



## Meeting Centre top tips

### Top tips relating to activities

- You don't always have to be 'doing' something - Don't do an activity for the sake of it. There's nothing wrong with giving people the time and space to relax, have a chat or read a newspaper. Downtime is still good.
- Not everyone has to join in - People have different preferences or may just not feel like doing something on a particular day. Be prepared to support people who want to do something different to a group activity.
- Social aspects can be just as important as the activity itself - Being able to chat to others and form relationships is key. Make sure that any activity you do incorporates and encourages this aspect.
- Don't be afraid to try new things - There's a temptation to do similar things all the time, maybe focusing on mainstream or 'traditional' activities. Actually, giving people the opportunity to try something new and different can be amazing.
- Be flexible - It can be good to have things to do, but don't feel you have to stick to a rigid plan or timetable. Often, an activity can be the starting point for something spontaneous, and it's up to you to go with that and embrace it.
- Offer variety - Everyone has different abilities and likes different things, so try to do things that cater for all audiences. Have some options that are more active or physical, others that are more sedate, whatever people can and want to do.
- Make activities attractive to carers too - Some carers will see Meeting Centres as an opportunity to have a break. If you offer activities and opportunities that appeal to them they might be more likely to stay and join in, especially if they can see that it will benefit them.

### Top tips relating to maintaining skills/adjusting to change

- It's not about doing for, it's about doing with - Meeting Centres should be about enabling, facilitating and encouraging people to do things for themselves, rather than jumping in and doing everything for them.
- Find out what people can still do, rather than what they're no longer able to - Enabling people to maintain their skills and do things for themselves can help them feel valued, valuable and accomplished. If we always focus on people's losses, we diminish them as individuals.
- Don't neglect who someone 'is' by focusing on who they 'were' - We often think about someone's life story, but it's important not to forget their current position. What someone enjoyed doing 30 years ago might not necessarily reflect what they want to do now.
- Limit the impact of Covid restrictions - Everything had to change during Covid, but don't let those changes become permanent without a good reason. Can members get back to helping

prepare food and drinks? Is there space for carers to start staying and joining in again? Can you find safe ways for external people to run activities or share information?

### **Top tip relating to volunteers**

- Everyone has different skills - Get to know your volunteers, as they may have skills or preferences you can draw on. They may want to do more 1-1 support, get involved with data collection or lead a session. If you don't ask, you won't know.

### **Top tips relating to communication**

- Don't base everything on what people say - Not everyone is able to verbalise their thoughts, so it's important to pick up on body language and other forms of communication.
- Engage all the senses - Don't do things that just focus on talking/listening or looking at things. Incorporate tactile elements into activities and see if you can also engage other senses such as smell and taste.

If you want to find out more about what 'makes' a Meeting Centre, have a look in the Essential Features booklet which you can [find here](#)