

Quieter lunches make Rosemary's dayQuieter lunches make Rosemary's day

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A few months ago, seventy-eight year old Rosemary Taylor, from Balmedie House in Aberdeenshire was finding life tough. Rosemary has dementia and had become incontinent. She didn't like going to the busy dining room at meal times. She didn't want to eat there and so would leave and go back to her room. Rosemary subsequently lost weight and began to spend a lot of her day sitting down instead of walking around, which she had previously done often, each day. Rosemary also began to lose all interest in activities and even stopped reading, a pastime she really enjoyed. During visits, her daughter became really concerned to see her Mum sleeping more and becoming increasingly quiet and withdrawn.

Staff realised that as well as Rosemary, a small number of other residents were also finding meals in the dining room challenging. So they held a meeting to discuss this with them, inviting their friends and family too, to see what they could do to make things better. They all agreed that a later, second lunch sitting for this smaller group would provide a more relaxed and comfortable environment for everyone, with staff able to provide additional support for those who needed it.



Staff worked together to make this happen, also providing the group with a late morning snack to keep everyone going until lunchtime.

Ann Reid, manager said: "When we introduced the later lunch for our group of residents, we also thought about the layout of the room and what we could do to make the environment more relaxed and inviting. We changed our crockery so that it provided more colour contrast and decluttered the tables so that eating was the main focus. Rosemary was keen to help set up the tables, so we worked with her to support her to do this. We also realised that we needed to change things with our domestic team and looked at our staffing levels so that the group would be properly supported at lunchtime. We identified that three members of the team would be needed, so we changed the staff rotas to accommodate this."

Six weeks after the team changed the lunchtime routine; Rosemary was much happier, felt alert, was walking more on her own and having good conversations with other residents and staff. With encouragement and support, Rosemary was also able to eat more and independently again, which was a huge improvement. She began to put on weight and her blood sugar levels stabilised which made her feel so much better.

Rosemary's daughter said: "My mum had been quite unwell and her Dementia had worsened to the point that she could no longer feed herself, was incontinent and was unable to take part in simple activities that she previously enjoyed. Ann and her team were involved in CAPA and they realised my mum wasn't eating very well in the dining room so supported my mum and a group of other residents to have a separate lunch when the dining room was quieter and less stressful for them. This small change has encouraged her to eat better – she had lost quite a lot of weight but is now regaining that. Ann, Lynn and the team really try to individualise care for each resident."Lynn Ingram, senior care worker said: "Rosemary's social skills and relationships within the home are much better. She is less tired during the day and is happier, much more active again, and enjoys walking around and chatting to others. This has also helped Rosemary's night routine and she now sleeps better. It's quite a transformation which we are delighted to see."