

Initial evaluation of using educational board games with staff and service-users in a residential care home

by Evelyn Newman, Nutrition and Dietetic Advisor for Care Homes, NHS Highland & Colin Murdoch, manager, Seaforth House.

Board games are becoming increasingly popular within health and social care as a flexible, interactive and effective way of delivering staff training, related to food, fluid and nutritional care.

However, little work has been done to evaluate how suitable board games are for engaging with residents, service-users and patients. This initial evaluation suggests that board games may be a useful and enjoyable tool for helping staff and service-users to explore and discuss the important role of food, fluids and effective communication in social care settings.

In March 2017, Evelyn Newman was contacted by Colin Murdoch the manager at Seaforth House a 22-room care home in Maryburgh. Colin wanted to discuss how Evelyn could support his staff and service users. At the end of our meeting, Evelyn loaned Colin 2 educational board games to play and evaluate with staff and service users. The 2 games that Colin evaluated were:



1. **The Dysphagia Game** - designed to help frontline healthcare staff and service users identify and manage dysphagia more effectively. www.DysphagiaGame.com



2. **The Communication Game** - helps frontline health & social care staff improve knowledge and skills around communication, allowing them to better support people with diverse communication support needs. www.CommunicationGame.co.uk

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Colin used the games over a period of 6 weeks with both staff and service-users and here is his account of what happened and his answer to the question ***Have the games made a difference to understanding and therefore a change in practice?***

“There are signs that playing both games, has had a positive impact on the nutritional support provided to our residents. This is not to say that this area of care is lacking in the home, it is not. Our residents are provided with excellent quality nutrition, it is prepared to very high standard led by our dedicated nursing and care staff.

The beneficial impact of these games stems from the fact that they are effective at providing knowledge and understanding for those with little experience and tests the knowledge and understanding of those with greater experience.

What results therefore is a more informed discussion, which is fundamental to the provision of continuity in care and support. These discussions indicate a more detailed awareness of the complexities and challenges that can be faced when a resident requires support with restricted and/or regulated food and fluid intake. This includes safety in relation to physical mechanisms and the need for modified food and drink, and an analysis of ways that choice can be encouraged and promoted through strategies of communication.”

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Conclusions

“We have played these games with both staff and residents, which has been fun and an invaluable resource for learning. The design of the games promotes focus and interaction and the variety of learning methods such as scenarios, questions and tasks allow for a good range in learning. I would encourage others to take the opportunity to use these games and consider them to be a valuable in-house learning resource.

After playing the games 4 comments made by participants were representative of how the whole group felt:

‘Good for learning new skills’ – Resident

‘Great way to learn’ – Staff member

‘Informative’ – Staff member

‘Great fun’ - Resident

I now believe that these games are definitely a great way to learn. I could see the depth of engagement in the way that staff and residents concentrated on the game and on answering questions and engaging with scenarios.”



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