

Run by Alive, BAB's Community Development in Care Homes project ran from April 2017 - March 2019. Working in four care homes, the project focused on developing connections between residents and with the local community, enabling residents to have more of a voice over what they want to do.

In March 2019, Alive presented their learning at a Share & Learn session for BAB Community Development projects and also at a larger celebration event for a variety of stakeholders. This Learning Digest summarises the key learning from this project. Please also see the presentation from Alive [here](#).



### A variety of coproduction strategies are needed to ensure that all residents have a voice

A key piece of learning is that **a variety of coproduction strategies are needed to ensure that all residents have a voice**. Alive used memory boxes at the start of the project to find out the skills, strengths and interests of residents. They set up a steering group within each home, but also worked one-to-one with residents who were not comfortable in a group setting or who needed additional support to put their voice across.

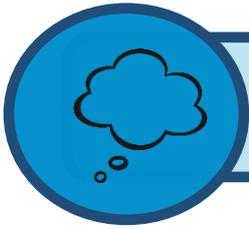
Alive also used suggestion boxes in halls and continually checked in with residents after activities. New residents moving into the care home were included in this coproduction, ensuring their voice had the same weight as existing residents.

This resulted in very different activity plans for each of the four care homes, as each was unique to the residents living there. For example in one care home the residents enjoyed intellectual stimulation and so decided to have evening talks on a variety of topics. Coproduction also allowed Alive to try out new activities in response to resident requests that as an organisation they had not previously tried (e.g. cookery) and explore how well these worked.



### Additional coproduction tools are needed when working with people whose dementia is advancing rapidly

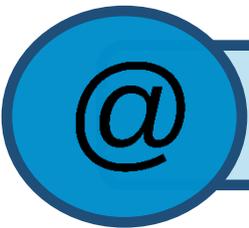
**Additional coproduction tools are needed when working with people whose dementia is advancing rapidly**. For example an individual may take part in a steering group but then later forget that they took part and what they said they wanted to do. Alive found that in these circumstances visual tools such as taking photos and bringing in leaflets or objects to remind that person of what they chose really helped them to be included and have a voice.



**“Now that you’ve moved in, what are you going to do with the rest of your life?”**

At the BAB Share & Learn session in March 2019, one resident who had been involved in the project spoke about how she had been worried about moving into a care home but was amazed at the opportunities available for her to choose and shape activities. This made her change her mindset and think to herself “now that you’ve moved in, what are you going to do with the rest of the life?”

Other residents also valued being asked their views and making decisions through opportunities such as steering groups. Alive gathered feedback about how they found this process and how it could be improved, recognising **that this may be a very unfamiliar process for some residents.**



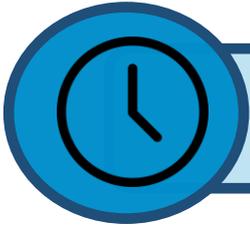
**Sustainability: training, resources and local connections**

In terms of sustainability, **Alive trained staff within the care homes so that the work could continue after the project finished** in March 2019. This training ranged from how to run specific activities (e.g. a gardening group), to the tools and models of coproduction, community engagement and volunteer management.

Alive also **purchased resources** needed for certain activities (e.g. accessible trays for seed planting) on behalf of the care homes. Having these resources available for future use helped to ensure these activities could continue after the project finished in March 2019.

Before the project, some of the care homes were hindered from making connections with the local community due to **not having an email address or a device such as a tablet.** Without these, it is difficult for care homes to maintain connections and share information. Setting these up contributed to the sustainability of the project.

Similarly through identifying assets in the local community and **putting in the initial work to build these relationships with the care homes,** it is hoped that these connections can continue smoothly beyond Alive’s involvement in March 2019.



## Challenges experienced by care home staff when creating community connections

When working with care homes, Alive learnt that there are a number of challenges which are the daily experience of care home staff. For example, it is **difficult for care home staff to make extra time within their roles** in order to make connections with the local community, attend training or even respond to the larger volume of emails that community connections generates.

Similarly **high staff and management turnover can make it difficult to ensure long-term buy-in and support** from a care home, for example at the beginning of the project some care homes agreed to take part but then dropped out before starting due to a change in management and new homes had to be found.



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