



■ The use of personal belongings from a person's past and personal colour schemes and décor are part of the Butterfly Model. Displays which tell something of a resident's life story are set up outside each resident's bedroom door.

Showing people they always matter

"Why do you matter?"
he asked us.

"When you think of your answer, I want you to turn to the person beside you and tell them your answer."

I was flummoxed. I'd only signed up to a conference, not to a baring of my soul!

With an awkward glance sideways, I took in the stranger beside me.

She seemed normal. Nice.

And so it was that, at the Sonas APC International Conference on Dementia

Care, I came to tell a lovely woman about why I mattered. She reciprocated. And, trust me, her story was much more interesting than mine.

She worked in a nursing home which had recently adopted the Butterfly Model for caring for people with dementia. It was all about bringing staff and residents onto an equal level, she said, about creating a shared, relaxed community environment for residents. The staff even wore pyjamas on their evening shifts!

Intrigued, I asked her more about this model. But David Sheard, the founder of Dementia Care Matters, had commanded our attention again at the top of the room. He told us that no matter where he talks, audiences always say the same thing — they want, and need, to feel like they matter. They want to feel needed.

And so David reminded us that nursing home residents with dementia are no different and are equally human. His work is all centred on finding ways to rein-

force residents' need to feel important, attached, missed, interesting and depended upon. Indeed, he argued, residents deserved to feel this way.

David set up a model called "Feelings Matter Most" which he piloted in nursing homes across the UK. The fundamentals are: to reach a person on the inside; to look for meaningful improvements in the small daily life experiences; to nurture staffs' emotional labour with an emotion-led organisational strategy. Essentially to put the human back into "human services"!

Moorehall Lodge

This idea has now taken off on Irish shores. The lady I sat beside was a nurse in one of the Butterfly homes — Moorehall Lodge in Ardee. Their nursing home has been transformed. The home became involved in the creation of the HSE-led Places to Flourish guidelines to improve the experience of a nursing home, in conjunction with the Netwell Centre at Dundalk IT and the School of Nursing at the University of Ulster. Using David Sheard's guidance, they re-evaluated the way they care and how it made residents feel according to the Butterfly model.

Moorehall Lodge now puts life stories outside each resident's bedroom door telling staff who the person is, and who they

were before their illness — their jobs, hobbies, passions, family and friends. This way staff could talk to residents about things that genuinely mattered to them, their identity.

They incorporated the motto of 'today', so that every 'today' would be about making a person feel needed, in their individual way.

And finally they transformed their place, their home. Out went the standardised décor and in came a burst of colour, of resident-selected wall-papers and a welcoming in of personal belongings and personally decorated rooms. The re-design, modelled on the principle of the household model of care, also divided the nursing home building into four households, each with its own domestic-style open plan kitchen, front door, bell, post box, and private and shared public areas.

And it has paid dividends.

Carol McLoughlin and Natasha Bloore presenting on behalf of Moorehall Living spoke of one man, Peter, who was referred to them from another community-based facility because of his challenging behaviour. They spoke about finding out during one of their chats with Peter's family, that he had been devoted to his local soccer team, Drogheda United. So they bought some of Peter's

team's fabric flags and hung them up in the hallways.

The flags had an immediate impact. Seeing and touching a flag instantly offered Peter a flash of comfort and familiarity. These acts, alongside numerous others, calmed Peter and other residents.

This was all based on the premise that "emotions are occurring at work anyway and are more dangerous if suppressed," the idea that people cannot exist without feeling, and that to deliver more feeling-oriented care is good for people.

It is good for residents who are responding well and good for staff who find more meaning and fun in the jobs they do.

For more information on the Butterfly model and 'Feelings Matter Most' training see www.dementiacare-matters.com.

The nursing home used in this article is Moorehall Lodge, a part of Moorehall Healthcare (www.moorehalliving.ie), who have homes in Ardee and Drogheda. They can be contacted at info@moorehalliving.ie or by calling (041) 68 56 990.

— Lorna Roe

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