



## Communication in health and social care

### *Taking care*

#### **Ann Brechin**

On this audio, you'll hear three acted scenes, that are set in a care home for older people in Scotland. In the first scene, you're about to hear Louise, accompanied by her niece Rose. Louise is being admitted to the Acres Home.

#### **James (Played by Martin Ledwith)**

Hello, really good to see you both again. Welcome to the Acres. Did you have a good journey?

#### **Rose (Played by Glenna Morrison)**

Not bad, it's still a bit foggy out there, and I'm not keen on driving in the fog.

#### **James**

Oh here, let me take your case. Are there any more things to bring in, have you more stuff in the car that we can help you with?

#### **Louise (Played by Iris Russell)**

Rose is going to bring some more of my things at the weekend, aren't you?

#### **Rose**

Mmm.

#### **James**

Okay, let's go and we'll sort out some of the details. Come into my office, I'll take this case to your room. I'll order us a drink. Okay, first of all, how do you want to be addressed? What shall I call you?

#### **Louise**

Well, I'm Louise, and I'm happy to be called by my first name, but I hate it when it's shortened, and people do that you know, and I hate it.

#### **James**

That's fine, I'll try to make sure the staff understand, and you?

#### **Rose**

I suppose Rose for me, but I'm not sure. Depends who it is, I suppose. I wouldn't want the doctors to call me that, it's a bit too... informal. People I know, I'm happy for those people to call me by my first name but, not strangers.

#### **James**

Okay, that's fine. I am James Brown, and I am happy for everyone to call me James. Now what would you like to drink Louise?

#### **Louise**

Oh, a cup of tea would be lovely. Just half a spoon of sugar and milk.

#### **James**

Rose?

#### **Rose**

Yes, tea for me as well, but not too strong. Trouble is Auntie likes it strong, and I like it weak.

**James**

That sounds like two pots of tea then. I'm with you Louise, I like mine strong. Okay, first of all I want to tell you a few things about the home, then I'll ask you some questions that we ask everybody on admission. Okay, as you know from when you came last time, the home is very large, but it's divided into small units. This means that you will share the home with eleven other people. You'll probably get to know each other quite well, but the facilities in the rest of the home are available to you, and you can go anywhere you like, except into other people's rooms, of course!

**Louise**

But I do get my own room, and I don't have to join in with the others if I don't want to, do I?

**James**

We want you to treat this like your own home, we want you to be happy here. We will encourage you to join in the life of the home though. The atmosphere in the home's very happy, and residents really enjoy the activities that we lay on for them, and they enjoy the company too.

**Rose**

It's quite a big change, from being alone and doing whatever you like, to being with eleven other people. How many people are there in the home altogether? You told us last time but, we couldn't remember.

**James**

Oh the home has sixty five places all together, that's six units. I'll take you round, you can see another one to the one you're going into, but they're all very similar, okay? Now one of the things I wanted to talk about, is what we call the trial period. We'd want you to be sure that this is where you wanted to live, so we suggest that you don't make a final decision about staying in the home until you've been here for a month. It can take that time for people to settle in. As you said Rose, it is a big change.

**Rose**

That sounds like a good idea. What do you think Auntie?

**Louise**

I don't know. I mean I've already put the house on the market, I've got to pay for this. What if the other residents don't like me?

**James**

Well, it is really your decision. We don't expect everyone to like everyone else, but it would be awful if you weren't happy here wouldn't it?

**Louise**

Well I suppose so. But I'm not sure where I would go if I wasn't.

**Rose**

I think James is right Auntie, you need to be happy, that's the most important thing.

**James**

Well let's not dwell on that. Anyway it's meant to make things better for you, not more stressful.

**Louise**

I'm not sure I can be happy anywhere that isn't my home.

**James**

Well that's the case for many people here, no one wants to leave their own home but, when you can't manage alone any more, this can be a good alternative. Lots of our residents have told us they've been happier here than they were at home, and for one thing they feel safer, and we encourage you to bring your own things to make your room more homely. Some of

the residents here have even had their room decorated to their own tastes, the way they want it. You'll see when we go round. Now Louise, I need to ask you a few questions okay, then you can ask me anything you want to know. (Knock at the door) Oh that'll be the tea, come in. Here we are then. Louise, want a cuppa?

**Louise**

Oh yes please, half a cup though, otherwise you know.

**James**

Hmm, there you are. There's yours Rose, that looks very weak to me.

**Rose**

That's wonderful, I'm dying for a drink. It's very warm in here you know, James.

**James**

Try working here Rose. Okay, I want to ask you a few basic questions. We've got all your details, name address date of birth, et cetera. I want to know more about what sort of help, er... assistance you need from us. For instance, are you able to wash and dress yourself?

**Louise**

Yes thank you. It's just help with getting into the bath, and sometimes my shoes, I can't always seem to bend down that far.

**Rose**

But Auntie, you'd need help with washing and dressing, don't you?

**James**

Is that right Louise?

**Louise**

Sometimes, but mostly I'm okay.

**James**

Okay, we can sort this out, we'll look at these things together. What about walking? I see you use a stick.

**Louise**

Well I'm not as fast as I was, of course! I mean at my age, what do you expect? And I don't do the stairs any more. That was one of the main reasons I thought about giving up my home, I could only use half the house.

**Rose**

Auntie had a hip replacement as you know, but the arthritis still plays up, doesn't it?

**Louise**

Oh, I suppose I've got used to it, you have to don't you? I'll just have to put up with it, what else can I do? I have good and bad days.

**Rose**

Mostly bad, I think.

**James**

What about eating and drinking? And the toilet?

**Louise**

Well I don't have the appetite I once had, oh no! I used to love my food. Now everything seems to taste the same. I suppose that's age, is it? Course, I'm not walking so much, and sitting most of the day so, I don't need much food.

**James**

And do you drink plenty? You said you only wanted half a cup of tea.

**Louise**

Well I have to be careful. If I drink a lot I have to go to the lavatory and, I can't walk as fast and... well, you know.

**James**

So how much would you drink in a day?

**Louise**

Four or five cups, I suppose.

**James**

And the toilet?

**Louise**

What about it?

**James**

Well do you always manage to get there?

**Louise**

Yes.

**Rose**

There are accidents sometimes, aren't there?

**James**

Please don't be embarrassed. This is something we can help you with. I think from what you've told me, that you need to drink more, and we'll get you to the toilet on time don't worry. And as far as food is concerned, you might find that being in company makes food more interesting, and we've a good cook here, everyone loves her food.

**Rose**

That sounds wonderful, doesn't it Auntie?

**Louise**

Well like I said, it all tastes the same, and I do manage to get to the toilet.

**James**

Okay, what do you want to ask me?

**Rose**

You told us about the fees, but are there any extras?

**James**

Only like, things from the shop, and the hair dresser, she comes twice a week. Then there are the occasional outings we arrange.

**Rose**

Sounds very exciting. I think I'll come in too!

**James**

Why don't we go round the home, eh? The guided tour. You can ask me questions on the way, it's this way. Let me help you up Louise. That's a difficult chair to get out of isn't it?

**Louise**

Oh yes.

**James**

Just to the right.

**Ann Brechin**

In the next scene, you'll hear a brief extract of a conversation between two care staff members, Doug and Pippa, of the Acres Home. You will notice how informal their conversation is, and the part that can be played by humour in this type of demanding work.

**Doug (Played by Anthony Ofoegbu)**

I see you've chipped your nail varnish again.

**Pippa (Played by Mary Ann O'Donoghue)**

Yeah I know, and do you know how much that cost me? A fiver! I must be mad!

**Doug**

And with such, such a dull pink like that you want to get a stronger pink, love!

**Pippa**

There's nothing wrong with that pink. that's lovely.

**Doug**

Oh well, I suppose we all have our...

**Pippa**

That's the summer pink, that is.

**Doug**

Is it?

**Pippa**

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Doug**

Well, good luck to the summer. Hey did you see that Mary this morning? She was really high! She played all the night staff up, they said.

**Pippa**

Bet it kept them awake.

**Doug**

Yeah. I see you have Ricky today, you must have done something wrong.

**Pippa**

You must have done something right - you've got my Maisie.

**Doug**

Yeah, she was blowing me kisses all morning. It's one of her good days ain't it?

**Pippa**

I like her whatever sort of day she's having, she's my friend. Bless.

**Doug**

I think my favourite has to be Ted. He's so funny. You know the other day he just poured salt onto Bob's plate, and Bob just carried on eating! It was ages before he noticed, and then matron came in and went ballistic. She said I should have keeping an eye on him. Man I can't do anything right when she's on shift, and she always seems to catch me. She must have radar or something. You'd have to stay with Ted all the bloody time to stop him doing those stupid things.

**Pippa**

And did you tell her that, did you tell her where to get off?

**Doug**

Oh yeah, that's why I still have my job, you daft peanut!

**Pippa**

Did you see the new woman downstairs being shown around? Poor thing, she looked terrified, especially when Bessie screamed, you know how she does, even when no one is touching her?

**Doug**

Enough to put anyone off ain't it? I was on night duty when she did that to me. I was doing a round, creeping round with my torch, and when I got to her bed she opened her eyes, and let out this great big scream, just like in a horror film!

**Pippa**

They say she was really wealthy once, and had this really important job. I sometimes wonder what I'd be like. Do you?

**Doug**

You must be joking! I'd rather be dead than end up in a place like this. But, tell me, Pippa, if you could be like anyone here who would you choose?

**Pippa**

Matron!

**Doug**

Yeah right! No, but seriously, seriously.

**Pippa**

Ah, I suppose Morag, she's so sweet, and everyone loves her. I don't want to be unpopular. What about you?

**Doug**

Oh well if I had to be someone here then, maybe I'd be like Ted. Yes, I want respect man. Look I'm going for a smoke before I have to go back, the Führer's in a bad mood today, so I'd better be careful. She set her stopwatch as I start me break, you know.

**Pippa**

Yeah, she'll be standing at the door praying you'll be half a second late.

**Doug**

Yeah yeah, you'll want to believe that!

**Ann Brechin**

In the final scene, Louise, the new resident, and Heather a more long-standing resident of the Acres, reminisce about their lives. Notice how they share their stories.

**Heather (Played by Aileen O'Gorman)**

Did you enjoy your dinner?

**Louise**

Well, I don't eat much and, I wasn't hungry.

**Heather**

Perhaps when you feel more settled. I'm Heather by the way, and your name is Louise? James told us you were coming.

**Louise**

Oh, did he?

**Heather**

How have you come to be in here then, where've you come from?

**Louise**

I live in Oatsville, not far really and, my niece lives in the next town. I just couldn't manage any more. I'm ninety-one you know.

**Heather**

Really? Have you lived in Oatsville long?

**Louise**

I moved there when I got a job at Jackson's, that was a long time ago. I lived in digs then of course. Then I met my friend Julie, and we saved up for a deposit and eventually bought a house together. Just a wee house mind but, it was ours so, it was exciting.

**Heather**

Oh sounds lovely.

**Louise**

Yes, yes it was nice. We made it really cosy, spent all our spare money on bits of furniture and things. Julie, she liked antiques, and so we used to go round the second-hand shops and search for bargains, that was fun. Then, the war came, and that changed things a bit. We both had to work in the munitions factory for the war effort, you know. Oh, we had some hard times then with rationing and all that. Julie's brother was killed, and then her mum died. I think it was shock you know?

**Heather**

Oh dear.

**Louise**

Thing is, despite all of this, I quite enjoyed the war. It was exciting. Afterwards, it all went back to normal. Well, eventually. And then in the fifties my mum died. She had cancer, but in those days you didn't live with cancer, it was a death sentence. She died in pain as well. I could hardly bear to see her. She went into hospital and one day they just rang to say she'd passed on. Dad went to pieces, he'd no idea how to manage without her, and we were persuaded him to come and live with us, and he agreed. He seemed to be getting over it. Although, he was never the same and, then he just died. He had really bad flu, got pneumonia. By the time we realised he was seriously ill and got him into hospital, it was too late.

**Heather**

The old man's friend, that's what they call it, eh? Perhaps it was for the best eh? He went to join your mum.

**Louise**

Well, that's what he thought anyway. I retired at seventy-three I think it was, yes, that's right. Julie had retired the year before, and we'd planned to travel, and that's what we did. Oh we had some lovely trips! Saw the Eiffel Tower, and the Coliseum, all those things we'd wanted to see and I'd only seen on the telly. Then, Julie got ill. We'd had twenty years together after we retired and we'd had a good time, but it broke my heart when she died. I thought I couldn't stand it. My niece came to the rescue, but she had her own family to think of. I got over it and oh, well you never get over it, but I carried on. Then I had this bad fall and, I was on the floor all night. Good job that Rose had a key.

**Heather**

Rose?

**Louise**

Oh, oh my niece, the one I told you about, she came in with me today, did you see her?

**Heather**

Oh yes, I think so.

**Louise**

My hip was broken. I went into hospital and had a replacement, it's like going in to have something changed in your car. Oh it's amazing what they can do now isn't it?

**Heather**

Aye!

**Louise**

Well, that was fine, and it helped me get around a bit better. You know, I've had this arthritis for a year, and so it was better, but the only thing was that I was frightened in case I fell. So, I stopped sleeping upstairs. Rose and her son, they helped me bring the bed downstairs, and gradually my world shrank into one room. I could go for days without seeing anyone. That's alright, I don't mind being alone, in fact I quite like it. But things weren't going to get better. Then I had this really bad cold, and Rose had to come and look after me, and she's not young and, well, she persuaded me to think about coming into a place like this. So, here I am.

**Heather**

Oh, I feel as if I've done nothing with my life. You've done so much. I feel as if I've wasted mine. I've just been a wife and mother. I've never been further than Glasgow do you know that? I've never been to England! Ha!

**Louise**

Have you got children?

**Heather**

Oh yes, and grand children. Someone comes every weekend, generally. Oh dear, your life sounds so exciting! I've never even been out to work, except when I left school, and then I worked in the shoe factory. That's where I met my husband. We were married when I was eighteen. I had a baby when I was nineteen!

**Louise**

Oh! How many children did you have?

**Heather**

I had four children but, one died. He had a heart attack and, just dropped dead. He had children and a wife, I don't know how she coped.

**Louise**

What about you? That must have been hard.

**Heather**

Well, you have to get on don't you? Of course I cried myself to sleep every night. Still miss him and think of him.

**Louise**

So Heather, you must have brought up your children during the war. What was that like?

**Heather**

Well it was hard. My husband went to fight. He was away for two years and I never saw him. My fourth child Joe was born while he was away and, he was nineteen months old before he saw him. I had to show him photos of his dad you know. Anyway, we managed. We became very close, and in our street, we women helped each other, you know? Oh, had some really lovely friends. They're all dead now though. It's just me left.

**Louise**

Yes, we're the ones who've survived. But it sounds a lot to me, to bring up children during the war, and on your own a lot of the time.

**Heather**



Yeah but, oh I wish I'd done more. I wanted to be a singer you know? I've got a good voice. When I was a little girl I sang solos at school, my mum was proud of me and I thought I could be a singer. But my dad told me not to be so daft, and I had to forget about it.

**Louise**

Perhaps I'll hear you sing here?

**Heather**

Just hymns on a Sunday! I'm a bit croaky.

**Pippa**

Come on Heather dear, time for your snooze. Feel like one myself today!

**Heather**

It's er, it's nice to talk to you, and I hope you'll like it here. I have a little rest in the afternoon. I'll see you later.

**Louise**

Right.