

Guidance notes for those using the Fair Shares film 'These People We Love' for Training

The film demonstrates only individual experiences. Those in the film share their experiences of how the person and their carers have been affected by dementia and how their relationships have evolved as dementia progresses. However many broader points are also raised that may be useful to discuss. These include ethical issues such as what is best for the individual, the family and society generally. Due to the personal nature of the film, it may evoke strong emotions and memories for those who watch it, based on their own personal experiences. Some may find it difficult to watch or may prefer not to watch it at all. Some may wish to discuss certain issues privately after the viewing; or some may request information about available support for carers or those living with dementia. So we suggest some preparation is organised before showing the film.

And please leave time for discussion at the end, after showing the film.

Some Talking Points the Film Raises

1. The important role of group activity, like a gentle park walk, gardening, memory groups, or other groups. It's an opportunity for "you get to know other people by sight, and then form friendships from that". These types of activities also create a supportive environment for family carers, staff and others.
2. As dementia progresses, 'the old person is still there physically, but you need to get to know the new person, which continually changes.' Carers talk about trying to enjoy what you can while you can and trying not to be angry or resistant. 'We cannot decide someone's journey has come to an end because we no longer recognise them.'
3. When someone needs to move to a care home, it can create complex and conflicting feelings for families and the person involved. Choosing the right care home can also be a difficult decision, sometimes with little support about how to choose the appropriate home. When parents say 'don't put me in a care home', we need to recognise the pressure that puts on the family regarding future decisions.
4. How do we support someone's cultural, religious, personal and relationship needs? There are often assumptions made about some communities, that they 'look after their own' because of beliefs that it is a 'duty of care' and that it's an 'honour and a privilege'. However this is not always the case, especially with fragmenting families. How do care homes accommodate couples? Are LGB relationships recognised? Are individuals from transgender communities supported?
5. The importance of pets in some people's lives. That companionship often ends when someone moves to a care/nursing home, with consequences for a person's well-being.
6. The importance of care home planning and respite for the relative and/or carer.
7. How can we support the person and families' plans for the future?
8. Family carers often play a crucial role in supporting a person living with dementia. So supporting carers is an important issue that can affect not only their own health and well-being but in turn will affect the quality of care they are able to give and so affect the health and well-being of the person living with dementia.

Some Suggestions for Care and Nursing Homes to Consider

- How do the person and family fit in to care/nursing home routines?
- Is there sufficient time and is there an organisational culture which encourages staff to spend time listening to people? The person, the family and friends.
- One family carer suggests a quick tip for care staff to get to know someone by asking family members 3 things that describe their loved one.
- Is there sufficient trust between care homes, families and the person?
- The importance of food and routines around meal times. Are families involved in meal times? Do they feel welcome to join the person for a meal? Are there barriers to making light refreshments?
- Should care homes reflect the diversity and make-up of the local community?
- How empowered are care/nursing home residents? A useful tip from the film came from a family carer who always asked her mum for one piece of advice on every visit. Even when she lost the power of speech, a simple thumbs up or down helped empower her.