



Dignity Champions Action Pack

Public Champions

PUBLIC DIGNITY CHAMPIONS ACTION PACK

When the Dignity in Care Campaign began in November 2006, the aim was to inspire local people and staff into taking action to put dignity and compassion at the heart of care.

Four years and 23,000 Dignity Champions later, the campaign shows no signs of slowing down. The sign-up of Champions is at an all time high, which makes this a positive time for the Department to step back from driving the campaign - however, there is still much that can be done.

We are enormously proud of our Dignity Champions and the impact they have made on so many people's lives and their experience of care. They believe it is completely unacceptable for anyone using health and social care services to feel demeaned or disrespected by the people they depend on for their most basic needs, particularly at a time when they may be at their most vulnerable.

We believe that the number of Champions will continue to grow – you are the heart, soul and spirit of the campaign and have become a self-sustaining force to be reckoned with.

You can find out more about the campaign and becoming a Dignity Champion at www.dignityincare.org.uk

15 Ideas for how you could make a difference

As a result of the campaigns four years of innovation, enthusiasm and action from the Dignity Champions, there is an abundance of good ideas and best practice on the website.

This Action Pack has been put together specifically for public champions who, although not working in a health and social care environment, can still make an invaluable contribution to the Dignity in Care campaign. It contains information and ideas for how you could take action to help improve people's experience of care.

The pack is split into three sets of actions covering:

- Simple things that anyone can do that can have a big impact on peoples' lives (Actions 1 – 6)
- Ideas for people who maybe have more time to spare - volunteering (Actions 7 – 9)
- Ideas for people who are ready and able to take more of an active role such as ideas for local involvement and playing a part in networks (Actions 10 – 15)

SIMPLE THINGS THAT ANYONE CAN DO (Actions 1 – 6)

ACTION 1 Sign up as a Dignity Champion online

We realise this can be an issue if you don't have a computer at home - not everyone does, but maybe:-

- Family and friends are often happy to let you use their computer if you don't have one at home - they may even show you the basics.
- every local library will have a bank of computers for public use and its an easy process to register as a library user in order to access them.
- there is usually a member of staff at your local library who will help you get started.
- take advantage of free courses offered by local organisations. your local council or health and community centre
- Email accounts can be quickly obtained at no cost, from suppliers such as Yahoo, Gmail or BT etc.

If you can get online, please register as an electronic dignity champion by visiting our website www.dignityincare.org.uk . The website is full of useful information about how to help ensure dignity in care. Once you have signed up you will receive monthly newsletters including tips on how to be more active.

Once online, you can also use the internet to:

- keep in touch with friends and family
- save money with your shopping
- save time by managing your utilities and banking online
- search for information on absolutely anything – the world is your oyster!

The AgeUK website has a fantastic webpage on technology and the internet. It is aimed at complete beginners and gives a step-by-step guide for getting online.

[AgeUK - make the most of the internet](#)

ACTION 2 Encourage others to sign up online as Dignity Champions

If you can already use a computer, why not help someone else to get started - and then encourage them to sign up as a dignity champion. They can then teach someone else and so on and so on.

The advantage of going online is having access to a wealth of information on the Dignity in Care website, including downloadable resources such as training packs, posters, leaflets and much more. Another benefit is being able to network directly with other Dignity Champions and Networks, particularly in your area.

ACTION 3 Provide feedback on care services

Never underestimate how much you can influence change by providing feedback on care services, good or bad. If you see someone providing wonderful care that really respects people's dignity, why not:-

- Tell them – well done!
- Tell their managers
- Send a thank you card
- Nominate them for an Award*
- Put a thank you note in the suggestion box
- Use online feedback such as [NHS Choices](#) or [Patient Opinion](#)

*Rewarding those staff and members of the public who really do go the extra mile is an important aspect of this campaign. Each year, there are various national and local awards held around the country. [Great British Care Awards](#) You can find out more about these by contacting your local council, NHS trust or by visiting health and social care organisational websites including [Skills for Care](#), [Caring Times Awards](#) . So why not nominate someone who you think deserves recognition for trying to make the care someone receives, a more compassionate and dignified experience.

Remember- positive feedback when care is good or exemplary reinforces the message that providing care with respect and dignity does make a difference.

And it is as important to highlight poor care - stand up and challenge it rather than just tolerate it.. You could:

- tell someone eg. go to the nurses station, speak to the care home manager or ring the council
- put a review on an online feedback website such as [NHS Choices](#) or [Patient Opinion](#) or make a formal [complaint](#) if you feel it is warranted

Below is a quote from a Dignity Champion and service user:

"I was recently in hospital and thought the way I was treated by staff was exceptional. They made a real effort to preserve my dignity at all times. When I recovered I logged on to www.patientopinions.org.uk and [NHS Choices](#) and shared my experience of the ward and its staff. Hopefully, their managers were made aware of their good work! I think this could also be a powerful way of making hospitals pay attention to poor experiences of dignity in care - these comments are public so I imagine they are keen to address any negative comments"

ACTION 4 Share your thoughts on the quality of care homes

There are a number of websites around that give people the opportunity to feedback their experiences of living in, or visiting care homes. This is vital information for people in choosing the most suitable care home for themselves or their relatives.

You could encourage other people to feed back and promote such sites so they become increasingly more useful sources of information for people seeking high quality care.

Here are some of the websites, which you may be interested in browsing:-

www.cqc.org.uk/findcareservices.cfm

www.carehomes.whereforcare.co.uk

www.iwantgreatcare.org

www.yourcarehome.co.uk

www.whichcarehome.co.uk

www.myhomelifemovement.org

ACTION 5 Take part in Dignity Action Day - Give someone the gift of your time

As a member of the public, you are likely to be involved with health and social care services at some time in your life, be that personally or as a carer, family member or friend. That is why so many people dedicated their time to Dignity Action Day on 25th February 2010. It was not necessarily a day about grand gestures but about doing something, however small to underline the need to treat people with dignity and also provide a truly memorable day for people receiving care. We had a great response and the day was a huge success - it also boosted our Dignity Champion numbers!

Many people enjoyed the day so much, that they pledged to make it a regular event whether or not there is an organised Dignity Action Day next year. Sometimes it only takes something simple to make someone's day special such as:-

- being there for someone to talk to, to share memories with and look at old photos.
- checking your elderly neighbour is warm and has enough food in the cold weather.
- helping someone do something new and interesting for the day – something they have never done before but always wanted to do
- perhaps help in a practical way by tidying a garden, doing some decorating or a spring clean.
- promoting Dignity in Care by signing up to the national campaign, wearing your badge and telling others about the campaign.

Dignity Action Day is set to take place again in 2011. Take a look at our [online memory book](#) for activities that took place this year to give you ideas of how you can get involved. Keep an eye on the website for more updates.

ACTION 6 Indulge In Acts of Kindness

Many of our dignity champions, especially those directly involved in the care of others, will be aware of the way in which kindness can enhance both our own lives and those who we care for.

[The Kindness Offensive](#) are a group of volunteers whose slogan is "Practice Random Kindness and Senseless Acts of Beauty". They say:

“Our aim is to grow as a group, develop new and exciting ways of having fun with kindness and become self sufficient while doing it; we want to demonstrate that kindness is more than just a nice ideal, it's actually a viable way of existing in the real world.”

Volunteers for The Kindness Offensive, attired in their trademark fluorescent jackets and yellow hard hats, have undertaken a number of events for charities such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), ChildLine and the Child's Voice appeal and the NSPCC helpline. The group have gathered and distributed non-perishable food items, helped the homeless, delivered several hundred toys to children's hospitals and clinics, and taken over a cafe to distribute free pancakes and beverages on pancake day. As an organised group of volunteers they are formidable.

Being kind to other people can make us feel good too. Many studies show that regular acts of kindness make us happier as well and can make a positive difference in the lives of others.

You don't have to do huge things to have a positive impact on people's lives – small things matter too, like holding a door open for someone, looking in on a neighbour or asking if they need anything.

Also visit www.kissingitbetter.co.uk for more ideas.

What can you do for someone today?

FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE MORE TIME TO SPARE (Actions 7 – 9)

ACTION 7 Volunteering

At its most simple, volunteering can involve those actions that fall under 'being a good neighbour' such as the examples we have already covered in previous actions above.

If you want to undertake a more formal volunteering activity we advise that you contact a volunteering organisation to obtain advice and support, of which there are many. Here is a selection below:-

Volunteering England www.volunteering.org.uk (telephone 020 7520 8900) does not directly place volunteers but you can search for your local volunteer centre on their website.

Do-It Volunteering www.do-it.org.uk (telephone 020 7250 5700) can help you find opportunities in your area to lend a listening ear and support, for example:

- fundraising for hospices
- helping out in charity shops
- befriending terminally ill patients

- becoming a therapeutic care practitioner, or a care volunteer for people with Leukaemia – lending a listening ear and support

Age UK www.ageuk.org.uk (telephone 0800 169 8787) have many opportunities for volunteers, for example:

- run activity classes
- give information and advice
- provide support as a befriender
- help in day centres and help out around the home as a handyman.

WRVS www.wrvs.org.uk (telephone 0845 601 4670) have four categories of volunteering opportunities:

- helping at community information centres and cafes
- meal and book delivery driving
- hospital patient support
- emergency service response teams

They are currently running a scheme challenging Britain to join forces to remove outdated stereotypes. Take a look at the [My Life, My Story campaign](#).

Learning for the Fourth Age www.l4a.org.uk is currently looking for volunteers to provide one-to-one learning and stimulate discussions with care home residents. Research shows that learning in the later stages of life can boost confidence; giving residents a more positive outlook on life can delay the onset of dementia

CSV www.csv.org.uk is the UK's leading volunteering and training charity.

Their vision is of a society where everyone can participate to build healthy, enterprising, inclusive communities.

Mentoring and Befriending Foundation www.mandbf.org.uk (telephone 0161 787 8600) They rely upon local support from people of all ages and community backgrounds to carry out projects working with specific groups of people offering a one to one non judgmental informal and social relationship.

Sue Ryder Care www.suerydercare.org (telephone 0845 050 1953) aim to make volunteering as flexible as possible. They will match your skills and interests with their volunteer vacancies.

British Red Cross www.redcross.org.uk/uksocialcare

The British Red Cross offers valuable short-term support to vulnerable people in the UK, whether it's helping out around the home following an operation, providing a wheelchair or taking someone on a trip to the shops.

Could you spare a bit of time to lend a hand and brighten someone's day? If you like spending time with people, then here's the ideal volunteering role for you.

Intergenerational volunteering

Intergenerational activities bring generations together with activities which

promote greater understanding between them, challenge stereotypes and address age discrimination. Volunteering with the younger generation can be extremely rewarding, with volunteers reporting that spending time with a younger person is both worthwhile and inspiring.

Many of the charities above offer intergenerational volunteering projects.

ACTION 8 Micro-volunteering

If you have limited time available then you may be interested in Micro-volunteering.

Often, one of the barriers to people volunteering is that they don't want to feel obligated to something. Most micro-actions are non-committal, which means that you can dip in and out whenever you want and you need not be restricted to being at a certain place at a certain time.

You could visit www.helpfromhome.org, which provides information on over 500 micro volunteering actions / initiatives that can all be performed in under 30 minutes – or try the following websites:

www.i-volunteer.org.uk
www.charityguide.org
www.flocklocal.net

ACTION 9 Join a local Timebank

Timebanking is different to volunteering as it is based on a system of give and take.

Local people from all backgrounds and abilities can come together to help each other - by sharing their skills. They earn credits by giving their practical help and support to others - one hour of giving earns them one time credit. These credits are 'deposited' in the bank and 'withdrawn' when they need the skills and support on offer from other local people.

People engage in all kinds of activity from support at home such as help with domestic tasks, gardening and DIY to baby-sitting, befriending, respite care and support with using computers.

Timebanking is also an innovative way of addressing social isolation by involving people who may not have existing support networks.

Two aspects of the Dignity Challenge are '**Treating each person as an individual**' and '**assisting people to maintain confidence and a positive sense of self esteem**' - timebanks can help meet these two challenges. Enabling people to make a

contribution, as well as having their own needs met, improves their self-esteem and helps them feel like valued members of the community.

To learn more about Timebanks visit www.timebanking.org or telephone 01453 750952

IDEAS FOR BECOMING MORE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN RAISING THE PROFILE OF DIGNITY (Actions 10 to 15)

ACTION 10 Contact your local councillor or MP

Getting your local councillor or MP on board can be a real asset if you are looking to tackle local issues. Whether you want to get involved in campaigning, holding services to account or even playing an active role locally in helping change existing services, there are many ways a local councillor may be able to help including:

- providing a formal route to influence the council executive
- helping you understand and take advantage of how council decision- making processes work in practice
- helping you attract good publicity and giving advice on dealing with the media
- signposting you to the right people and helping open doors
- giving weight and credibility to your cause
- giving you advice about funding - from the local authority and from elsewhere
- helping you pitch your proposals so they use the right language and focus to gain support from the wider council

MP's and local councillors can make powerful Dignity Champions. As well as being the voice for local people some councillors have a powerful scrutiny role in health and social care through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and all can use their positions of influence to encourage local services to promote dignity.

You can find out who your local councillors and MPs are by following the link below and entering your postcode www.writetothem.com.

The British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres (bassac) and Urban Forum have produced a joint guide showing how communities have successfully worked with their local councillors to bring about change in their neighbourhood. You can access the guide here [Local action: The handy guide for communities working with councillors.](#)

BASSAC is a membership body for community organisations – they organise training and events, highlight funding opportunities and offer tailored support to every member. It has more than 100 members working with disadvantaged communities across the UK, visit www.bassac.org.uk or telephone 020 7336 9442

ACTION 11 Raise the profile of Dignity in Care via other internet sites

Social media is all about community – it provides opportunities for people to have their voices heard on the issues they are passionate about. It is also a quick and easy way to have conversations and debates with like-minded people.

- You can use social media to talk to those in power. Many MPS and Councillors have active, two-way conversations with those who tweet them. Check out [Tweetminster](#) to find your MP, or [TweetyHall](#) to connect with your local Councillors.
- Just signing up to [facebook](#) or [twitter.com/](#) is a good start. You may already know quite a few people online, and both these tools will allow you to communicate with them or make new friends.
- Networks like [Facebook](#), [Bebo](#) and [MySpace](#) are used usually in a social context - but they are also used by organisations and businesses to share information about products, services or events with a range of interested individuals.
- It is worth exploring sites that campaign specifically about the issues that you have an interest in such as [Mumsnet](#). This is primarily a forum for parenting but also hosts discussions on a wide range of other topics and has become a popular resource for journalists. The prime minister and the leader of the opposition have recently appeared on the website's "livechats".
- [Sagazone](#) is the biggest social networking site for over 50s. It is a massive site where it's impossible not to find something of interest.

ACTION 12 Contact your local LINK to bring about change

Sometimes the people who use services don't feel they have a strong enough voice to bring about change. Did you know that, as a member of the public, you have a right to be involved in discussions and decisions about local health & social care services.

Why not contact your Local Involvement Network (LINK) – these are made up of local people and community groups working together to improve health & social care services. The job of each LINK is to:-

- listen to what people think about local healthcare services and their ideas for changes/improvements
- investigate specific issues of concern to the community
- use its powers to hold services to account and get results
- carry out spot-checks to see if services are working well
- make reports and recommendations
- refer issues to the local 'Overview and Scrutiny Committee'

You can find out more about LINKs and get details of your local LINK here.

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/links/Pages/links-make-it-happen.aspx> or perhaps, you feel so strongly that you are prepared to go a step further and become a LINK member yourself.

The Government is undergoing a consultation process on a proposal to change LINKs into bodies known as Local Healthwatch, and Dignity Champions should be aware of this potential change of identity.

ACTION 13 Finding support for carers

As a carer you are part of wide community, so why not find support by forming links and friendships with other people in your position who can understand the highs and lows of caring for someone, as you will for them. Getting out and about together, possibly trying new activities and seeing new places, will give you a fresh outlook.

Carers are lot more powerful as a group than individually. Caring for someone, even when you love them very much, can be a solitary occupation. When you start to become involved in a group of carers, and can offer as well as benefit from health and advice, any situation can become easier.

Be aware of activities and the potential for social interaction with other carers in your area – look out for social events, which may be publicised through your local carers organisation, LINK, or through our website.

If you are not a carer yourself, you can help carers to make these links. There are several online carers communities such as:

- The Princess Royal Trust for Carers <http://www.carers.org/> (telephone 0844 800 4361) who offer mutual support for carers and extra assistance such as support meetings, location of grants for essential items and support for young carers and the adults that they care for.
- Carers Information online offer information for “informal” carers <http://www.carersinformation.org.uk/> Some carers communities identify themselves by the medical condition that the person that you care for suffers from.
- <http://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect/Pages/CarersDirectHome.aspx> (telephone 0808 802 0202) Carers Direct offers support and information for carers including housing issues, money and legal advice etc

ACTION 14 Support people with dementia

We all know that people who find it difficult to communicate often become isolated. Online communities are a terrific way for people with communication difficulties – either social or otherwise - to make themselves known and heard.

For people with dementia, or dementia related conditions, online support is available through the ‘Horsemouth’ network [Visit the Horsemouth website](#). This website offers online mentoring and support to people with dementia and their carers. You can also become an online mentor yourself and provide support and advice to others in the same situation.

We encourage Dignity Champions to spread the word about this service. People can sign up as a member and mentor under the 'living well with dementia' badge, by going onto the website. It's a great way to volunteer and give something back, and it's a really meaningful way to enjoy communicating online.

Horseshmouth does not limit people to talking about dementia, in fact, it would great if people could offer support on other experiences. People can mentor on three subjects, and we would ask that one of them is related to dementia.

ACTION 15 Start an e-petition for dignity

An e-petition is a form of petition posted on a website. Individuals or groups can create a petition on a website and visitors can add their details to the petition to sign it.

The more people register their vote for dignity in care to be a priority issue for local hospitals, councils and Government, the more likely it is to end up being so. E-petitions are a simple and inexpensive way to do this.

For more information, why not keep an eye on the [official site of the Prime Minister's office](#) or visit [iPetitions](#) and start a petition today!

Give us feedback

- Please do email us and tell us what you have done as a result of getting this action pack. We will post your feedback on the Dignity Champions website (anonymously if you would prefer) to help inspire others. Just email us at dignityincare@scie.org.uk
- If you think we have missed any useful information and would like to see something else added please do email us at the email address above.

GOOD LUCK AND THANK YOU FOR PLAYING YOUR PART IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE

If you are looking at the online version of this pack, any words in blue are links that you can click on to visit other websites.