

Elder care & Wellbeing Guide

Elderly care is not simply a choice between live-in care or a care home – it is about quality of life. Max Tookey, a psychologist with expertise in leisure and lifestyle agrees, “Without quality of life, people can lose their interest in living and it’s important to keep mind and body active whatever our age. Obviously, as we move into the later years our ability to partake in some activities does narrow, but there are still hobbies and interests, which can inspire us, and gentler, active pursuits can be developed and adapted to suit our individual needs. In this sense, there are tremendous benefits for elderly clients who have opted for care in the home, as a live-in carer can devise activities that enhance the individual’s quality of life.”

Care homes have often been slammed for their regimented approach, many daily schedules being dictated by the staffing rota – elderly patients no longer in control of their day-to-day life inevitably feeling as though they have lost their independence. Such a procedural approach to care is impersonal and bears a sharp contrast to live-in care in the home, where activities have been specifically devised for the client, in terms of their interest and ability. Consultus Care and Nursing Agency has recently undertaken a live-in care review, taking a deeper look at the activities that keep mind and body active. Essentially, this is a top ten guide to a better sense of wellbeing for the elderly, taken from real live in carers.

1. Soothing soles: Foot massage is a highly beneficial treatment for the elderly often provided by live-in carers. A non-invasive treatment, it helps to induce relaxation, which in turn aids the body’s own healing processes. Massage can relieve the general aches and pains associated with getting older and everyone deserves a little pampering, especially in their later years. However, above all, it is perfect for those who no longer get out and about, as a foot massage can be enjoyed from the comfort of a favourite armchair.

2. Q&A’s: Everything from the atlas to the daily round up of news can be used to stimulate the mind, and it is important to keep thinking and exercise the brain at any age. Naming the capitals of exotic countries might also invite conversation on the elderly persons travels, providing an ideal opportunity to reminisce about past experiences.

3. Getting out and about: While a sprightly walk in the park might not be the ticket for many elderly clients, a pleasant ride in the car can be a very stimulating experience for the willing and able. Chatting about the local architecture, people on the street or the beautiful flowers in the countryside can breathe life into conversations and let the outside world in.

4. **Gourmet delights:** Meal times are based on a strict menu plan in care homes, but with live-in care 'elderly foodies' can make the most of their hidden culinary talents. Perhaps sitting down at the start of the day and planning out the menu with their live-in carer, or indulging in cookery books. For those clients who are housebound, meal times are an important event in the day, which means spending time on preparation and planning is meaningful to many elderly people. With carers originating from the UK, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, more adventurous clients are also able to experience a mix of different recipes.

5. **A snapshot of life:** Getting out the family album and reminiscing is a great way for clients and carers to get to know each other. Some clients, having travelled the world in a different era, can relive their journey on the slow boat to China as if it were yesterday. Everyone has a story to tell and all of us enjoy remembering birthday celebrations and events with humorous anecdotes. A healthy way to spend the day, clients and live-in carers can find laughter, joy and a love of living within each image.

6. **Off for a stroll:** Being at home means that elderly people still have access to their garden; a garden, which has often been loved and cultivated for many years. Wheelchair bound clients can retire outside for afternoon tea and comment on how the seasons are changing. Some live-in carers might also help to tend flower-beds and plant new seeds while in the company of their client – sharing a long-favoured pastime, while getting a spot of healthy fresh air.

7. **Music is food for the soul:** Music brings out many emotions and being in touch with our feelings and working through them, is as important at 95, as it is at five. More musical carers might indulge in a spot of name that tune with their clients, and having time to entertain and care for the elderly is what makes live-in care such a contrast to a care home.

8. **Wordsworth:** Email might be more modern, but a love of writing doesn't have to come via a computer. Many elderly people like to keep in touch with their friends and family the old fashioned way – in some instances, the carer taking on the role of writer. Putting pen to paper, and sitting down to write a letter is also a useful way to organise thoughts – keeping the brain ticking over and bringing meaning to the day-to-day events in an elderly person's life.

9. **Anyone for scrabble?:** Clients and live-in carers don't share their lives exclusively. Family and friends can drop in as they did before the carer arrived: another benefit of live-in care and less social and psychological disruption for the elderly person. Often live-in carers and the elderly client's relatives will join in a

game of scrabble – new words and old words combining, making this an enjoyable way to pass the time.

10. Sharing experiences: We all have our own favourite hobbies and pastimes and sharing these is an ideal way, not only to get to know someone, but also to develop other interests. It could be stamp collecting, coin collecting or flower pressing, however, regardless of the activity a live-in carer can become a meaningful companion who shares the elderly person's interests and love of life.

Consultus can continue helping as each client's needs change. Most clients use carers, but live-in nurses can also be provided by the company. This is hugely reassuring if a husband or wife develops a major health problem, or if one comes home from hospital needing specialist care, as it means that the couple can still stay home together.

Source and Courtesy: <http://www.mabels.org.uk/elderly-care-wellbeing.htm>