## Soap Box:

## Why do we always need something 'new'?

We pride ourselves on communicating with our members and others in the care sector so we gather feedback whenever we can. Frequently we hear or read things like "We need new ideas" or "Tell us what other activities we can do". I confess that sometimes I let out an exasperated sigh when this comes up time and again.



I always want to go back to the individual and ask what sits behind this request. I'm not sure where the belief comes from that we need to constantly change what is happening. Is it the older people who are asking or is it Managers who want to see programmes with constantly varied activities on offer.



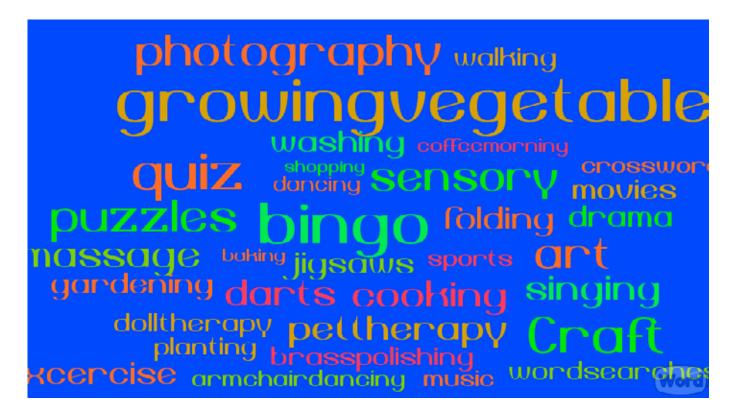
If we are truly offering person centred, relationship based activity provision then everything we do will revolve around the needs and interests of the people we support and the care team that support them. In my experience, supported by the research evidence of Professor Mike Nolan, continuity is a key element of good care. In the rituals of day to day life that we all hold dear we frequently do the same thing at a similar time of day or the same day of the week. I am always pleased to see activity programmes that detail things like Coffee and News at the same time and venue each morning. It means that the older people know what to expect at a regular time and so do the care team. It may well be the same small group of people that turn up each day but for them it clearly meets a need in an informal comfortable way. Sharing the headlines in the newspaper each day can spark many varied and interesting conversations and may lead to other activities emerging that folk would like to do. I know of a care home that introduced a regular Sports Club every Thursday afternoon as a result of reading the back pages of the paper. They committed to discussing a different sport every week and the activity team enjoyed gathering up memorabilia, books and magazines on lots of different sports.

Of course I am not advocating that nothing ever changes, as boredom can lead to depression and lethargy for everyone, but offering continuity and regular small group, topic based sessions is a proven way to engage with older people. We also need to recognise that for many people living with dementia the activity on offer is brand new to them every time and can bring just as much pleasure.

The challenge is more often about how the staff involved keeps up the motivation and enthusiasm to repeatedly do the same thing. Sharing the load helps as does trying to identify what works for each individual. If the team member really does not enjoy the activity then everyone will sense it- not every carer loves singing!

So if you are one of the people saying "just give me ideas" I suggest taking a step back and listening to the people around you - they have more ideas than I will ever be able to give you - and recognise that doing the same thing regularly isn't always a bad thing.

Written by Sylvie Silver NAPA Director.



## The Senses Framework

NOLAN, M. R., BROWN, J., DAVIES, S., NOLAN, J. and KEADY, J. (2006).

The Senses Framework: improving care for older people through a relationship-centred approach.

University of Sheffield. http://shura.shu.ac.uk Studies suggest that in the best care environments all participants experience a Sense of:

**Security** – to feel safe

**Belonging** – to feel part of things

**Continuity** – to experience links and connection

**Purpose** – to have a goal(s) to aspire to

**Achievement** – to make progress towards these goals

**Significance** – to feel that you matter as a person