

Library scheme for older people living with dementia

Older people's charity MHA has teamed up with specialist book publisher Pictures to Share to develop an innovative library service for older people living with dementia.

The scheme, which has received funding from the Elise Pilkington Charitable Trust, will initially place book trolleys into five MHA Care Homes. They will enable people with dementia to read specially designed books, and to experience the process of choosing them regardless of mobility limitations.

Book titles already supplied by Pictures to Share include 'A Sporting Life in pictures', 'Women's Work in pictures' and 'Childhood in pictures'. They provide "a well researched, readily available and enjoyable activity for those with dementia and their carers to share", says Helen Bate, who founded Pictures to Share when her own mother had dementia and she became aware of the lack of suitable resources.

MHA staff have received training in the best use of book resources for people living with dementia, and the use of the libraries is being monitored to find out whether they offer benefits to residents, staff or visitors.

It is estimated that over 680,000 people in the UK currently live with a form of dementia. "Relatives and staff need to learn the most helpful ways of communicating with older people living with dementia," says MHA's Director of Chaplaincy and Spirituality, the Revd Keith Albans.

"MHA is delighted to be working with Pictures to Share in providing a valuable service to MHA residents across the UK. The books being introduced at the heart of this library initiative are ideally suited to triggering memories and providing points of conversation."

MHA has developed a reputation of expertise in the field of dementia care since opening its first specialist dementia Care Homes in the late 1980s. It is hoped that the library scheme will be extended over a three year period to include a total of 14 MHA Care Homes.