NAPA

A Toolkit for Activity & Care Teams

Technology in Activity Provision

National Activity Providers Association
The Professional Association for Activity Providers and Activity Provision

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A welcome from Hilary

Foreward

Meaningful engagement has always been at the heart of good care. It is about recognising the whole person, their history, their relationships, their preferences, their culture and their identity. It is about supporting people not just to be cared for, but to live well.

As care evolves, so too do the tools available to us.

Technology is now part of everyday life for most of us. We use it to stay in touch, to listen to music, to learn, to remember and to share moments with others. For many people living in care today, technology has been part of their world for decades. For others, it is newer but still full of possibility.

This resource is not about turning care homes into digital spaces or replacing traditional activities. It is about recognising that technology can be one more way, when used thoughtfully, to support connection, creativity, reminiscence and wellbeing.

At NAPA, we believe technology should never lead the practice. ***People should***. The person comes first, always. Technology is simply a tool that can help us reach meaningful moments: a familiar song, a shared memory, a conversation with family, a glimpse of a place that matters to someone.

What we see across our member services is encouraging. Care and activity teams are already using digital tools in gentle, imaginative and person-centred ways. Often it is not about big projects or specialist equipment. It is about small, human moments, a playlist that brings comfort, a video call that maintains belonging, a photograph that sparks a story.

We also know that some staff feel unsure about using technology. That is completely understandable. Care is about people, not devices. But the experiences shared in this resource show that you do not need to be a technology expert. Curiosity, patience and warmth go much further than technical knowledge.

If you would like to discuss any of the resources, ideas and top tips in the pack, please get in touch with us at:
supportline@napa-activities.co.uk

This guidance has been created to support confidence, not pressure. It offers ideas, examples and reflections drawn from real care practice. It recognises the realities of busy settings and the need for flexibility.

There is no "one right way" to use technology in activity provision, only what works for the person in front of you. Importantly, this resource also highlights inclusion.

Technology can widen access for people who are bedbound, living with sensory changes, or less able to engage in traditional ways. It can support cultural identity, spiritual wellbeing and life story work.

When used with care, it can help people remain connected to who they are.

But we remain clear on one thing: technology never replaces human connection. The most meaningful part of any activity is still the relationship between people. A tablet cannot replace presence. A screen cannot replace kindness.

A device cannot replace understanding. What technology can do is support you in the valuable work you already do, helping people feel seen, heard, remembered and valued.

Hilary

Hilary Woodhead
NAPA's
Chief Executive Officer

"We are delighted to highlight the services of NAPA Recognised Suppliers; Famileo, OMi, and Social-Ability. We value their continued engagement and support in helping to connect innovation with practice."

Gianna

Gianna Burns
Communications and Marketing Manager - NAPA

Introduction to Technology in Activity Provision

Technology is part of everyday life now. Most of us use it without really noticing, sending messages, listening to music, watching television, finding information, sharing photos. It has quietly become woven into how we stay connected and how we spend our time.

Care settings are no different. The people who live in care homes today have lived through enormous technological change. Many have used computers at work, owned mobile phones, used the internet, or kept in touch with family through digital means. Others may have had less exposure but are still curious and open to trying. Yet in activity provision, technology can sometimes feel like a separate world. Something extra. Something for "later" when there is more time or more confidence.

This resource starts from a different place. It sees technology as simply one more way to support what activity teams already do so well: helping people stay connected, stimulated, comforted and engaged. Technology does not replace good activity work. It builds on it.

"Start with What You Already Know"

A useful way to begin is to start with the technology you already use in your own daily life. Most of us already use technology for comfort, routine and connection, often without thinking of it as "technology."

If you listen to the radio on your drive to work, that's a starting point. Why not have a radio station playing softly in the background during a relaxing craft session, or as part of a morning routine in communal areas?

If you play music while cooking, that's a starting point. Why not create a gentle playlist for mealtimes or a themed music hour that reflects individuals' preferences?

If you use video calls to speak to family, that's a starting point. Why not support a short call with someone who is missing home?

Using technology in activity provision doesn't begin with apps or equipment. It begins with familiar, simple practices that already support wellbeing.

How Digital Activity Links to the Standards of Practice

Technology is most effective when it supports what we already know good activity provision should do. This section is designed to help Activity Providers connect digital activity clearly to best practice, outcomes, and inspection evidence.

Person-Centred Care

Digital activity supports person-centred care when it is shaped by the person's history, interests, preferences, identity and goals.

- A playlist that reflects someone's life story is person-centred.
- Looking up a hometown, workplace, or wedding venue is person-centred.
- Supporting someone to message family at a time that suits them is person-centred.

Evidence examples:

- "X chose the music and shared memories about…"
- "X preferred a short 1:1 session with photos rather than a group activity."
- "We adapted the session to X's hearing/vision needs using subtitles/zoom."

Wellbeing

Digital activity can support wellbeing in multiple ways: emotional comfort, reduced anxiety, joy, stimulation, meaningful occupation and connection.

- Familiar music can soothe and regulate mood.
- Nature videos can support calm and relaxation.
- Digital quizzes can support cognitive stimulation and social interaction.

Evidence examples:

- mood/engagement observations before, during and after
- short notes on emotional responses ("smiled", "sang along", "talked more than usual", "appeared calmer")
- outcomes linked to personal goals ("felt closer to family", "increased confidence")

Inclusion

Technology can widen access and participation, especially when physical, sensory or cognitive changes make some traditional activities harder.

- Enlarged text and zoom features can support people with visual changes.
- Subtitles and adjustable volume can support people with hearing loss.
- Touchscreens can support those with reduced grip or dexterity.

Evidence examples:

- "X could participate because we used large visuals / simplified the screen / reduced steps."
- "X joined in by pointing/smiling/choosing rather than speaking."

Technology is most effective when it supports what we already know good activity provision should do.

Reflective Practice and Continuous Improvement
Digital activity supports reflective practice when teams plan, try, notice, adapt and learn.

- What worked well? What didn't?
- Did the person enjoy it today? Would they prefer a different format next time?
- What barriers got in the way (Wi-Fi, noise, timing, device access), and what could we change?

Evidence examples:

- short reflective notes ("Next time we'll…", "X was more engaged when…", "Keep sessions under 10 minutes.")
- adapting practice based on what you observed, not what you planned

This is useful not only for quality improvement but also for inspections, because it shows intentional, outcomes-focused practice rather than "screen time."

Keeping the Focus on People

At the heart of activity provision is the person. Their history, preferences, personality and mood shape what meaningful engagement looks like for them. That does not change when technology is involved.

A tablet does not create a meaningful moment on its own. A meaningful moment happens when someone hears a song they love, sees a familiar place, recognises a face on a screen, or shares a memory sparked by an image or a sound.

"Technology is simply a tool that can help us reach those moments. For example, playing an individual's favourite music digitally is still about the emotional connection to the song. Looking up photographs of a hometown is still about reminiscence and identity. A video call is still about relationships and belonging. **The device is not the point. The person is.**"

Did you know?

Just like with any activity, interest varies from person to person. The key is to offer choice rather than assume.

Making It Achievable in Busy Care Settings

It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking older people and technology do not mix. But today's care home individuals have lived through radio, television, home computers, mobile phones and the internet.

Some will be confident users.
Some will be occasional users.
Some will be new to it.

Just like with any activity, interest varies from person to person. The key is to offer choice rather than assume.

Many individuals enjoy technology because it helps them stay in touch with modern life. It can reduce the feeling of being left behind or disconnected from the world outside the care setting. For some, it supports dignity and independence. Being able to choose music, see family, or explore interests can reinforce a sense of self.

Connection in a Digital World

One of the greatest strengths of technology is its ability to support connection. Family members may live far away or have busy lives. Friends may not visit as often as they once did. Some individuals are less able to go out into the community.

Digital tools can help bridge these gaps:

- a video call can allow someone to see a grandchild's smile
- a shared photo can prompt a story
- a voice message can bring comfort

These moments do not replace in-person contact, but they can maintain relationships in between visits. They remind individuals they are thought of and valued. That emotional reassurance can have a real impact on wellbeing.

Practice Example: A Virtual Trip Down Memory Lane

One gentleman spoke often about living in Hong Kong for two years and travelling back through work. He would frequently mention a tailor he used to phone before visiting, asking for suits to be prepared from measurements they kept on file. He often ended with: "I wonder if they are still there?"

Using Google Street View, we took a spontaneous virtual trip to the street where the tailor had been. Sadly it was no longer there, but we had a magical moment exploring the area together, how it looked then compared to now, and sharing stories that brought his memories to life. It wasn't "a tech activity." It was reminiscence, identity, and connection, supported by a simple tool.

famileo PRO

Where family stories become part of *care*

Turn family messages into real moments your residents can hold, read and share. A simple way to spark conversation and participation in your daily activities. 2,700+ care homes already use Famileo

starting at £45/month, visit famileopro.com, get in touch sales@famileo.com

Meaningful, Not Just Entertaining

There is sometimes a worry that technology is passive or isolating. It can be, if it is used without thought. But when used well, it can be deeply engaging.

- watching a documentary can lead to discussion
- listening to music can unlock memories
- looking at maps can spark storytelling
- exploring hobbies online can maintain identity

The difference lies in how it is facilitated. Technology works best when it is interactive and shared. When someone sits alongside, listens, asks questions and notices reactions.

When someone sits alongside, listens, asks questions and notices reactions, that human presence turns digital content into meaningful engagement.

Technology can support inclusion. Many devices now have built-in accessibility features:

- larger text and zoom
- subtitles
- voice controls
- touchscreens
- audio options and headphones

These can make engagement easier for some individuals than traditional materials.
For people with limited mobility, digital tools can bring the outside world in: nature scenes, travel, performances, cultural events.

Used thoughtfully, technology can widen access rather than narrow it.

When Things Don't Go to Plan

Not every attempt will work. Wi-Fi can fail. Sound might be too quiet. A person may not be interested that day.

This is no different from any activity. Sometimes a craft session falls flat. Sometimes a game doesn't appeal.

A helpful approach is:

- Try
- Notice
- Adapt

Often the effort itself is appreciated, even if the activity changes direction. Building confidence includes accepting that "not perfect" is still valuable.

Keeping Care Values at the Centre

Using technology still follows the same principles of good care:

- respect
- consent
- choice
- privacy
- dignity

Asking before taking photos. Checking before sharing. Respecting when someone says no. These are familiar values, simply applied in a digital space.

A Balanced View

Technology is not the answer to everything. It does not replace human contact, fresh air, conversation or hands-on activities. But it can add something valuable. It can open doors. It can offer new ways to connect, explore and remember.

For some individuals, it becomes a favourite part of their day. For others, it is an occasional interest. Both are perfectly fine. The goal is not to use technology for its own sake. The goal is to support wellbeing in ways that feel right for each person.

Making It Achievable in Busy Care Settings

Care settings are busy. Staff are balancing many demands.

Technology must fit into real life, not add pressure. The good news is that it can often save time or blend into what already happens.

Small additions can have a big impact:

- A ready-made playlist to support a calm atmosphere
- A short video clip to prompt conversation
- A quick picture quiz in a gap between routines
- A digital photo shared by family that sparks storytelling

Practical Considerations (So It Works in the Real World)
It helps to plan for common barriers so technology feels achievable:

Wi-Fi and signal strength

- Test Wi-Fi in the room you'll use (signal often varies across buildings).
- Have a "low Wi-Fi plan B": downloaded music, offline photos, pre-loaded videos.

Shared devices

- Agree where devices are stored and how they are booked out.
- Keep chargers with devices (missing chargers are a common barrier).
- Consider a simple sign-out sheet to reduce "it's disappeared" stress.

Unfamiliar users

- Keep screens simple: open the app before you start.
- Reduce steps: one icon, one video, one song.
- Use a stand/holder so staff aren't juggling a device while supporting someone.

Noise and privacy

- Choose quieter spaces for calls and reminiscence.
- Use subtitles/headphones when suitable and agreed.
- Always ask what level of privacy the person wants.

Time constraints

- Keep sessions short and successful rather than long and complicated.
- A five-minute moment can still be meaningful.

Technology works best when it is easy, repeatable, and supported by small routines.

A Gentle Starting Point

Notice what happens. Notice the smiles, the stories, the reactions. Those moments often speak for themselves.

Because in the end, activity provision is about helping people feel connected, valued and engaged with life.

Technology is simply one more way to support that, when used with care, warmth and common sense.

If this feels new, start small and start familiar:

- one song on a tablet
- one short video clip
- one online photo search
- one five-minute video call
- one radio programme in the background during an activity

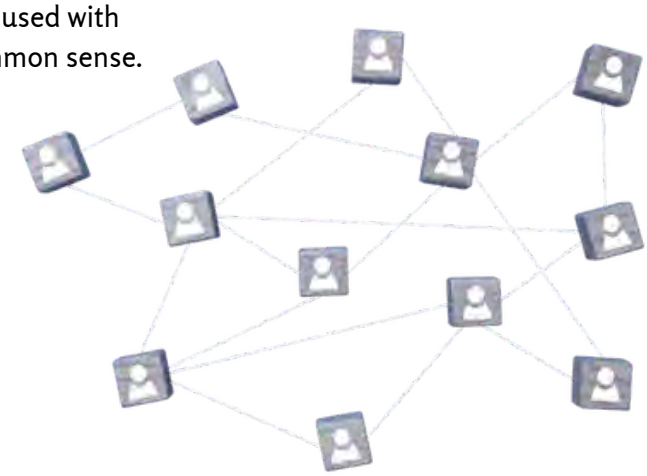
Digital Tools to Support Connection and Communication

Connection is one of those words we use all the time in care, but it carries real weight. When people move into a care setting, they don't leave their relationships behind. They don't stop being parents, siblings, partners, friends or grandparents. Their lives don't suddenly shrink to the size of the building they now live in.

But the reality is that their world can become smaller.

Friends may visit less often. Family may live further away. Health and mobility can limit outings. Confidence can change. Over time, social circles can narrow, even in the most caring and active environments. For many individuals, the hardest part of moving into care is not the building, the routines or even the loss of independence, it's the fear of losing touch with the people and life they know.

This is where digital tools can play a meaningful role. Not as a replacement for real relationships, and not as a "tech solution," but as a support to something deeply human: the need to feel connected.



Connection Is About Belonging

When we talk about connection, we are really talking about belonging:

- ***Belonging to a family***
- ***Belonging to a friendship group***
- ***Belonging to a community***
- ***Belonging to a story that continues beyond the care home walls***

Digital communication can help maintain that sense of belonging. It can remind someone that they are still part of their family's everyday life, still included in conversations, still thought about.

- ***An individual seeing their granddaughter's new school uniform.***
- ***A son calling to share small news.***
- ***A friend checking in from afar.***

These moments say, without words: You still matter in my life.

The Emotional Impact of Seeing and Hearing Loved Ones

There is something uniquely powerful about seeing a familiar face.

Video calls allow visual connection that a phone call cannot offer. Facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, these are all part of communication.

Care staff often notice the shift when a video call begins. A person who seemed withdrawn may become more alert. Someone quiet may suddenly have a lot to say. It is not about the novelty of the screen. It is about recognition, relationship, and emotional memory.

For some individuals, especially those living with dementia, emotional memory can remain strong even when factual memory fades.

They may not remember the details later, but they may hold onto the feeling:

- comfort
- reassurance
- closeness

Those feelings matter.

The Value of Ordinary Conversation

Calls do not need to be perfect or profound. Often, the ordinary conversations mean the most:

- ***The weather***
- ***What someone had for lunch***
- ***A pet's antics***
- ***A child's homework***

These small details bring normality. They remind individuals that life continues and that they are still part of it.

Families sometimes worry they don't have enough "important" things to say. In truth, everyday life is exactly what helps people feel included.

The Role of Staff as Facilitators (Without It Becoming "Another Job")

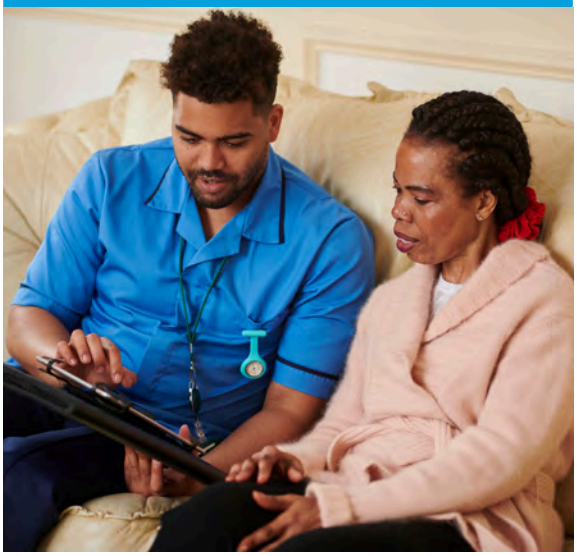
Supporting digital communication is not just technical, it is relational.

Staff help create the right conditions:

- **choosing a quiet space**
- **helping with hearing/vision needs**
- **preparing someone for the call**
- **offering prompts if conversation slows**
- **staying nearby if reassurance is needed**

At the same time, it's important this feels achievable. A short, supported call that goes well is often better than a long call that becomes stressful.

Some services find it helpful to set simple routines, for example: a weekly family call schedule or a "digital visiting hour."



When Connection Brings Mixed Emotions

Connection can bring joy and sadness. Someone may miss their home or wish they could visit.

These emotions are not a sign that connection should be avoided. They are a sign the relationship matters.

Supporting someone after a call with warmth and reassurance can help. The aim is balance, not avoidance.

Voice and Sound as Connection

Not all communication needs to be visual. Familiar voices can be deeply reassuring. A short voice message from a loved one can be replayed and can provide comfort during unsettled moments. Music can also be a form of connection. A song linked to family memories can bring someone emotionally closer to their past and the people in it.

Digital Photos and Shared Stories

When families share photos, they offer a glimpse into their current lives. Looking at photos together can also help staff build relationships with individuals. Stories emerge. Identity is reinforced. A photo is rarely just a picture. It is often a doorway into someone's life story.

Respecting Choice and Preference

Not everyone will want digital communication. Some prefer phone calls, letters, or in-person visits. Technology should always be an invitation, never an obligation. Respecting a "no" is part of person-centred care.

Privacy, Consent and Boundaries

Digital communication brings responsibilities:

- consent remains central
- privacy must be respected
- recording or sharing should always be agreed

Clear policies and open conversations help teams feel confident. This becomes increasingly important as more people move into care with their own devices.

Creating Meaningful Activities in Care

www.omi.uk
Engage. Enable. Empower

Interactive Sensory Technology Supporting Activity Teams

What if meaningful activity could be more accessible, engaging and easy to deliver?

The Mobii supports this by creating responsive, interactive experiences that encourage movement, engagement, and shared moments.

How it Supports Activity Teams

- ☑ Creates positive and engaging environments that enhance activity sessions
- ☑ Saves staff time by enabling multiple residents to participate with minimal support
- ☑ Supports staff motivation through seeing immediate resident response and enjoyment
- ☑ Helps reduce staff pressure while boosting team morale

Why the Mobii Works

- ☑ Instant response to movement encourages continued engagement and participation
- ☑ Minimal setup allows activities to be introduced quickly and easily, reducing preparation time
- ☑ Flexible use supports both calm sensory sessions and active group activities
- ☑ Delivers measurable improvements in wellbeing

"It can be used for person-centred activities as there is something to suit all needs, and CQC love that."
Colette Yuksel, Activities Coordinator, Stocks Hall Nursing Home Burscough

OM Interactive

OMi has over 21 years of experience developing interactive sensory technology used in care homes across the UK.

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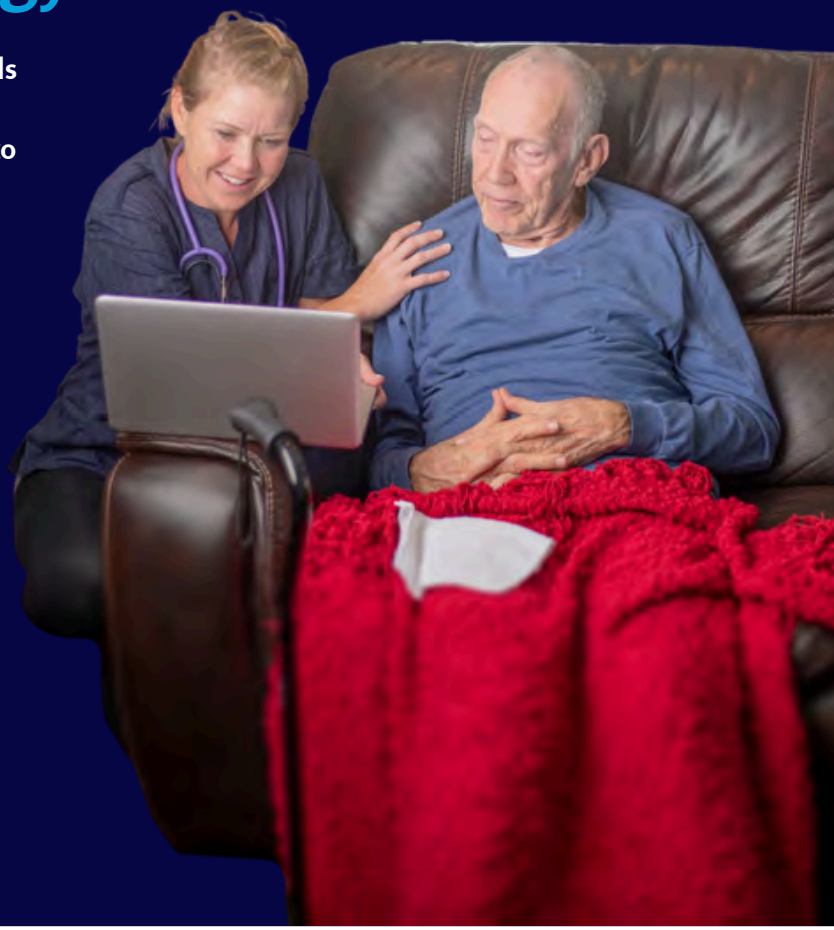
21 YEARS

Supporting Individuals With Their Own Technology



As technology becomes more common, many individuals arrive with smartphones, tablets or laptops. They may have relied on family support previously and then look to staff for help with:

- finding emails
- remembering passwords
- ordering items online
- using apps and settings

Most services will have policies around what staff can and cannot support, particularly relating to online purchases, passwords, and data protection. It can help to:

- agree boundaries as a team
- encourage family involvement where possible
- signpost to appropriate support
- document any support provided in line with policy

This protects the individual, staff and the service while still enabling independence where appropriate.

A Realistic Perspective

Digital tools are not a cure for loneliness. They do not replace human contact. But they can maintain relationships and reduce feelings of disconnection.

Even small interactions can have value: a five-minute call, a shared photo, a voice message.

At its core, care is about relationships. Technology doesn't change that. It simply offers another way to support it.

Technology for Creativity, Reminiscence and Life Story Work

Creativity, memory and identity sit at the heart of meaningful activity provision. When we support someone to create, remember or share their story, we are doing more than filling time, we are recognising their personhood.

Technology can play a powerful role in this work, not because it is modern, but because it gives us new ways to access memories, express ideas and preserve stories.

Used well, technology supports three deeply human needs:

- the need to express ourselves
- the need to remember and be remembered
- the need to make sense of our life story

NAPA Members can access resources and toolkits to support this in the Activity Shed

Gentle Digital Creativity

Simple is often best. A tablet drawing app allows exploration of colour without worrying about holding brushes. A camera function can turn a walk into a photography activity. A music app can support someone to create playlists that reflect their life.

What matters is not the final result but the process: choosing, exploring, noticing, expressing.

Life Story Work and Preserving Legacy

Digital life story books can include photos, voice recordings, written memories, favourite songs and family messages. These can be revisited and updated.

Recording someone's voice can be especially powerful:

- a childhood memory
- how they met their partner
- advice they want to pass on

These recordings can become treasured for families and affirm that the person's story is worth keeping.

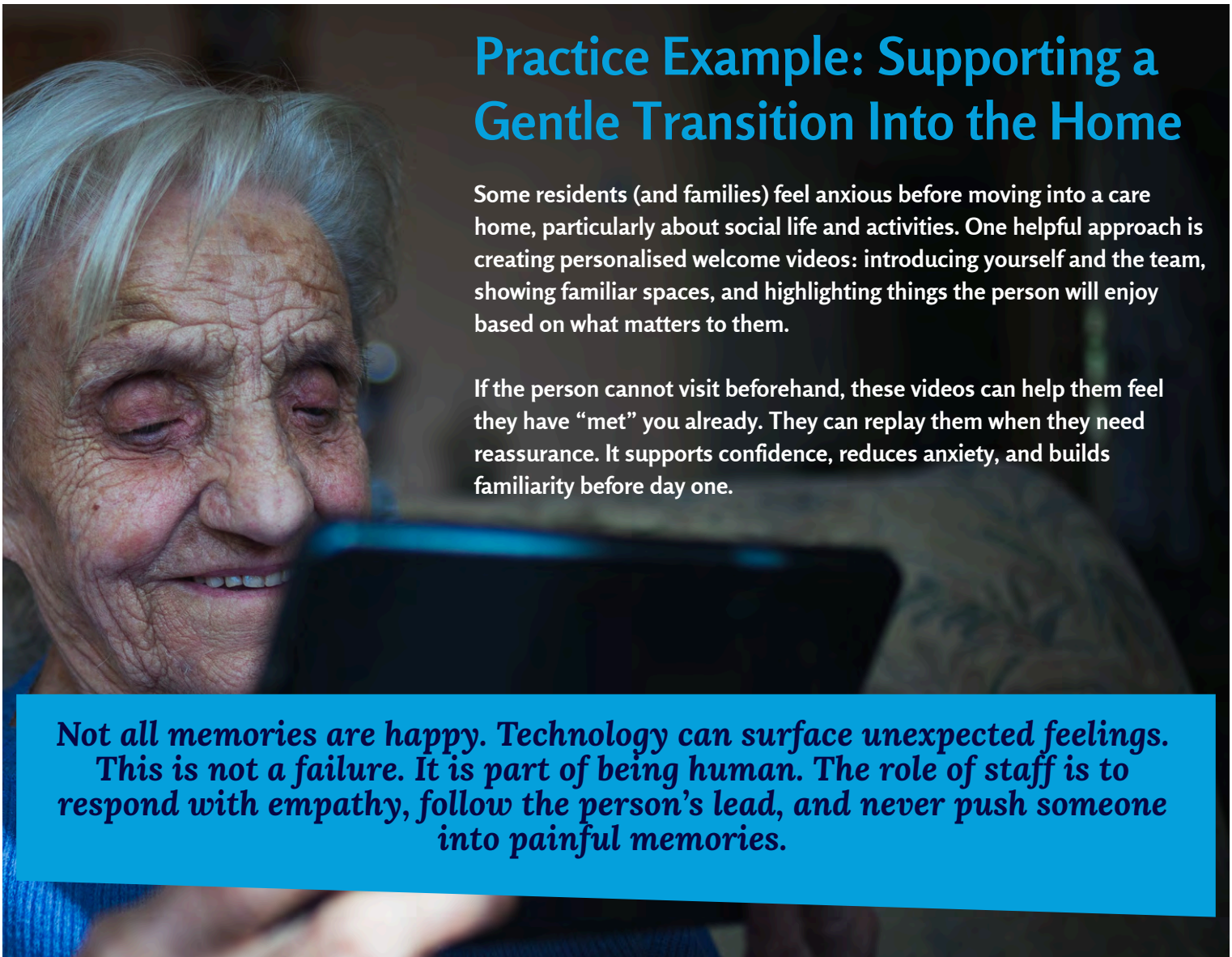
Reminiscence That Feels Like Conversation, Not a Test

Technology makes it easier to find:

- **songs from a particular era**
- **images of old towns and landmarks**
- **clips from historical events**
- **fashion, food, adverts and culture from different decades**

The key is to invite reflection rather than test memory. Instead of "Do you remember this?" try:

- **"Does this feel familiar?"**
- **"What does this remind you of?"**



Practice Example: Supporting a Gentle Transition Into the Home

Some residents (and families) feel anxious before moving into a care home, particularly about social life and activities. One helpful approach is creating personalised welcome videos: introducing yourself and the team, showing familiar spaces, and highlighting things the person will enjoy based on what matters to them.

If the person cannot visit beforehand, these videos can help them feel they have "met" you already. They can replay them when they need reassurance. It supports confidence, reduces anxiety, and builds familiarity before day one.

Not all memories are happy. Technology can surface unexpected feelings. This is not a failure. It is part of being human. The role of staff is to respond with empathy, follow the person's lead, and never push someone into painful memories.

Keep it simple
- Choose easy to use devices and apps with clear layouts and minimal steps

Use visual support
- Incorporate pictures, symbols and videos to support understanding and engagement

Offer choice
- Use technology to give individuals options, such as selecting music, activities or communication methods

Adapt to individual needs
- Adjust settings like font size, brightness, volume and contrast to suit preferences

Support communication
- Use apps or devices that enable non verbal communication such as picture boards or voice output tools

Go at the individual's pace
- Allow time for people to explore and respond without pressure

Use familiar content
- Include photos, music or videos that are meaningful and recognisable

Encourage independence
- Support individuals to use technology themselves where possible to build confidence

Create accessible environments
- Ensure devices are easy to reach, positioned comfortably and safe to use

Using Technology to Support Inclusion and Accessibility

Inclusion is the foundation of person-centred care. Technology can help remove barriers when used thoughtfully.

It can support:
- visual accessibility (zoom, enlarged text, clearer screens)
- hearing differences (subtitles, adjustable volume, headphones)
- physical accessibility (touchscreens, simplified interactions)
- cognitive accessibility (short sessions, simple screens, predictable routines)
- emotional accessibility (calming playlists, relaxation audio, quiet 1:1 engagement)

The most inclusive environments use a balanced approach: digital and non-digital, group and 1:1, active and calm.

Often inclusion is not about big change. It is about small adjustments:
- a clearer screen
- a slower pace
- fewer choices
- a quieter setting

Inclusion remains human at its core: noticing who is left out and adapting with kindness.

Keeping It Human

Technology is not the goal. Connection, wellbeing, inclusion and identity are the goal. When digital tools are used with care and warmth, they become part of good activity provision rather than something separate. A song, a photo, a familiar street, a voice message, a shared laugh over a quiz, these are human moments. Technology simply helps make more of them possible.

And when you notice a small change, a smile, a story, a calmer mood, a spark of recognition, you are seeing the impact.

Start small. Start familiar. Start with the person. Then try, notice and adapt.

Ideas for Group and 1:1 Digital Activities

Digital activities are sometimes misunderstood as complicated or less meaningful than traditional activities. But when used well they are about connection, curiosity and shared experiences. They don't replace existing activities; they add another option.

Group Digital Activities

Virtual Travel and Armchair Adventures

Use simple videos or street-view tools to visit:

- seaside towns
- landmarks
- museums and galleries
- historic cities
- nature reserves

Encourage conversation:

- "Have you been here?"
- "What does this remind you of?"
- "What would you do if you were there today?"

NAPA Members can access resources and toolkits to support this in the Activity Shed

THE Activity SHED

Digital Quizzes and Visual Games

- picture quizzes
- film/TV trivia
- brand/logo recognition
- "guess the celebrity" (younger photos)

Music Sessions

- decade-themed sessions
- "name that tune"
- choosing songs in turn
- sing-alongs with lyrics on screen

Watch and Talk

Short clips that prompt discussion:

- old adverts
- news clips
- comedy sketches
- short documentaries
- nature clips

1:1 Digital Activities (Short, Personal, Flexible)

1:1 digital activities often work best in small moments:

- music and playlists tailored to the person
- looking at photos from family or online
- street view of hometowns, workplaces, holiday spots
- short video calls or voice messages
- calming content for anxiety or low mood

The aim is not long sessions. The aim is meaningful moments that fit into the day.

Suggested Apps, Websites and Digital Resources (Starter List)

This list focuses on familiar, widely used tools and simple resources that work well in care settings:

Everyday tools

- YouTube (music, old adverts, short clips, documentaries)
- Google Street View / Google Maps (virtual travel, hometown visits)
- Video calling platforms (used by families and services)

Reminiscence and conversation prompts

- Supermarket/food archives such as Sainsbury's Archive (packaging, adverts, food memories for conversation)

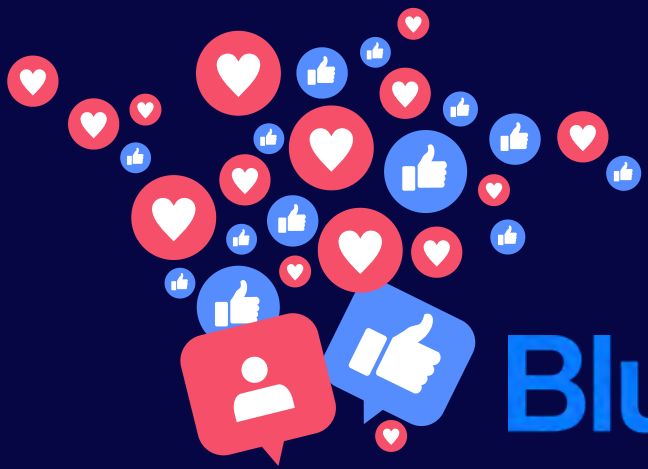
Activity and engagement resources

- NAPA Big Screen Games (group-friendly digital engagement)

Learning and inspiration

Social media for ideas and community learning:

- **NAPA social media channels**
- **NAPA Facebook group (peer support, shared ideas, troubleshooting)**



Services may wish to adapt this list based on their devices, Wi-Fi, policies and what individuals enjoy.

1:1 Digital Activities

One-to-one digital activities can be especially meaningful. They allow for personalisation and quieter engagement. Some individuals prefer calm spaces or individual attention. For them, 1:1 digital work can be powerful.

Personal Music Moments

A personalised playlist can be a gift. Songs from someone's youth, culture or life events can create emotional connection.

- *Listening together can lead to stories.*
- *A wedding song might prompt a memory.*
- *A favourite artist might spark conversation.*

Even quiet listening can be meaningful.

Digital Reminiscence

Looking up familiar places online can be deeply engaging.

- *A childhood street*
- *A hometown*
- *A workplace*
- *A holiday location*

Seeing these can bring comfort and recognition. You don't need to ask many questions. Let the person lead.

Photo Sharing

Looking at family photos together can support connection and identity. Some individuals enjoy simply viewing. Others enjoy telling stories. There is no pressure. The moment itself is enough.

Gentle Games and Apps

Some apps support calm engagement:

- *Jigsaw puzzles*
- *Simple painting apps*
- *Matching games*
- *Nature or animal videos*

These can support relaxation as well as stimulation.

Pacing Matters

Digital activities can be tiring if overdone.
Screens demand focus.

- Short sessions often work best.
- 10–30 minutes can be enough.

Watch for signs of fatigue:

- Looking away
- Restlessness
- Reduced responses

Stopping at the right time keeps the experience positive.

When It Doesn't Work

won't land well. Wi-Fi fails. Interest fades. That's normal. Flexibility is part of activity provision. Some days, digital activities
Try again another day or switch approach. No activity works every time.

The Role of Staff

Staff are not tech instructors. They are facilitators of experience.

Your role is to:

- Sit alongside
- Encourage conversation
- Notice reactions
- Follow the individual's lead

The human presence makes the activity meaningful.

Blending Digital and Traditional

Digital activities don't need to stand alone.

- A virtual garden tour can lead to planting seeds.
- A music session can lead to dancing or singing.
- A travel video can lead to themed food or decorations.

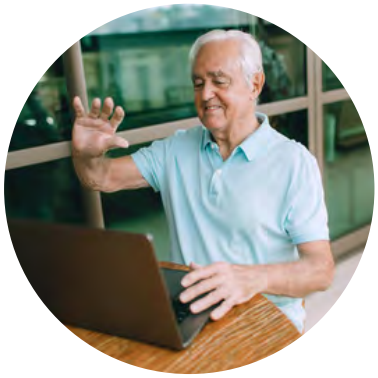
Blending approaches keeps things rich and varied.

Digital activities are not about screens. They are about:

- Sharing experiences
- Sparking memories
- Encouraging conversation
- Supporting identity
- Creating moments of joy

When used thoughtfully, they can open doors to connection and creativity.

The heart of the activity is still human.....



.....Technology simply offers another way to reach it.

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INTERACTIVE LIGHT THERAPY

Interactive light therapy that helps people reconnect with themselves, others, and their past.

Social-Ability's Happiness Programme combines evidence-based therapeutic projection activities with unlimited training and support, proven to improve wellbeing, reduce reliance on PRN medication, and encourage mobility for people living with dementia and other cognitive challenges.

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85%

Increased Confidence

89%

Increased positive sensory experiences

77%

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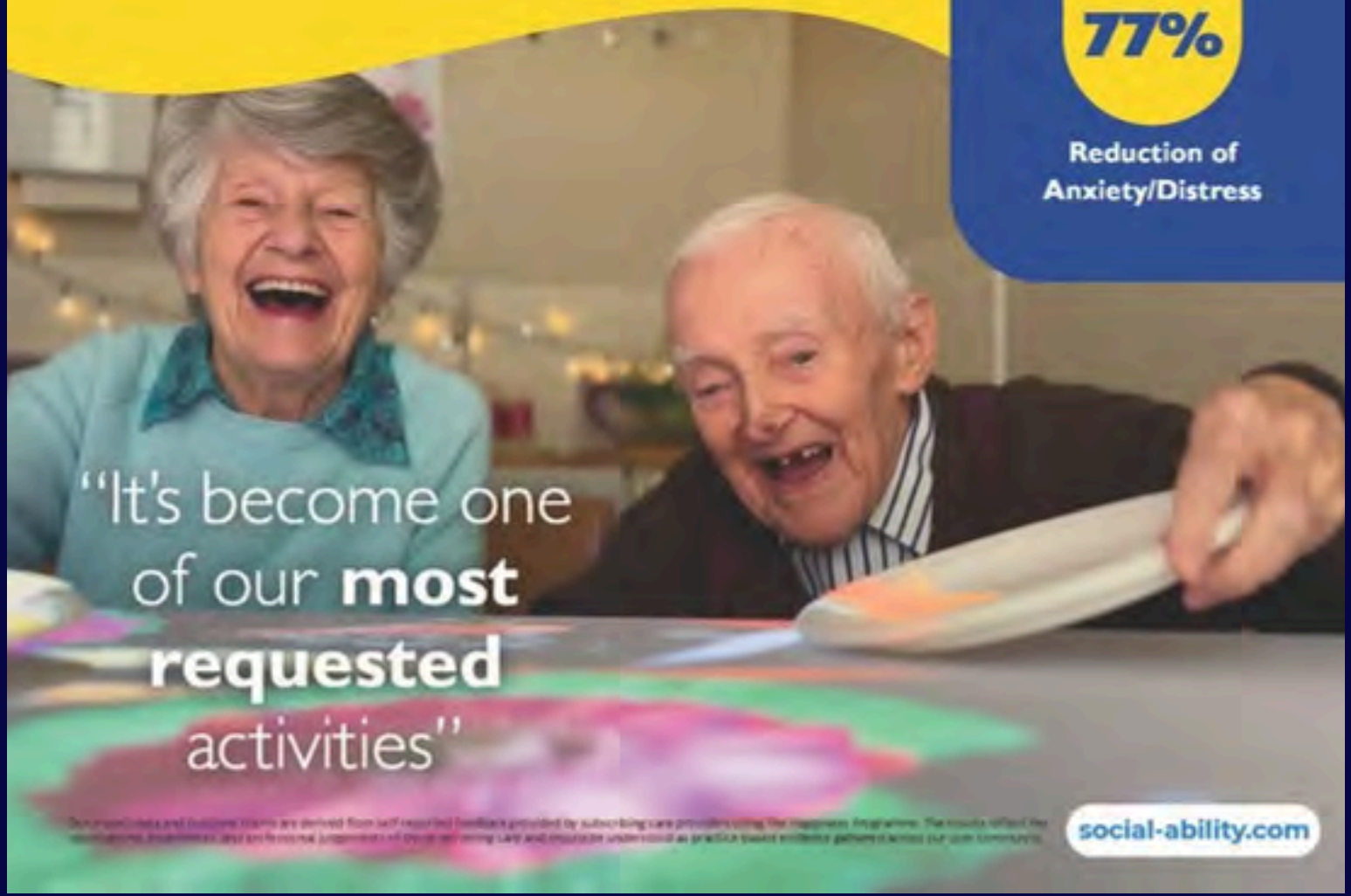


social-ability.com

30 Quick Tech Ideas for Activity & Care Teams

MUSIC & SOUND

Play a favourite song during personal care
- Helps relax and build connection.

Morning "music mood booster"
- One uplifting song to start the day.

Guess the singer
- Play a short clip and invite guesses.

Decade music session
- 50s, 60s, 70s etc.

Hymns or faith music for comfort
- Especially meaningful for some individuals.

REMINISCENCE & CONVERSATION

Look at old photos of your town
- Sparks memories.

Historic event photos
- "Do you remember this time?"

Vintage adverts
- Often create laughter.

Old TV theme tunes
- Many individuals recognise them.

Celebrity throwback photos
- Guess who it is.

CONNECTION

Video message from family
- Short and meaningful.

Photo slideshow from relatives
- With permission.

Record an individual message to family
- If they wish.

CALM & WELLBEING

Nature sounds during rest time
- Rain, ocean, birds.

Virtual fireplace video
- Creates a cosy atmosphere.

Gentle scenic videos
- Forest walks or countryside drives.

Relaxation music in the afternoon
- Good for sundowning periods.

Watch fish tanks or aquarium livestreams
- Surprisingly calming.

VIRTUAL OUTINGS

Visit the seaside via webcam
- Watch waves and people.

Virtual museum tours
- Short and gentle.

Street-view old neighbourhoods
- If known.

Explore famous landmarks
- London, Paris, etc.

Zoo or wildlife park livestreams
- Good for groups.

GAMES & FUN

Online bingo generator
- Simple and familiar.

Picture quizzes
- Logos, foods, places.

Digital jigsaw puzzles
- Good for 1:1.

Balloon pop or simple tapping games
- Light-hearted fun.

"Would you rather?"
- Questions from online prompts

CREATIVITY

Simple digital painting app
- No mess, easy try.

Colouring apps
- Relaxing and accessible

Case Study 1

"Dad the Music Man" – Reconnecting Identity Through Personalised Music

George was 90 and had lived in the care home for just over a year. Before moving in, he had been known in his family as "Dad the Music Man." His daughter explained that music had been part of everyday life in their home. George played records each evening, sang while cooking, and rarely let a family gathering pass without starting a sing-along.

In his younger years he had sung in a local choir for over 30 years. He wasn't a soloist, but he was reliable, enthusiastic and deeply proud of it. His daughter described it as "his social life and his joy rolled into one." Since moving into care, staff noticed George was polite and friendly but often quiet in groups. He attended activities but rarely took the lead. During group singing sessions, he would sit in but not sing. Sometimes he left early.

When gently asked, George once said,
"I used to be good at that. Not anymore."

His daughter later shared that he felt embarrassed because he could not always remember lyrics or follow along quickly. For someone who had once been confident in music, this felt like a loss.

The Challenge

The challenge was not a lack of interest in music; it was a loss of confidence and fear of "getting it wrong."

George's cognitive changes meant he sometimes struggled with recall. In group settings, where songs moved quickly, he couldn't keep up. Rather than risk embarrassment, he withdrew. Staff recognised that if this continued, George might slowly disconnect from something that had once been central to his identity.

The question became:

How do we reconnect George with music in a way that feels safe and affirming?

Digital Approach

An activity coordinator decided to step back from group music and focus on George as an individual first.

She spent time chatting with him and his daughter about:

- Favourite artists
- Songs linked to memories
- Choir pieces he used to sing
- Music from his teens and twenties linked to memories

Using a tablet and a music streaming service, she created a personalised playlist just for him. Instead of inviting him to a session, she simply said one afternoon, "I found some music you might like,would you sit with me and listen?"

There was no pressure to sing, no audience, no expectation. Just listening.

Person-Centred Adaptations

This was not just about pressing play. The approach was thoughtful and responsive.
1. Quiet Environment - Sessions took place in a calm space, not the busy lounge. This reduced distraction and performance pressure.

2. Sitting Alongside, Not Leading - Staff sat beside George, not opposite him like a facilitator. This felt like shared listening rather than an "activity."

3. No Pressure to Perform - There was no invitation to sing unless he chose to. The focus was enjoyment.

4. Watching Emotional Cues - Staff paid attention to his face and body language. A foot tap, a smile, a sigh,these were seen as engagement.

5. Flexible Timing - Sessions were short and happened when George seemed alert and settled.

6. Lyrics Available, But Optional - Lyrics could be shown on screen, but only if George wanted them.

What Happened

At first, George just listened.

Then he started tapping his fingers. Then humming quietly.

One day, halfway through a familiar song, he sang a full line.

The staff member did not react dramatically. She simply smiled and continued listening with him. This avoided making him self-conscious.

Over a few weeks, George became more relaxed. He began sharing small stories:
"We sang this at the town hall once."
"My wife liked this one."

Eventually, during a small group session, George surprised staff by joining in for part of a chorus. Not loudly, not perfectly, but willingly.

His daughter later became emotional hearing him sing during a visit. She said, *"That's my dad. That's the part of him I recognise."*

This is George

Outcome and Impact

- George's mood lifted noticeably on music days
- He began attending group music again in small ways
- His confidence improved
- Staff saw more of his personality
- His daughter felt reassured seeing his identity supported

Most importantly, George no longer avoided music. It became something he could enjoy again without fear.

Why This Worked

This approach worked because it was:

Person-led, not activity-led
Focused on identity, not ability
Gentle and respectful
Free from pressure
Built on emotional memory

It recognised that confidence matters as much as capability.

Guidance Tips for Practice

- Start with personal history, not a generic playlist
- Reduce pressure before building participation
- One-to-one can rebuild confidence for group settings
- Emotional responses are meaningful engagement
- Don't over-celebrate small steps, protect dignity
- Music can reconnect people with themselves, not just others

Reflective Questions for Staff

1. Are we noticing when withdrawal is about confidence rather than disinterest?
2. How often do we adapt activities for emotional safety, not just physical ability?
3. Do we allow individuals to enjoy activities without expectation to perform?
4. How can we use digital tools to support identity, not just stimulation?
5. Whose past passions might need a gentler re-introduction?

Music & MEMORIES

Case Study 2

"Still Grandad" – Maintaining Belonging Through Digital Family Connection

John was 91 and had been living in the care home for around 18 months. Before moving in, he had lived independently in the same town for over 50 years. He was a widower and spoke often about his late wife, but just as often about his grandchildren.

His daughter described him as a very involved grandparent. He attended school plays, remembered birthdays and used to phone each grandchild weekly "just for a chat." His role as "Grandad" was something he valued deeply.

After moving into care, visits became less frequent. His family loved him dearly but lived in different parts of the country and abroad. Travel was not always easy. Staff noticed John often asked gentle questions like:
"Are the children busy these days?"
"Have they got a lot on?"
"Do they still live near the park?"

He rarely said he missed them outright, but he kept their photos near his chair and sometimes looked at them quietly.

The Challenge

John was not socially withdrawn in the home. He chatted to staff and other individuals. But there was a subtle sadness at times, especially after family visits. Phone calls were attempted, but John had some hearing loss.

He found calls tiring and sometimes frustrating if he misheard. His daughter said he often downplayed his feelings so as not to "be a bother." Staff recognised that John's sense of belonging to his family was central to his identity. The challenge was how to maintain meaningful connection across distance, hearing changes and busy family lives.

The question became:

How do we help John still feel like an active part of his family, not just someone they visit occasionally?

Digital Approach

Rather than jumping straight to regular video calls, staff began by speaking with John's daughter about what felt realistic for the family. It became clear that long scheduled calls were difficult across time zones and work schedules. But short, flexible contact might be easier.

The plan focused on:

- Short video messages from family
- Occasional live video calls
- Sharing photos digitally
- Supporting two-way communication where possible

Staff explained to the family that contact did not need to be perfect or lengthy to be meaningful.

Person-Centred Adaptations

This approach was shaped around John's comfort, not just availability of technology.

1. Timing Matters
Calls and messages were shared when John was most alert, usually mid-morning. Late afternoons were avoided as he tired more easily.

2. Emotional Preparation
Staff gently let John know when a message was coming. This avoided surprise or confusion.

This is John

3. Hearing Support
Simple headphones improved clarity. Volume was checked together.

4. Staff as Quiet Supporters
A staff member stayed nearby but did not lead the conversation. John remained the focus.

5. Keeping It Natural
Family were encouraged to share everyday life, not "perform" for the call.
Examples included:

- Showing the garden
- A grandchild talking about school
- The family dog appearing on screen
- A short "thinking of you" message

6. Respecting John's Pace
If he seemed tired or emotional, sessions ended gently.

What Happened

The first video message was simple. His youngest granddaughter said hello and showed him a picture she had drawn.

John smiled and said quietly,
"She's getting big now."
He asked to see it again later that day.

Over time, these moments became part of his routine. Staff noticed:

- He spoke about his grandchildren more confidently
- He shared updates proudly with other individuals
- He seemed brighter on days he received messages

One day after a call, he said to a staff member,
"They've got their lives, but they still think of me. That's nice."

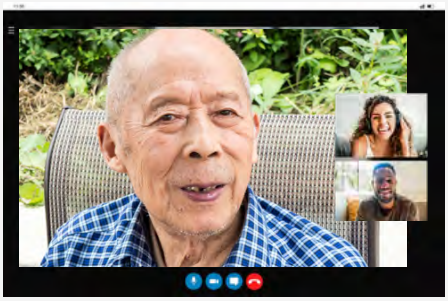
It was a small sentence, but it spoke volumes.

Outcome and Impact

- John's mood improved on connection days
- He showed increased conversation and social engagement
- His sense of belonging was reinforced
- His daughter felt reassured that connection was maintained
- Staff understood John more deeply as a family-centred person

Why This Worked

This worked because it focused on:
Belonging, not just contact
Realistic family involvement
Emotional comfort
Gentle facilitation
Respect for John's dignity and independence
It recognised that connection is about feeling remembered, not just seeing someone on a screen.



Guidance Tips for Practice

- Start with conversations with families about what is realistic
- Short, regular contact often works better than rare long calls
- Prepare individuals gently
- Support hearing and comfort needs
- Everyday moments are meaningful
- Avoid making calls feel like performances
- Allow space for emotion without trying to "fix" it

Reflective Questions for Staff

1. Who in your setting might be quietly missing family connection?
2. Are we assuming families are too busy, or inviting them to connect differently?
3. How can we make digital contact feel natural rather than formal?
4. Do we notice subtle signs of longing or pride in family roles?
5. How can we support individuals to still feel part of their family story?

The 5-Minute Digital Moments

These ideas fit into short windows of time.

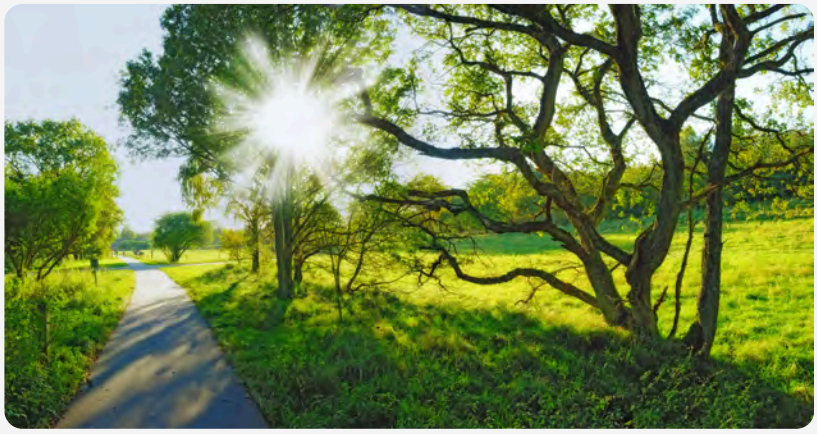
Music Moments

Play a familiar song during:

- *Morning routines*
- *Relaxation time*
- *One-to-one support*

Music often lifts mood quickly and needs little explanation.

Calm Nature Clips



Short videos of:

- Oceans
- Forests
- Birds or animals
-

Good for:

- Anxiety
- Restlessness
- Late afternoons

Photo Chats

Photo Chats
Look at:

- Old photos
- Local area images
- Historical pictures

Simple prompts:
"That looks familiar."
"Did you ever go somewhere like that?"

No pressure to remember.

Animal Videos

Many individuals enjoy:

- Pets
- Farm animals
- Wildlife clips

These often spark smiles and conversation.

Easy Group Ideas

When time is limited, keep group digital activities light and social.

Visual Quizzes

Use picture-based quizzes:

- Famous faces
- Old brands
- Landmarks

Images are easier than text.

Virtual Visits

Take a quick “trip” to:

- The seaside
- A city centre
- A museum
- A garden

Ask: “Would you visit here?”

“Name That Tune”

Play short music clips and invite guesses., No scoring needed, just fun.

Case Study 3

"The Songs Still There" – Reaching Emotional Memory Through Personalised Music

Eileen was 82 and living with advanced dementia. She had moved into the care home two years earlier after her husband died. Before that, she had lived independently and been described by her family as warm, sociable and "always humming something." Her daughter shared that music had been a big part of Eileen's life. She loved dancing in her younger years, went to social dances with her husband, and always had the radio on while doing housework.

Since moving into care, Eileen had become quieter. She rarely initiated conversation and sometimes appeared withdrawn in group settings. She often sat calmly but seemed distant, as if watching rather than participating. Staff noticed that although she was peaceful, she was not deeply engaged.

The Challenge

Eileen's dementia meant verbal communication was limited. She sometimes struggled to follow conversations and could become unsettled in busy environments. Group activities did not always suit her.

She attended but often did not actively join in. Staff felt they were "including" her physically but not always reaching her emotionally. Her daughter expressed a quiet sadness, saying,

"I just want to know there's still something reaching her."

The question became:

How do we connect with someone when words are no longer the main bridge?

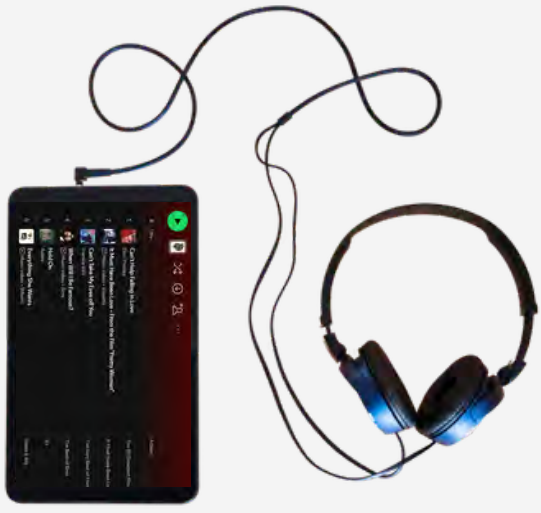
Digital Approach

A staff member spoke in depth with Eileen's daughter about her musical memories.

They learned:

- She loved 1950s and 60s dance hall music
- She adored Frank Sinatra and Vera Lynn
- Her wedding song had special meaning
- She used to sing while cooking

Using a tablet and music streaming service, staff created a personalised playlist based on this information. The aim was not stimulation, but connection.



Spotify

Person-Centred Adaptations

This approach was shaped very gently around Eileen's needs.

1. One-to-One First
Sessions began individually rather than in a group. This reduced pressure and distraction.

2. Calm Environment
Music was played in a quiet, familiar space with minimal noise.

3. Observing, Not Directing
Staff did not ask lots of questions. They simply noticed responses.

4. Watching Emotional Cues
A change in breathing, a softened expression or a small smile were seen as meaningful.

5. Flexible Timing
Music was offered when Eileen seemed settled, not tired or distressed.

6. No Testing Memory
Staff avoided phrases like "Do you remember this?"

Instead they used gentle comments like,

"This is a lovely one."

This is Eileen

What Happened

The first-time music played, Eileen showed little reaction. But halfway through a familiar song, her fingers began tapping slightly on the arm of the chair. On another day, during her wedding song, she quietly sang a few words.

Not clearly, but recognisably. A staff member sitting beside her said later, *"It was like she was somewhere else for a moment, but in a good way."*

Over time, these responses became more consistent. She sometimes smiled, sometimes hummed, sometimes relaxed visibly. Her daughter was invited to join a session.

When Eileen softly sang part of a chorus, her daughter became tearful and said, *"That's Mum. That's still her."*

Outcome and Impact

- Eileen showed more emotional engagement
- She appeared calmer during and after sessions
- Staff felt more connected to her as a person
- Her daughter felt reassured and comforted
- Music became a regular part of her care routine

Importantly, staff stopped measuring engagement by words or participation. They learned to recognise emotional presence.

Why This Worked

This worked because it focused on:

Emotional memory rather than factual memory

Identity rather than ability

Observation rather than performance

Comfort rather than stimulation

Music accessed a part of Eileen that conversation could no longer easily reach.

Guidance Tips for Practice

- Learn musical history from families
- Emotional responses are valid engagement
- Avoid testing memory
- Keep sessions gentle and unhurried
- One meaningful response is enough
- Music can support regulation as well as connection
- Consistency helps build comfort

Reflective Questions for Staff

1. Are we valuing emotional engagement as much as verbal engagement?
2. How often do we use family knowledge to personalise support?
3. Do we sometimes expect too much response?
4. How can music support individuals who seem withdrawn?
5. Are we noticing small signs of connection?

Case Study 4

"I Just Need a Bit of Quiet" – Supporting Emotional Wellbeing Through Digital Calm

Rose was 86 and had moved into the care home following a hospital stay. Before this, she had lived alone and valued her independence. Her niece described her as someone who liked "peace and her own space." Rose was gentle and polite but often appeared tense in busy environments. She attended group activities but sometimes left early or became visibly unsettled when noise levels rose. Staff noticed she often chose a chair slightly away from others and seemed most comfortable during quieter times of day. When asked what she liked to do, she once said softly, "I don't need much. I just like a bit of quiet."

The Challenge

Rose wasn't disengaged; she was overwhelmed. Group activities in the lounge could be noisy, with multiple conversations, background sounds and movement. For some individuals this felt lively; for Rose it felt stressful. She sometimes became anxious in the late afternoon and found it hard to settle. Staff initially tried encouraging more social involvement, thinking it might help, but this often increased her discomfort.

The team began to realise that stimulation and wellbeing are not the same thing for everyone.

The question became:

How do we support someone who needs calm, not activity, to feel included and well?

Digital Approach

A staff member who knew Rose well asked about her past routines. Her niece shared that Rose used to enjoy sitting in her garden listening to birds and watching the trees move. She rarely had the television on and preferred natural sounds.

Using a tablet and smart TV, staff introduced:

- Gentle nature videos
- Birdsong recordings
- Soft instrumental music
- Slow scenic footage (forests, beaches, rain)

These were offered as an option, not a scheduled activity.

Person-Centred Adaptations

This was not presented as "an activity." It was presented as comfort.

1. Choice and Invitation
Rose was always asked if she'd like it. There was no expectation.

2. Quiet Setting
Sessions took place in a calm space or her room, not the busy lounge.

3. Low Volume
Sound levels were kept soft and soothing.

4. Short Duration
Sometimes just 10–15 minutes.

5. Sitting With, Not Supervising
Staff sometimes sat quietly nearby rather than talking.

6. Watching Emotional Cues
If Rose seemed relaxed, it continued. If not, it stopped.

This is Rose

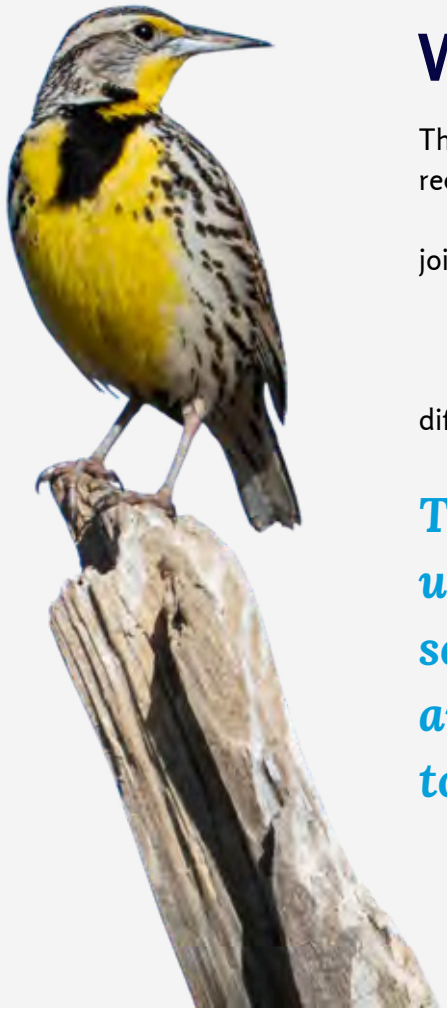
What Happened

The first time a woodland video with birdsong played, Rose simply watched.

After a few minutes she said, *"That's nice. It feels real."* Her breathing slowed and her shoulders visibly relaxed. Over time, this became part of her routine during moments of anxiety or restlessness.

She sometimes asked, *"Could we have the birds?"* Staff noticed that after these quiet sessions, Rose was more settled and more open to gentle conversation.

Her niece later said, *"That sounds like her. She always liked simple things."*



Outcome and Impact

- Rose showed reduced signs of anxiety
- She settled more easily in the afternoons
- She engaged in quiet conversations more comfortably
- Staff understood her needs more deeply
- She felt respected rather than "pushed" to socialise
- Most importantly, Rose did not feel overlooked.

Her need for calm was seen as valid, not as disengagement.

Why This Worked

This worked because staff recognised:

Inclusion is not always about joining in

Calm is a legitimate need

Emotional regulation matters

Wellbeing looks different for different people

Technology was used to recreate something familiar and comforting, not to entertain.

Guidance Tips for Practice

- Not all individuals want lively stimulation
- Learn what calm looked like in a person's earlier life
- Nature content is often soothing
- Quiet engagement is still meaningful engagement
- Respect sensory preferences
- Calm moments can prevent escalation of anxiety
- Don't measure success only by activity levels

Reflective Questions for Staff

1. Are we sometimes pushing stimulation when someone needs calm?
2. How do we recognise sensory overload?
3. Do we value quiet engagement as much as active participation?
4. What environments help individuals feel safe and settled?
5. How can technology support emotional regulation, not just activity?

NAPA Guidance

Top Tips for Safe and Confident Use of Technology

For Activity and Care Teams

Technology is now part of everyday life, including in care settings. It can support connection, creativity, reminiscence and wellbeing. But for many care and activity teams, using technology can feel unfamiliar or even daunting. This guidance is not about becoming technology experts. It is about using simple digital tools in ways that are safe, respectful and person-centred. At its heart, this is still care work.

Technology is just another tool to support it.

1. Start with the Person, Not the Device

The most important principle is simple:
Technology should follow the person, not the other way around.

Before using any digital tool, ask:

- What does this person enjoy?
- What are their interests?
- What matters to them?
- How do they prefer to engage?

A tablet or screen should never be the "activity." The activity is the connection, memory, creativity or enjoyment it supports.

Person first
Technology second

2. Keep It Simple

You do not need complex equipment or advanced knowledge.
Simple often works best:

- Playing music
- Looking at photos
- Short videos
- Video calls with family
- Gentle games or quizzes

Avoid overloading individuals with too many options or features. One meaningful experience is better than ten rushed ones.

Simple builds confidence
Simple reduces stress
Simple supports success

3. Build Your Own Confidence Gradually

Many staff worry about "getting it wrong." That's normal. You don't need to know everything. You only need to be willing to try.
Good ways to build confidence:

- Practice with colleagues first
- Explore devices in your own time
- Share tips within the team
- Start small

Individuals do not expect perfection. Warmth and patience matter far more.

Confidence grows through doing
It's okay to learn alongside individuals

4. Always Gain Consent

Consent still applies in digital spaces.
Always ask before:

- Taking photos
- Recording videos or voices
- Sharing images with families
- Joining video calls
- Accessing personal information

If someone lacks capacity, follow your organisation's consent and best-interest policies.

Respect dignity
Respect choice
Respect privacy

5. Protect Privacy and Data

Technology brings responsibility.
Good practice includes:

- Not sharing individual photos on personal devices
- Using secure systems where possible
- Following your organisation's data policies
- Avoiding social media sharing without clear consent
- Keeping personal details private

When in doubt, check policy or ask a manager.

Privacy is part of dignity
Digital safety is care safety

6. Be Present — Don't "Hand Over a Screen"

Technology should support human interaction, not replace it.
A meaningful digital session usually includes:

- Sitting alongside
- Talking together
- Watching reactions
- Sharing the moment

Avoid leaving individuals alone with screens for long periods unless it is their clear choice and safe to do so.

Connection matters more than content

7. Watch for Signs of Fatigue or Overload

Screens can be tiring.
Look out for:

- Restlessness
- Looking away
- Reduced responses
- Irritation
- Tiredness

Short sessions are often best.

Stop while it's still enjoyable
Quality over quantity

8. Respect That Technology Isn't for Everyone

Some individuals will love digital tools.
Some will tolerate them.
Some will not enjoy them at all.

All responses are valid.

Never push technology on someone who isn't comfortable. Offer gently and respect their answer.

Choice is central to person-centred care

9. Use Technology to Include, Not Replace

Digital tools can widen access:

- For bedbound individuals
- For those with sensory changes
- For people who prefer quieter engagement
- For maintaining family connections

But they should not replace real experiences where possible.

Technology is an addition, not a substitute

10. Work in Partnership with Families

Families can be great partners in digital engagement.
They can:

- Share photos
- Send messages
- Join calls
- Suggest meaningful content
- Help personalise playlists

Supporting family involvement often strengthens connection and wellbeing.

Families hold valuable knowledge

Case Study 5

"It's My Festival" – Supporting Cultural Identity Through Digital Connection

Mr Singh was 83 and had moved into the care home after a fall at home. He had lived in the UK for over 50 years but remained deeply connected to his Punjabi heritage, language and Sikh faith. His family described him as a proud man who valued tradition. He had always celebrated cultural and religious festivals with extended family, food and community gatherings. These events were a highlight of his year. Since moving into care, Mr Singh was polite and friendly but noticeably quieter during celebrations that did not reflect his own culture. He rarely complained, but staff sensed he sometimes felt like an observer rather than a participant. His daughter gently shared, "Dad doesn't always say it, but our festivals matter to him. That's when he feels most himself."

The Challenge

The home aimed to be inclusive, but most activities reflected the majority culture of individuals. Staff wanted to be respectful but were unsure how to support Mr Singh's cultural needs without making assumptions or token gestures.

Mr Singh also spoke Punjabi more comfortably than English when relaxed and sometimes struggled to express himself fully in English.

The question became:

How do we help someone feel culturally at home, not just physically cared for?

Digital Approach

A staff member began by having an open conversation with Mr Singh and his daughter about what celebrations meant to him.

They learned:

- Vaisakhi was especially important
- He enjoyed devotional music (kirtan)
- He liked watching festival processions
- He missed hearing Punjabi spoken regularly

Using a tablet and smart TV, staff explored:

- Live-streamed festival celebrations
- Recordings from Sikh temples
- Punjabi music and prayers
- Videos of community events

Person-Centred Adaptations

This was approached with sensitivity and curiosity.

1. Asking, Not Assuming
Staff checked what Mr Singh wanted rather than deciding for him.

2. Family Involvement
His daughter suggested trusted sources and shared traditions.

3. Creating the Right Atmosphere
During festival times, familiar foods and decorations were included alongside digital content.

4. Language Comfort
Punjabi-language content allowed Mr Singh to relax and engage more naturally.

5. Gentle Inclusion of Others
Other individuals were invited to watch and learn if interested, promoting cultural sharing rather than separation.

6. Respect for Spiritual Elements
Religious content was treated respectfully, not as entertainment.

CULTURAL
IDENTITY

This is Mr Singh

What Happened

When Mr Singh watched a Vaisakhi procession online, his face visibly lit up.

He quietly explained parts of the celebration to a staff member. On another occasion, while listening to kirtan, he closed his eyes and sang softly along.

A staff member later said, *"It was the most relaxed and expressive we'd seen him."* Other individuals became curious and asked questions. Mr Singh seemed proud to share.

His daughter said, *"He looked like himself again. Like he belonged."*

Outcome and Impact

- Mr Singh showed increased engagement
- He spoke more and shared stories
- His sense of identity was supported
- Other individuals gained cultural awareness
- Staff grew in confidence around inclusion

Most importantly, Mr Singh no longer felt like a guest in someone else's culture. He felt recognised as himself.

Why This Worked

This worked because it focused on:

Respect
Curiosity
Partnership with family
Cultural humility
Identity and belonging

Technology allowed access to familiar sights, sounds and language that the care home alone could not provide.

Guidance Tips for Practice

- Culture is part of identity, not an "extra"
- Ask individuals and families what matters
- Use digital tools to widen access
- Avoid stereotypes or assumptions
- Inclusion can be shared learning
- Honour spiritual and cultural content respectfully
- Small gestures can have deep meaning

Reflective Questions for Staff

1. How well do we know individuals' cultural identities?
2. Are we confident asking about cultural needs?
3. Do our activities reflect real diversity?
4. How can technology help bridge cultural gaps?
5. Are we creating belonging, not just care?

Case Study 6

"That's My Story" – Preserving Identity Through Digital Life Story Work

Arthur was 88 and had lived in the care home for just over a year. He had worked as a railway engineer for most of his adult life. His family described him as hardworking, practical and proud of "doing a proper day's work."

Arthur enjoyed conversation and often shared stories about the railway, but they were sometimes repeated or told slightly differently each time. Some staff initially saw this as repetition linked to memory changes, but one newer team member noticed something else, Arthur lit up when talking about his past. His daughter shared, "Dad's life was his work and his family. He doesn't talk about feelings much, but his stories are how he shares himself."

The Challenge

Arthur's memory was beginning to change. He could still talk about long-ago events but sometimes struggled with recent details. Staff realised that many of his stories were rich in detail and history, but there was no record of them. His daughter mentioned that the family had often said, *"We should write these down one day,"* but never had. There was a growing awareness that if nothing was captured, these memories might gradually fade.

But this wasn't just about memory. It was about identity.
Arthur's stories were how he expressed who he was.

The question became:

How do we honour and preserve someone's life story in a way that feels natural, respectful and meaningful?

Digital Approach

Rather than starting a formal "project," a staff member began simply by listening more intentionally. During relaxed chats, she asked gentle prompts like:

"What was your first day on the railway like?"
"Did you have a favourite route?"
"What was the hardest job you did?"

With Arthur's and his daughter's permission, short voice recordings were made using a tablet.

- Nothing structured.
- No interviews.
- Just natural conversation.

Later, these recordings were organised into a simple digital life story collection with photos his family provided.

Person-Centred Adaptations

This approach was shaped around Arthur's personality and comfort.

1. Informal, Not Clinical
Recordings happened during normal chats, not formal sessions.

2. Following His Lead
Arthur chose what to talk about. Staff never pushed topics.

3. Respecting Mood
If he wasn't in the mood, it wasn't raised.

4. Family Collaboration
His daughter shared old photos and filled in small details.

5. Keeping It Simple
No complicated technology, just voice recordings and images.

6. Preserving Dignity
Arthur was always aware and consenting. Nothing was recorded secretly or "for his own good."

This is Arthur

What Happened

At first, Arthur didn't think much of it. He said, *"Oh, it's just old tales."* But when staff played back one of his recordings, he listened carefully. He smiled and corrected a small detail, then added more to the story.

He began to take quiet pride in it. One day he said, *"That might be nice for the grandchildren to hear one day."*

His daughter later became emotional listening to the recordings. She said, *"I've never heard some of these stories before. This is Dad's voice, Dad's words."*

The recordings became something the family treasured.

Outcome and Impact

- Arthur felt valued and listened to
- His sense of identity was reinforced
- Family connection deepened
- Staff understood him more personally
- His life experience was honoured, not just managed
- Importantly, this was not about creating a perfect biography.

It was about recognising a life lived.

Why This Worked

This worked because it focused on:

Respect
Consent
Listening
Identity
Legacy

Technology was simply the tool. The real value was in the human connection.

Guidance Tips for Practice

- Life story work should feel natural, not forced
- Capture voice, it carries personality
- Short moments are enough
- Work with families, not separately from them
- Always seek consent and respect boundaries
- Focus on the person, not the "project"
- Remember: this is about dignity, not documentation

Reflective Questions for Staff

1. Whose stories might be at risk of being lost?
2. Are we truly listening when individuals talk about their past?
3. How can we involve families in life story work?
4. Are we capturing memories respectfully?
5. Do we see reminiscence as repetition, or as identity expression?

11. Know When to Stop

Not every session will go perfectly.

- Wi-Fi might fail.
- A individual might not engage.
- Something might not land well.

That's okay. Activity work has always required flexibility. Technology is no different.

Try again another day
Reflect and adapt

12. Focus on Meaning, Not Performance

Technology is not about impressing anyone. It is about supporting moments that matter.

- A smile
- A memory shared
- A relaxed moment
- A feeling of connection

These are the real outcomes.

SMALL MOMENTS COUNT

Final Reflection

Safe and confident use of technology is not about technical skill. It is about:

- *Respect*
- *Curiosity*
- *Patience*
- *Person-centred care*

When used thoughtfully, technology can support identity, connection and wellbeing in powerful but gentle ways.

And when it doesn't work, we simply adapt, just as we do in all good care.

Quick-Start Ideas for Busy Activity and Care Teams

Care and activity teams are busy. Time is precious. Plans change. Energy levels vary. Some days run smoothly and others don't. Technology in activity provision should never feel like "another task." It should feel like a helpful tool you can dip into when it fits.

The good news is that meaningful digital moments do not need lots of time, equipment or preparation. Often, the simplest ideas work best. This guide offers realistic, quick-start ideas you can use in everyday care.

Start Small It Still Counts

There is a myth that digital activities must be long or impressive. They don't. A five-minute moment can be just as meaningful as a one-hour session.

Examples:

- Playing a favourite song while supporting personal care
- Looking at a photo together
- Watching a short nature clip
- Listening to birdsong in a quiet moment

These are not "lesser" activities.
They are person-centred care in action.
Small moments matter.

One-to-One When Time is Tight

Even a few minutes can be meaningful.
During quieter times

- Sit alongside and watch something short
- Play a favourite hymn or song
- Show local news clips

For Individuals who cared for in bed

- Live webcams
- Travel videos
- Street scenes

This can widen their world.

Use What You Already Have
You do not need special equipment.
Often enough:

- A tablet
- A smartphone
- A TV screen

The value is not the device; it is the interaction.

Keep It Flexible

Some days it works.
Some days it doesn't.

That's normal

.
If an individual isn't interested:
Try later
Try something else
Or leave it entirely

Choice always comes first.

Focus on Connection

The goal is never the screen.
The goal is the moment.
A smile
A memory
A conversation
A calm feeling

That is success.

Build It Into Everyday Care

Technology does not have to be separate from care.
It can fit into:

- Morning routines
- Wind-down time
- One-to-one chats
- Family visits

Digital moments can support care, not compete with it.

Confidence Comes From Trying

You do not need to be "good with tech."

You only need:

- Curiosity
- Warmth
- Patience

Individuals do not expect perfection. They respond to the person with them.

A Gentle Reminder

Technology should:
Support wellbeing
Support identity
Support connection
It should never replace human interaction.

The most meaningful part of any activity is still you.
If a digital moment brings:

- Comfort
- Enjoyment
- Recognition
- Calm
- Connection

Then it has done its job. Even if it only lasted five minutes. Those moments add up.

Further Learning and Support

Technology in Activity Provision

Using technology in activity provision is a journey, not a one-off skill. Confidence grows over time, and no one is expected to know everything straight away. The most important thing is curiosity, willingness to try, and keeping the person at the centre of what you do.

If you would like to build your confidence, skills and ideas further, there are many sources of support available.

NAPA Learning & Support

NAPA Learning Space

NAPA Learning Space
Activity & Engagement Training

The NAPA Learning Space offers accessible, practical learning designed specifically for care and activity teams. It includes short courses, bite-sized learning and resources that fit into busy care roles. Learning is designed to be realistic, supportive and rooted in everyday care practice. The aim is not perfection; it is confidence and quality of life for the people you support.

NAPA Open Course Programme

NAPA's open courses provide structured learning opportunities for staff at all levels. These sessions support teams to build skills, share ideas and feel more confident in delivering meaningful activity. These courses also offer valuable peer learning, hearing what works in other settings.

NAPA Resources and Publications

NAPA regularly shares practical guidance, tools and inspiration to support activity and care teams.

NAPA Networks and Community

Being part of NAPA connects you to a wider community of people who care about meaningful engagement.

Through networks and events, you can:

- Share ideas
- Learn from others
- Gain inspiration
- Build confidence
- Feel supported in your role

No one needs to do this work alone.

Wider Learning and Inspiration

Learning can also come from everyday curiosity.

Staff often gain ideas from:

- Museums and heritage websites
- Music and arts organisations
- Local community groups
- Libraries and cultural organisations

The key is adapting ideas to suit the people you support.

A Gentle Reminder

You do not need to be a technology expert to use digital tools meaningfully.

You only need to:

- Be curious
- Be patient
- Be person-centred
- Be willing to try

Technology should never feel like pressure. It should feel like a helpful option in your toolkit.

Good activity provision has always been about:

- Knowing the person
- Supporting identity
- Creating connection
- Enabling moments of joy

Technology simply offers another way to do this.

And when you need ideas, support or reassurance, NAPA is there to walk alongside you.

NAPA Literature Review
Technology in Activity Provision

Introduction

The integration of technology into care home environments has accelerated in recent years, driven by increasing demand for innovative, person-centred approaches to activity provision. Within residential care settings, older adults often experience reduced mobility, social isolation, and cognitive decline, particularly those living with dementia. These challenges have prompted growing interest in the use of digital technologies to enhance engagement, wellbeing, and overall quality of life.

Technology in care homes is no longer limited to clinical or assistive functions; it now plays a central role in activity provision, enabling activity and care staff to deliver meaningful, stimulating and inclusive experiences. The field of gerontechnology highlights how digital tools can support ageing populations to maintain participation, autonomy and psychological wellbeing (Bouma et al., 2007; Peek et al., 2014).

Technology, Activity and Person-Centred Care

Activity provision is closely aligned with person-centred care, which emphasises identity, autonomy and meaningful occupation (Kitwood, 1997). The Activity Theory of Ageing further suggests that continued engagement in meaningful activities is associated with higher levels of wellbeing and life satisfaction (Havighurst, 1961).
Technology enhances these frameworks by enabling continued participation despite physical or cognitive limitations. In care settings, this is particularly significant, as traditional activities may not always meet the diverse and complex needs of individuals.

Technology-based activities improve wellbeing by giving individuals greater choice and control over how they engage, which helps to maintain autonomy and independence. This is particularly important in care settings, where opportunities for self-directed activity can sometimes be limited (Astell et al., 2010; Hung et al., 2021). They also provide meaningful stimulation through interactive and personalised content, helping to reduce boredom and apathy. In addition, technology facilitates social connection by enabling communication with others, which can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Finally, digital activities can support a person's identity by incorporating elements of their life history, such as familiar music, images, or experiences, helping to maintain a sense of self and emotional connection.
Technology-based activity improves wellbeing by:

- Enabling choice and control, supporting autonomy
- Providing meaningful stimulation, reducing boredom and apathy
- Facilitating social connection, reducing loneliness
- Supporting identity and life history

These mechanisms are consistently identified as key determinants of wellbeing in later life (Sixsmith and Gutman, 2013).

Types of Technology Used in Activity Provision

Touchscreen and Digital Devices

Tablets and touchscreen devices are widely used due to their accessibility and adaptability. These devices support a range of activities including games, music, reminiscence and communication.

Research demonstrates that touchscreen technologies can significantly enhance engagement and social interaction among people with dementia, particularly when content is personalised (Astell et al., 2010; Hung et al., 2021).

Interactive use promotes a sense of agency and immediate feedback, contributing to improved mood and participation.

Reminiscence and Personalised Media Technologies

Personalised digital content, such as photographs, music and videos, plays a significant role in improving wellbeing. Reminiscence-based interventions draw on long-term memory, which is often relatively preserved in dementia.

A systematic review by Woods et al. (2018) found that reminiscence interventions can improve mood, communication and quality of life in people with dementia. Digital delivery enhances accessibility and allows for more tailored and engaging experiences.

Social and Communication Technologies

Digital communication tools, including video calling platforms, support ongoing contact with family and friends. Maintaining social relationships is a key determinant of wellbeing in older age.

Evidence indicates that digital communication can reduce loneliness and support emotional wellbeing among older adults, including those in care settings (Czaja et al., 2018; Seifert et al., 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, such technologies became essential in maintaining social connectedness in care homes.

Assistive and Smart Technologies

Assistive technologies can support engagement by promoting independence and reducing barriers to participation. Technologies such as reminders, prompts and adaptive interfaces enable individuals with cognitive impairment to take part in activities more confidently. Greenhalgh et al. (2013) highlight that when appropriately implemented, these technologies can enhance autonomy and participation, contributing to improved wellbeing.

Immersive and Creative Technologies

Emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and digital creative tools provide immersive, multisensory experiences. These technologies are increasingly used in care homes to support engagement and emotional wellbeing.

A growing body of evidence suggests that VR can reduce apathy, anxiety and agitation while promoting enjoyment and relaxation in people with dementia (Appel et al., 2020; Moyle et al., 2018).

Impact on Engagement in Care Homes

Engagement is a central outcome of activity provision in care homes and is strongly associated with wellbeing. Technology-based activities support engagement by offering interactive, adaptable and personalised experiences.

Studies show that digital interventions can increase levels of participation and social interaction among care home residents, particularly those with dementia (Hung et al., 2021). Engagement is enhanced when activities are meaningful and tailored to individual preferences.
For people with dementia, technology can support engagement by drawing on preserved abilities such as emotional and sensory processing. This enables continued participation even in later stages of the condition.
Higher levels of engagement are associated with improved mood, reduced behavioural symptoms and enhanced quality of life (Beerens et al., 2016).

Impact on Wellbeing

The literature consistently demonstrates that technology-based activity can enhance multiple dimensions of wellbeing in older adults.

Emotional Wellbeing

Digital activities such as music, games and reminiscence have been shown to improve mood and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression (Moyle et al., 2018).

Social Wellbeing

Technology supports social connection, which is strongly linked to improved mental health and reduced loneliness. Maintaining relationships is particularly important in care home environments (Seifert et al., 2021).

Psychological Wellbeing and Identity

Activities that reflect personal identity and life history support self-esteem and a sense of purpose. This is especially important in dementia care, where maintaining identity is a key component of wellbeing (Kitwood, 1997).
Behavioural and Dementia-Related Outcomes
Technology-based engagement has been associated with reductions in behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia, including agitation, apathy and distress (Moyle et al., 2018; Woods et al., 2018).

Assistive and Smart Technologies

Technology plays a vital role in supporting individuals living with dementia by adapting to changing cognitive abilities.

Digital tools play an important role in supporting people living with dementia by helping to maintain key aspects of their identity and daily functioning. Through reminiscence activities, such as personalised photos, music, and videos, technology can reinforce identity and support memory recall, drawing on long-term memories that are often preserved (Peek et al., 2014).

They also enhance communication by using visual and sensory cues, making it easier for individuals to express themselves and understand others, even as verbal abilities decline. In addition, familiar and personalised digital content can provide comfort and reassurance, helping to reduce anxiety and distress (Appel et al., 2020; Moyle et al., 2018).

Overall, digital tools enable individuals to continue participating in meaningful activities, supporting a sense of purpose, engagement, and connection to their environment despite cognitive changes.

Digital tools:

- Reinforce identity and memory through reminiscence
- Support communication through visual and sensory cues
- Provide comfort and familiarity, reducing distress
- Enable continued participation and meaningful occupation

These functions contribute to improved quality of life and align with person-centred models of dementia care (Brooker, 2007).

Conclusion

The evidence demonstrates that technology-based activity provision in care homes offers substantial benefits for older adults, particularly those living with dementia. Through enhancing engagement, supporting social connection and enabling personalised experiences, technology contributes significantly to improved wellbeing and quality of life. Digital tools enable residents to remain active participants in their environment, supporting autonomy, identity and emotional expression. They also enhance the ability of care staff to deliver responsive, creative and inclusive activity provision.

Importantly, technology supports a shift towards care models that prioritise meaningful living, connection and engagement. When embedded within person-centred practice, technology becomes a powerful enabler of positive experiences and improved outcomes for care home residents.

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