

Volunteer service for nursing home residents

A buddy system that ensures social care for elderly

Overview

With the limited resources in staff that juggle a lot of daily tasks, Rokilde nursing home in Kristiansund municipality, Norway, struggled with providing their residents with more than basic medical care. This resulted in residents feeling bored and longing for something to look forward to in their daily life. This lead the nursing home management to look into how they could facilitate more “active ageing” for their residents, going beyond just their physical well-being.

As we age, we gradually loose the context of worklife, neighbours, friends and family. This service provides the nursing home the

ability to deliver individual social care through the involvement of “buddies” from the local community. Each buddy is carefully selected for each resident, and the purpose is to match individuals that share the same interests and curiosities in life.

The buddy’s aim is to reduce loneliness by simply engaging in conversation, going for walks and encouraging participation in organized social activities. With this new service, the resident has a committed friend visiting every week, resulting in a meaningful and richer everyday life for both buddy and resident.



Process

The user centered and collaborative nature of the design process ensured a service that truly met the needs and wants of the residents, staff and volunteers. By co-creating the new service with the volunteers and staff, based on residents needs, we secured ownership and a dedication towards realizing and implementing the service.

Benefits and effect

The new buddy system has resulted in residents always having something to look forward to, feeling less lonely and engaging in more social activities. Many of the residents express that they are truly touched by the connection they experience with their buddy, and that they choose to spend their time to hang out with them. The buddies also express appreciation towards their new friendship, considering the value they gain from getting to know their new elderly friend and learn about their life experiences.

The service was piloted fall 2014 and proved to be an immediate success. It gradually converted into a fully operating service, that later has scaled to all the five nursing homes in Kristiansund municipality. Starting with seven buddies at one nursing home during the pilot, they can now happily report that over 30 buddies are regularly visiting the seniors in all nursing homes in Kristiansund.

