**All Wales induction framework for health and social care**

**An introduction to the senses framework**

*The following text is an extract from information we provided at the 2016 registered managers’ forum in Carmarthen.***Where did the senses framework come from and what is a better environment of care?**  
Although the senses framework has been applied in acute and community settings, it was initially developed with care homes in mind. The framework was suggested by Mike Nolan (Nolan, 1997). Since then, it has been developed further (Davies et al, 1999; Nolan et al, 2006). Nolan (1997) was worried that care homes did not have the recognition they deserved and that they were painted badly in a negative picture of what it was like to live and work there.  
  
For example, some studies have said that care homes provide “aimless care” (Evers, 1981) or “good geriatric care” (Reed and Bond, 1991) where the main goals are to ensure that residents are well fed, dressed and kept clean. Even though these activities are important, there is more to life than this.

Other then “good geriatric care”, it has been suggested that staff have few therapeutic goals to aim for. There is little motivation or simulation from their work because of this. Some say that staff in acute settings may suffer “burnout” because of the highly demanding and fast-changing nature of their work, and that staff in care homes are more likely to experience “rust out” (Pennington and Pierce, 1985) because they experience so little stimulation.  
  
Based on his experience as a practitioner and researcher, Nolan (1997) proposed a framework that he hoped would allow care homes to show more clearly the important work staff carry out. He also said staff should set goals to aim for. He believed that staff in care homes are highly skilled and often have to deal with very complex situations, including increasing numbers of people with considerable physical and cognitive frailty. He argued that care homes should create an environment in which older people experience six “senses”.

These are:

* **A sense of security** – to feel safe and secure, not just physically but also psychologically. To feel free from threat or harm, but not to the point that no risks are allowed. Also, to feel free to complain without fear of paybacks.
* **A sense of belonging** – to feel 'part of things', both within the home and the wider community, and to be able to maintain relationships and create new ones.
* **A sense of continuity** – so that people's life and their history are recognised and valued, and used to plan and provide care that they want and like.
* **A sense of purpose** –having things to aim for, the sort of things that make it worth getting out of bed for in the morning and provide a feeling of “I have a contribution to make”. It is important that older people in care homes have interesting things to do to pass the time. Many studies suggest they spend up to 80 per cent of their waking day doing nothing.
* **A sense of achievement** –to feel happy with your efforts.
* **A sense of significance** – although all the senses are important, and each one is related to the next (for example, you need a sense of purpose to get a sense of achievement), a sense of significance is possibly the most fundamental sense of all. This is about feeling that you 'matter', that your life has importance, and that other people recognise you and who you are. As we get older, our sense of significance is threatened as older people often suffer many losses (work, health, a partner or friends) and going into a care home also means the loss of your “home”.  So, creating an environment in which older people feel they really “matter” is important.

Nolan (1997) said that if staff were to create these senses for residents, then they too had to experience the senses for themselves. If staff do not experience a sense of security, belonging, continuity and so on in their work, how can they help residents experience the senses? This idea views staff well-being and satisfaction as important to residents' quality of life.

So, for example, staff need to experience a sense of security, not just to be free from physical or verbal abuse, but also to feel confident that they can complain about poor standards, without risking losing their job. They need to experience a sense of belonging, with good teamwork, a happy work atmosphere and friendly relationships within the home. A sense of continuity is essential, but can be hard to achieve if there is high staff turnover and a lot of agency staff. The research says staff in care homes often don’t have a clear sense of purpose – what their job is about and how they know if they are doing it well.

Creating the senses for residents helps give a sense of purpose for staff. This means that all the residents’ needs are seen as important, not just their physical care. So making sure residents have things to do and are encouraged to make friends if they want to is every bit as important as meeting their physical needs.  
  
We all need a 'pat on the back' sometimes and to go home at the end of the day feeling and being told that we have 'done a good job'. Staff need to experience a sense of achievement and feel their efforts are recognised and valued. While the financial rewards in care homes are often limited, the potential for other rewards, such as making sure residents have a good quality of life, is as great.

Most research suggests that staff get their greatest satisfaction from their relationships with residents. This needs to be fully recognised, as does the vulnerable position it may leave staff in. So the grief staff may feel when a resident they know well dies must be acknowledged and there should be support in place to help staff deal with this grief if they are to feel 'secure' (ie safe) to form close relationships with other residents in the future. This shows how each of the senses influences the others. They are 'interdependent' rather than independent.  
  
Staff must also experience a sense of significance. They must not only feel valued by the organisation they work for, but society must also recognise and see the value of the work they do. There is some way to go before this is achieved, but initiatives such as My Home Life are leading the way.  
  
Nolan (1997) said an “enriched” environment was one in which both residents and staff experience the senses. If one group does not or one of the senses is missing, then the environment is “impoverished” to a greater or lesser extent.

**References (as cited in Nolan *et al.* 2006)**

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