could go on a charity shop hunt for new cookbooks.
- Or sit together and look for recipes online.

For example, www.bbcgoodfood.com

- If the recipe is a success, keep it and do it again.
- Housemates could start a recipe book or scrapbook to collect their recipes in.



Maybe housemates would like to swap recipes... or share dishes.

Why Mitch liked to cook...

Mitch used to like helping his Mum cook curries. He remembers having a Sunday roast with her. He would like to like to cook these foods more often because it reminds him of his Mum.



6. Getting on together

Getting on together



What's in this section



Page 85	Research: what we found out
Page 86	Activity: People in my life
Page 88	Activity: Friends and family
Page 89	Activity: Making a video when moving house
Page 90	Activity: Mini personal profile
Page 92	Activity: Ideas for things to do together
Page 94	Activity: Sharing music
Page 95	Activity: Choosing what to call each other
Page 96	Activity: Getting to know new staff
Page 97	Activity: Photo chat
Page 98	Activity: Film evenings
Page 99	Staff and supporter advice: Intimacy and sexuality
Page 100	Staff and supporter advice: Dealing with loss
Page 101	Staff and supporter advice: Dealing with arguments

Page 114 Planning sheet

You can use the plan to record what you want to do.

Getting on together



Our research findings

Relationships with friends and family, housemates, staff and pets are a crucial part of feeling at home. Positive relationships are supported by doing activities. Relationships with friends and family outside the home are fostered through phone calls and visits. Some people reported feeling picked on by housemates or staff. For quite a few people, talking about relationships reminded them of experiences of loss when loved ones had passed away or when they had had to move home.

What helps people feel at home through their relationships with others?	What gets in the way?
People could easily make phone calls and video calls	Phones and iPads were not working or people did not know how to use them
People had photos and mementos from cherished people	People had no one to talk to about important losses in their lives
Staff made time to talk to people about people and places they had lost.	Family did not trust staff enough to be comfortable to raise concerns
Housemates and staffed enjoyed 'hanging out' and relaxing together – listening to music, dancing, watching TV	People did not get support to improve their relationships with housemates
Housemates fostered friends outside the house through visits, meals out and sleepovers	People moved house without preparation or choices about their new home

Case study: Samantha and Susie

Samantha and Susie had known each other for some years as they attend the same drama project. Their friendship has really developed since Samantha moved in with Susie, through shared interests in acting, clothes and make-up. They go shopping together and love going on holiday together.

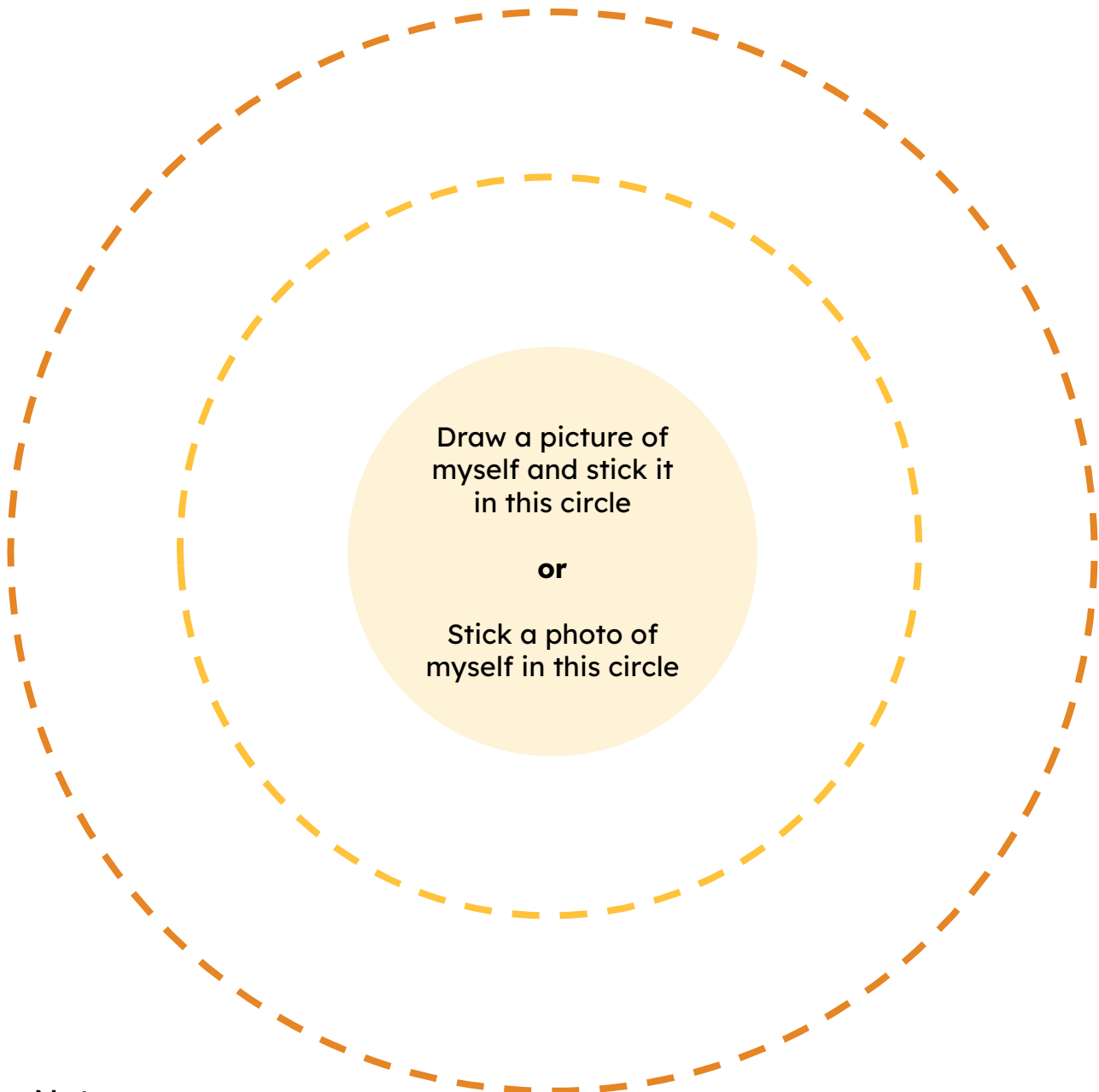


Getting on together



Activity: People in my life

Sometimes it is hard to keep in touch with important people. You might need some support to do this. Staff might not know who the important people are in your life. You can add all the people who are important to you. And note who you would like to see more of.

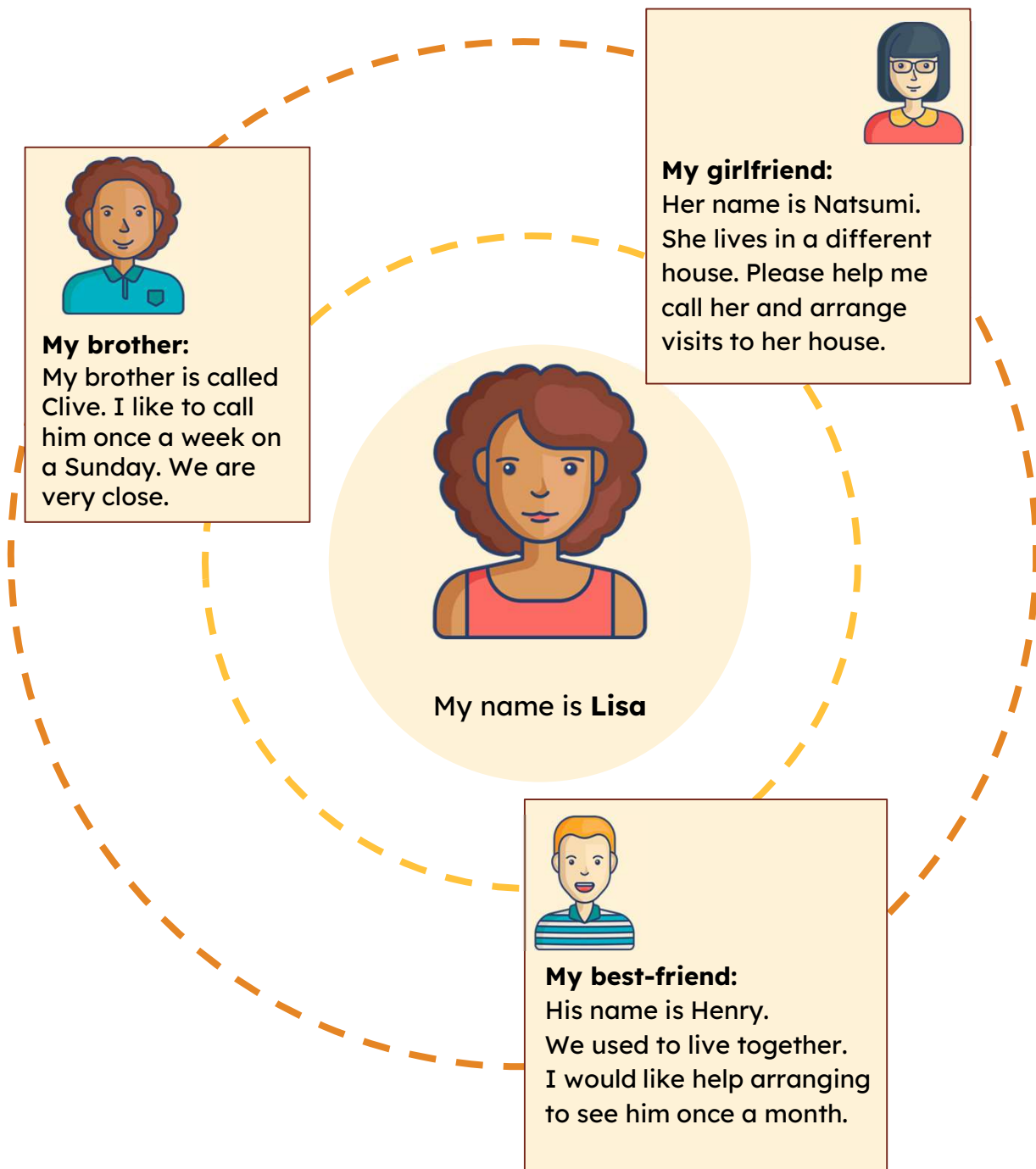


Notes

Getting on together



Activity: People in my life **example**



Notes

- I would like help to see Henry once a month

Getting on together



Activity: Friends and family

Sometimes family members lived far away so could not visit very often. There are lots of little ways that people can keep in touch with family members.

Here are few easy things to do...

How can you support people to keep in touch with friends and family?

- **Address book**
Support housemates to keep an address book of family and friends. This makes it quick and easy for them to get in touch. If writing is hard, you could print out some address stickers of important family members.
- **Birthday book**
Help housemates make a note of birthdays of important family and friends in a birthday book.
- **Email or Zoom**
Do housemates know how to go online to see friends or family face to face? There is lots of Easy Read guidance online to support people to do this. For example, <https://www.ldw.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/How-to-use-Zoom.pdf>
- **Letter**
Can you get a letter writing kit? A place to keep a good pen, notelets, envelopes, stamps, and an address book all in one place.
- **Postcards**
Have a stack of postcards and stamps ready so when someone feels like contacting family, they can do it quickly and easily. Go out and post the postcard together.

Getting on together: Moving Home

Activity: Video for new housemates



Make a video about your house, the people who live there and the staff to help newcomers feel at home.

Moving home is a huge change in our lives and can be very stressful. A video of the new home, about the house and new people can help someone feel less anxious and settle in more easily. If you are moving to a new place, you could create a mini profile of yourself using the template on page 90, and then send this to your new housemates.



Making a video can seem overwhelming, but you can do everything using a mobile that has a camera and YouTube. Ask staff for support and take your time.

1. **Make** the film

Film the house, interview housemates, interview staff.

2. **Create** a YouTube account and upload the video.

Then edit your video using YouTube's tools, like subtitles.

3. **Publish** your video 'Privately' and send the link to your new housemate. (instructions are here: <https://tinyurl.com/4ejs8k8f>)

Questions you can ask housemates

- Please introduce yourself.
- What do you like doing?
- What are your dislikes?
- How do you like to be in your home?
- How do you communicate with people?

Questions to ask staff

- Please introduce yourself.
- What are your likes and dislikes?
- What are your working hours?
- What activities do you like doing in the house?



You can find support about moving home here:

www.makingpositivemoves.org/looking-after-yourself-feeling/

Getting on together: Moving home

Activity: Mini personal profile



Name

Birthday:

Door Number:

I like my home to be....



I like...



What I like to do at home....



I do not like...



Getting on together: Moving home

Activity: Mini profile - **example**



Gemma

Birthday: 18/07/1991

Door Number: 101

I like...



Painting
Gardening

I like my home to be....



To be tidy
To be cosy
To have parties

What I like to do at home....



I like to talk to people.

But when I am in my room I want quiet.

I like having my family round for dinner.

I do not like...



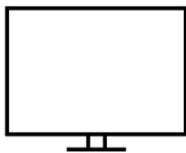
People talking to me when I am tired

Getting on together



Ideas of things housemates and staff can do together

Housemates often love to spend time with the staff that work in their homes. Here are some suggested activities that you could do together. Include housemates in deciding what you do.



Watch a TV show or film that you both like



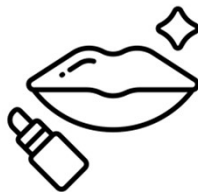
Make a meal or cake together



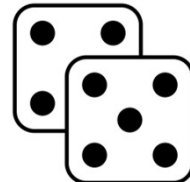
Plan a meal for everyone



Plan a party, day trip, exhibition outing for the house



Set up a beauty parlour and do makeovers



Play a board game or do a puzzle



Listen to an audiobook or podcast together



YouTube ways to upcycle some of furniture in your house



Organise communal spaces together

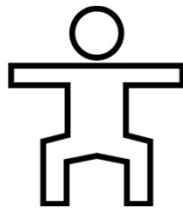
Getting on together



Activity: More activities we can do together



Watch funny
YouTube or
TikTok videos



Do exercise together
(YouTube 'Yoga with
Adriene' or 'Joe
Wicks workouts')



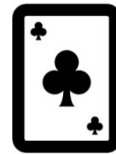
Plant things in
the garden



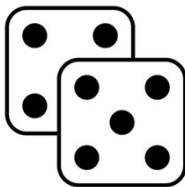
Find some new
music on Spotify



Learn some
words from
another language



Play a card
game



Play a board
game or do a
puzzle

How did it go?

- Did you both enjoy it?
- Did it lead to any new ideas?
- Is there anything that stops you from doing this?

Getting on together



Activity: Sharing music



Activity

Top 5 favourite songs

A housemate and a staff member each make a list of their all-time favourite 5 songs...

Use Spotify or YouTube to take turns to play the songs to each other. What do you think of each other's music?

Activity

Cover versions

Pick one of your favourite songs from your lists and see what unusual cover versions there are on Spotify.

What do you think? Which one do you like best?

Activity

This week we're mostly listening to...

Have a whiteboard in the kitchen or other shared room where housemates and staff can share songs they like at the moment.



Getting on together



Activity: What's in a name?

The words we use can affect how we and others feel. They can help us feel closer to people, they can show respect, and they can push people away.

Some staff have worked with people for decades and they and the people they support think of each other more as family or close friends.

Some family members do not like the word 'resident' as it felt too institutional.

Some had special nicknames for each other. Whatever you use, it is important that both staff and housemates are happy with it.

Put aside some time and space to think about what you like to call each other and how it makes you both feel. You can record it in a care plan or somewhere else so anyone new to the home understands.

...Friend
Supporter
Carer
Staff
Housemate
Personal assistant
Support worker
Keyworker....



Getting on together: New staff



Activity: Questions for new staff

When staff come and go quickly it could be unsettling for people. It can be hard to get to know new staff and feel comfortable with strangers in the house. Our co-researcher Shalim thought of some questions for staff and housemates to ask each other to break the ice.

1. Who would play you in a movie of your life?
2. If you had to take one thing to a desert island, what would it be?
3. What are your worst habits?
4. What is your proudest moment?
5. What is your most embarrassing moment?
6. What was the last movie you cried at?
7. What sports teams do you support?
8. What are you most scared of?
9. How do you like to relax?
10. What is your favourite film?
11. What is your favourite TV programme?

Can you think of any other good questions?



Getting on together

Activity: Photo chat

Sharing photos is a great way to learn more about each other and what's important to people.

This activity can be helpful for housemates and staff who might not know much about each other.

The activity works well in pairs or in larger groups.

You can do this over a cup of tea.

Everyone chooses 1 or 2 of their photos they are happy to share and talk about.

People then take turns to ask each other questions about the photo. Here are some to start people off...

- What is your photo of or about?
- Why is this important to you?
- What does your photo tell us about you?



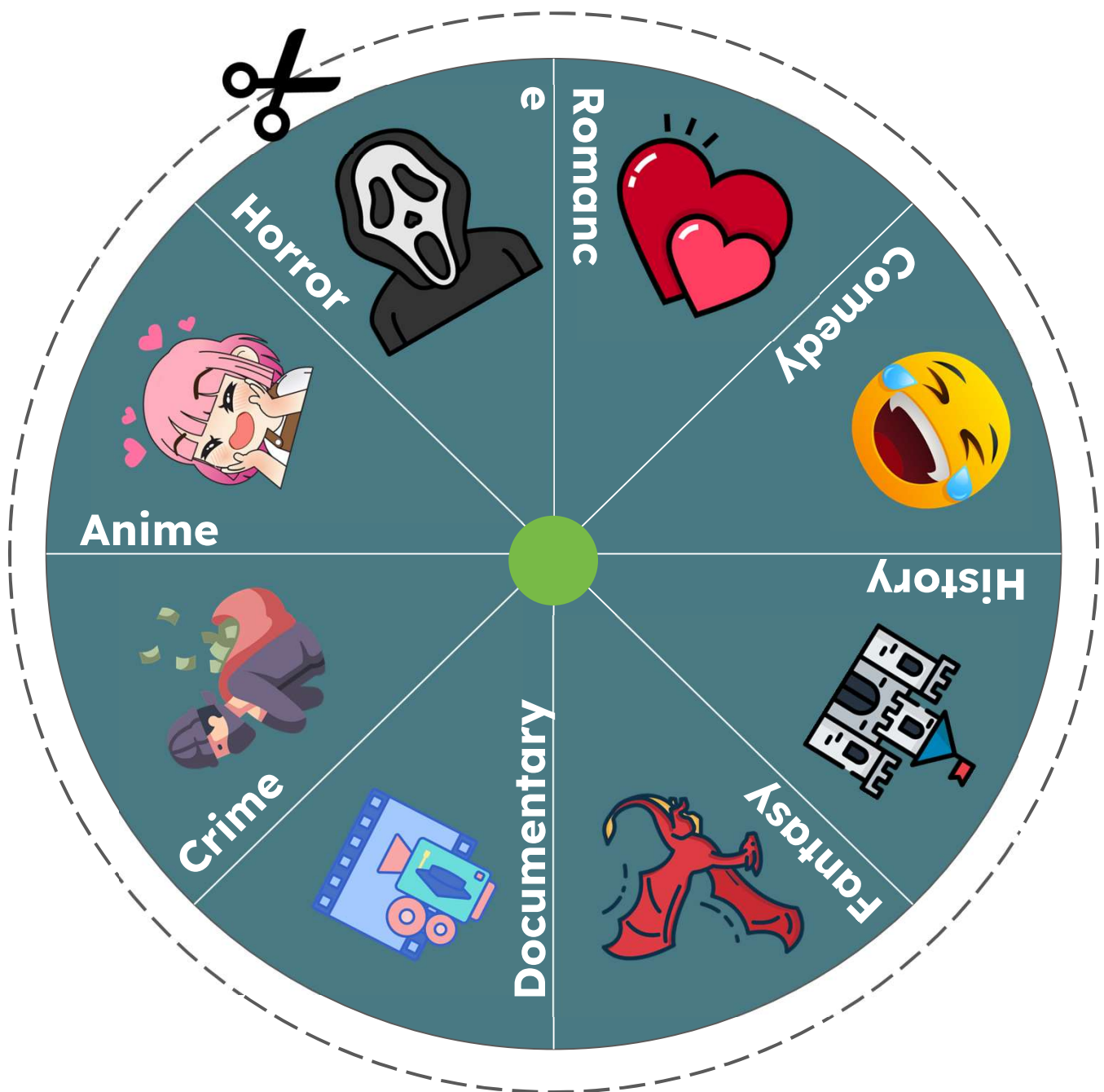


Getting on together

Activity: Film evenings

Get together and have a film evening. If you can't figure out what film to watch, use this decision wheel. Spin the wheel, and whatever lands at the top, is the genre of film you should watch.

Remember popcorn.



Getting on together



Intimate relationships and sexuality

For staff and supporters

For many of us, home is a place where we enjoy intimate and sexual relationships and can express our sexuality. People with learning disabilities often need support to achieve this.

Staff can find this area of support very difficult. They might feel they do not get enough training or help from their managers.

Staff teams: As individuals and as a team, think about how housemates are supported around intimate relationships and sexuality. **What is going well and what are the barriers?**

Advice and resources are available from Supported Loving <https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/supported-loving>.

Talk with individual housemates.

If they have a boyfriend or girlfriend, is there a trusted staff member who they can talk to about their relationship?
Can housemates have someone stay over with them in their bedroom?

This may also need discussion in a housemates' meeting (see section 1 for support with this). What do other housemates think about people staying over? How might it affect the dynamics in the house?

There is a lot to think about:

- Training for staff (see Supported Loving website to find training [providers](#)).
- Tenancy agreements
- Risks and safeguarding
- Sex education



Getting on together



Dealing with loss

For staff and supporters

Loss is something we all deal with, but it can be really tricky to know how to speak to someone who has just experienced loss.

Grieving is a very important emotional process. We are all and have different ways of coping, and ways of supporting those who are grieving.

Below are some ideas around what you could do with housemates to help them grieve if they have lost a loved one.



Things to do together

- Make a collage with housemates of photos of their loved one or special staff member who has left. Ask them about each photo, what they think about it, and why it feels important.
- You could help make a memory box with housemates. This can include photos, objects and written memories about the departed person.
- Create an event to commemorate the person. This could include making their favourite meal, writing a speech to remember them, or watching home videos of the person.
- You could help housemates write down their memories of the person, maybe as a poem.
- You can plant a tree or bush in the garden to remember them by.

When staff leave – advice for staff

- Give people enough notice that you are leaving. Even if they seem sad when they hear the news, it can help people adjust.
- Pass on the knowledge and skills staff have to people who are left.
- Agree on whether you will keep in touch – it is fine to say this won't be possible...

Getting on together



Dealing with arguments

For staff and supporters

Dealing with arguments is never easy. Here are some suggestions from care workers and people with learning disabilities about what they would like to have happen after arguments.

- **Talk to housemates individually**
After an argument talk to each housemate on their own. Give them space away from each other to calm down.
- **Try to find out the root cause of the argument**
Finding the root cause of the argument, understanding it, and taking it seriously is important.
- **Apologies can be meaningful**
Asking each housemate to meaningfully apologise can be powerful.
- **Support people to make a complaint**
Although there are complaint procedures in place, housemates often do not know how to use them. They might need support to complain verbally or in writing.
- **Respond to people's feelings**
If someone has something on their mind bothering them, acknowledge that they are upset. People often just want empathy. They do not always need an explanation, solution or want to be challenged.





7. Community and neighbourhood

Community and neighbourhood



What's in this section



Page 104 Research: what we found out

Page 105 Activity: Mapping your neighbourhood

Page 106 Activity: Finding out more about your area

Page 107 Activity: Getting out and about safely

Page 108 Activity: Making friends outside the home

Page 109 Activity: Find your local pub or café

Page 110 Activity: Getting to know your neighbours

Page 111 Activity: Throw a party!

Page 112 Activity: Keep the faith - religion and worship

Page 113 Activity: Connecting with your culture

Page 114 Planning sheet

You can use this plan to record what you want to do.



Community and neighbourhood: our research findings

Some housemates, through their own efforts or with support from family and staff, really feel connected to their neighbourhood and the area where they live, which is strengthened through taking advantage of local facilities, especially the local corner shop and sports' centre. Others seem to have little sense of connection to their neighbourhood and a few have met with unfriendly reactions from their neighbours.

What helps people feel at home in their community and neighbourhood?	What gets in the way?
A good sense of where all the local facilities are situated	Lack of opportunities to learn to walk and travel in the local area more independently
Getting to know other community members at the pub, church, café or library	Not knowing names of any neighbours
Having decorations or ornaments that reflect the local area	Feeling unsafe
Following a local sports team	Not using local parks or open spaces

Case Study: Leroy

Leroy enjoys gardening and looks after the plants in the back garden of the house where he lives with three other men. With staff support he advertised his services as a gardener on the neighbourhood Facebook page and is now working in other gardens in his street.

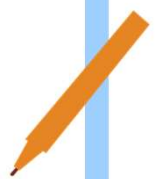


Community and neighbourhood



Activity: Mapping your neighbourhood

It can be helpful to think about where you like to spend time in your local area and what you like to do there.
Draw a simple map of your area showing the different places you like to go... use more paper if you need to.



Put a tick on the places you like.
And cross in the places you do not like.



You can use your map to talk to staff or family about

- where you most like to go
- other places you would like to go
- where you do **not** like and why.

Community and neighbourhood



Activity: Finding out more about your area

Did you do a map of your neighbourhood on page 105? What is missing from your map?

Do you want to change anything?

Think about **why** some places might be missing...

- Not interested?
- No library / leisure centre / membership card?
- Not sure what you can do there?
- Not very accessible?
- Travel too hard to arrange?

Library

Book in a session with a librarian to get advice on how to use the library and what's on. Some libraries have multisensory books, and lots host a range of community events.

Sports venues

Find out about fixtures for your local football, cricket, rugby or cricket teams. Book a tour at the local sports centre to explore any suitable activities.

Green space

Use [Google Maps](#) together to see what green spaces there are near your home. Do some research to find out if it's public, what's there, how to get there. Plan a trip to explore.

Visit this website for more resources on community:

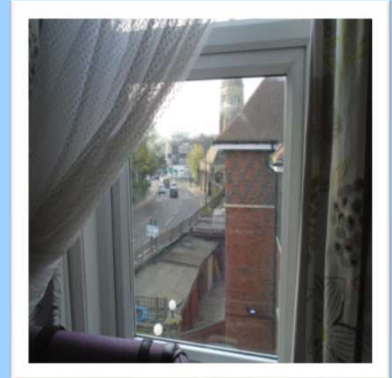
<https://firstpersonservices.com/friendship-connection-with-angela-amado/>



Activity: Getting out and about safely

Talk about how you keep safe while you are out and about and what concerns you might have.

- Experiences of harassment and discrimination
- People asking you for money
- Getting lost and finding directions.



There may be some practical tips that you could share, for example:

- Carrying ID, health details and a personal alarm
- The [Safe Places](#) national network and similar schemes.
- Arrange with friends to support each other.
- Road safety, as a pedestrian.
- Invite or visit community police for advice and guidance on keeping safe when out and about.

Try some role-playing scenarios. It can help to practise decision-making in a controlled and safe environment, thinking about what problems you might have.

Create photo social stories or narratives to illustrate decision-making situations in the community.

Community and neighbourhood



Activity: Making friends outside the home

There are lots of ways to make new friends outside of your home. Here are some ideas...



- **Join a club or group around your interests**
For example, gardening, dance, or gaming. You can ask your local council what groups are on. Or search online, like 'poetry club Brighton'.



- **Take a class and learn a new skill**
This could be online or in person.



- **Join a sports group or gym**
Sports clubs can be a great way to meet friends. Find out what clubs are on around you.



- **Go to community events**
Local events are a great place to meet neighbours and others in your area. Check local noticeboards, libraries and council websites for what's on nearby.



- **Volunteer**
This is a great way to meet new people and build relationships – and have fun and learn. You can find out about how to get a volunteer role on this website: <https://doit.life/volunteer>



- **Befriending service**
A befriending service will match you up with others in your area to visit or chat with. Mencap can advise you on what befriending services there are in your area: www.mencap.org.uk/

Community and neighbourhood



Activity: Find your local pub or cafe

Having a local pub or café can help people to feel at home in the area – it's sometimes good to know where you can see some familiar faces.

With staff, housemates or friends, try out a few pubs or cafes in your local area.

Test them out - find out which one you would like to be your local.

Ask yourself...

- Do they have any fun things to do, like a pub quiz or pool?
- What are the staff like? Are they respectful?
- Where do you feel most at home?
- What are the prices like?
- What's the food like?
- Is it accessible for you?





Activity: Getting to know your neighbours

Here are some ideas of things you can do to get to know your neighbours more...



Join Next Door

[Nextdoor](#) is an app for neighbourhoods where you can get local tips, buy and sell items, and connect.



Neighbourhood Whatsapp

Some streets and areas have a Whatsapp group for neighbours. Whatsapp is a messaging app. Having a neighbour's group is a useful way to stay in touch, share information about events, ask for help, and lend and borrow things. Does your area have a Whatsapp group? If not, do you want to start one?



BBQ

An easy way to get to know neighbours is to invite them to a BBQ at your house. Pop a note through their door to ask them to come. You can copy the note on the next page. Put the date, time and address. Let them know if they should bring any food or drink.



Games night

When you know your neighbours well, you could invite them to a games night at your house with your friends and family. Take turns to choose the games, plan snacks, and decide if you want some music on.

Community and neighbourhood

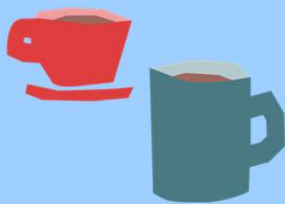


Activity: Parties

There are lots of excuses to have a party, whether it is a housemate's birthday, Christmas or Halloween.

You can invite neighbours to your party. This is a great way to meet people in the local community and to start building relationships.

Your neighbours at
number are having a party
and you are invited!



Date _ _ _ _ _

Time _ _ _ _ _

Other info _ _ _ _ _

Tell us if you are coming by _ _ _ _ _



Activity: Keep the faith

It is easy for people to lose touch with their faith communities.

Here are some activities which can help people stay engaged.

- Invite your Iman, Vicar, Rabbi or Elders round for a cup of tea. Or someone from your local church, mosque, temple or synagogue might be able to visit you.
- Find out the times and days when your place of worship is open, if you or staff do not know them already. You can note these down or add it to your care plan.
- Do you eat or avoid certain foods as part of your religion? Find a local shop or take away that sells what you need. Note down the address so new staff know this.
- Find and put up a calendar of important religious holidays for the household.



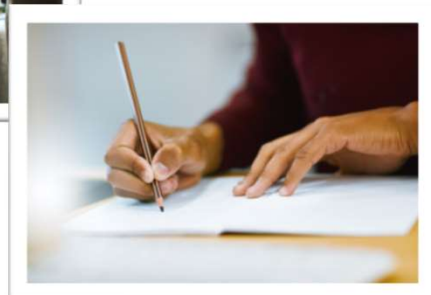
Community and neighbourhood



Activity: Connecting with your culture

You might have a different cultural background to the UK culture. Or you might have more than culture.

- Do you find it hard to get the food you are used to? Or food from your cultural or ethnic background? Find out where your local oriental, Chinese, Jamaican or other supermarket is. Make a note of it so staff know for the future. You can ask them to add it to your care plan.
- Make a recipe from your ethnic or cultural background. You could do this with staff or a family member.
- You can share the food with others. It can be a nice way to tell them something about your background.
- Write down the recipe and keep it to do again. You might want to start your own recipe book.
- Are there any important dates in your culture? For example, Thanksgiving in the USA. If so, make a note so your housemates and staff know. Can you think of a way to celebrate it with them? A meal together is often a good way to celebrate a special event that everyone can enjoy.



Planning sheet



When you have done the Checklist, answer these questions to help plan what you are going to do.

Name	
Supporter's name	
What activity from the toolkit are you going to do to? Or you can choose your own idea.	
When are you going to start?	
How did you get on?	☐ We finished the activity ☐ We started the activity but have not finished ☐ We did not start the activity
Notes You can write here • what went well • what got in the way • if you would do it again.	

Thank you to...



- [National Institute for Health and Care Research \(NIHR\)](#)
- [School for Social Care Research](#)
- [NIHR Clinical Research Network](#)
- [The Feeling at Home Advisory Group members](#)
- Mary, Expert by Experience
- Sam Bolton, Expert by Experience
- [Choice Support](#)
- [Quiet Down There](#)
- [Stay Up Late](#)
- [Self Building Our Lives](#)
- [Humanly](#)
- [SeeAbility](#)
- [Ambient](#)



The Feeling at Home project was led by researchers based in King's College London, University of Southampton, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Choice Support.

Our partner organisations include **Quiet Down There** and the **Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities**.

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