Introduction

The Bloom Awards are presented by Lemos&Crane for work in sheltered housing schemes, care homes, extra care settings, retirement villages, floating support, or other services provided in the community that generates positive outcomes for older people in relation to:

- **Relationships:** enhancing relationships with family, friendship, love, community links and volunteering, conversation, or using technology to develop and sustain relationships
- **Identity and interests:** work to develop, enhance or sustain fun and hobbies, nature and gardening, pets and animals, faith and spirituality, sport, creativity, learning, memories
- **Independence:** work to identify and meet people’s aspirations in relation to money, employment, enterprise, transport, assistive technology, beauty, fitness, shopping

We received over 150 entries for this year’s awards - many thanks to everyone who entered and who shared examples of their inspiring work. We are also grateful to more than 200 voters who participated in the final selection process and to our panel of judges: Andrew Barnett, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; David Cutler, The Baring Foundation; Tim Joss, The Rayne Foundation; Katherine Payne, The Mercers’ Company; and Louise Telford, Northern Rock Foundation.

In this report we highlight key themes and trends from all entries before presenting the winner of the awards, the finalists and all other shortlisted entries.

5 big ideas

1. **Give residents roles and responsibilities:** Several entries demonstrated the value of giving people a role that made them feel useful and important – being given responsibility for a task is a great way to boost self-esteem and a sense of independence, whether you’re 8 or 80. Here are some examples and suggestions of how this can be achieved:
For care homes - residents make their own beds, take turns to show prospective residents and relatives around the home, answer the phone at weekends, take charge of the laundry and ironing, manage dining room and set tables.

For all services including sheltered housing - carry out surveys on social activities and report back, organise fundraising events (jumble sales, bazaars, etc), help out with day-to-day garden up-keep (fill up bird feeders, paint benches, mow lawns etc), take over some or all of what contractors do to maintain garden areas.

2. **Find your heroes, achievers and wish-makers:** Every service has someone who has achieved something special or inspiring in their life, or has a resident with a burning ambition – finding out about, celebrating and fulfilling aspirations and achievements is rewarding not just to the individual but to other residents and to the wider community. Here are a few remarkable stories from this year’s awards:

- Mr O, 90, a resident of Connect Housing Association, is a life-long musician and composer whose dream is to hear one of his pieces being played by a brass band. He composed a tribute piece for his scheme, the Hawthorn Mill March, which is now being transcribed to a score with a performance imminent.
- A Polish resident at Rooftop Housing Association joined their computer club and found comrades from Poland who told him that he has been listed as one of the last surviving companions of the internationally renowned ‘bear Wojtek’. He’s soon to be awarded a Siberian Deportees Cross in Broadway, England.
- Finally, is Victoria Southan, 111, web-devotee and a regular at the Alrewych Court Day Centre, the oldest person on Facebook?

3. **Do things together, have a mission, create a common purpose:** This can range from simple day-to-day things like preparing and having a meal together (the pleasures of which have been praised since the time of Plato but are often neglected in modern life) to more ambitious projects involving collective effort and planning over a period of time. Here are some ideas and suggestions for generating *esprit de corps* at your service:

- Make a communal work of art or item a craft - a doll’s house, a wall hanging, a mural from waste bits, collect photos of everyone when they were young and make it into one large item where people have to guess who’s who.
- Adopt a charity and set targets for fundraising – employ the tactics of ‘guerilla marketing’ and think of headline-grabbing stunts and events such as a mobility scooter gymkhana to attract press and punters.
• Start an enterprise - make or grow things and sell produce at local markets

4. Get connected with the local community: Schools, churches, businesses and many other institutions or individuals can be brought in to the service and made to feel part of the lives of the older people and to be stakeholders in the home or scheme, people who care about its standards, values and levels of service. Here are a few ideas and suggestions for involving local people:
   • Involve young people - from schools, girl guides, scout groups, youth clubs or students to take part in ‘skill swap’ events (‘how to make pastry and cakes’ classes in exchange for Wii tips and lessons on texting), recruit a young person as your on-call ‘IT doctor’
   • Compile a mailing list (schools, families, friends) and send newsletters on what is happening in the service – ask people for their ideas and suggestions
   • Get businesses to hold fundraising events for your service – have photos of residents at these events so that people know who they are supporting
   • Get pro-bono help from local businesses, schools, churches and even farms – from help with IT expertise to donations of top-soil!

5. Give purpose to your garden patch – every home should have one but gardens come in different shapes and sizes and can have very different purposes. What type of garden does your service have or aspire to?
   • ‘The magic garden’ - with windchimes, ornaments, solar-powered interactive sound posts, mirrors, colourful parasols, outside games, oversized pets corners with human-scale rabbit runs
   • ‘The flower garden’ – with giant sunflowers, sculpted beds and borders, soft grasses and herbs, aromatic plants and shrubs, evergreen and winter flowering plants
   • ‘The productive garden’ – adopt the ‘from plot to plate’ ethos, nurture vegetable and fruit patches, have poly tunnels with electricity for heat pads, grow herbs, make broths and soups from produce and give them to families or sell to visitors
   • ‘The wild garden’ – leave a section uncultivated to attract insects and wild flowers, get a butterfly house, bird house, or hedgehog house, experiment with different bird feed to attract different species, have a wildlife photography competition.

For more ideas and suggestions for improving the quality of life, dignity and well-being older people by promoting relationships, identity and interests, and independence – visit the Bloom website – www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/bloom.
The Abbeyfield Society has created a unique person-centered environment at Browns Field House, a 26 bed residential care for older people who have some form of dementia. The home has been designed by the carers with funds raised by volunteers and family members and with works carried out by volunteers. The aim was to create a ‘home from home’. No area is institutionalized. There are themed areas reflecting residents’ personal interests and histories and bags of reminiscence items. The themed areas act as a prompt for families and friends to sustain and engage with their relative or friend in meaningful conversations. Visitors in the past often struggled to maintain good conversations – they would get upset by their loved one’s behaviour that suggested a detachment from reality, living in a private world. Now the themed areas reflect this private world and make it public, validating residents’ experiences and feelings in the here and now. For example, one resident used to be a post master so the home has a fully working post office, and when a family member visits they can go along together to buy stamps. Great grandchildren now visit more often and stay longer because of the themed areas around the house, buying sweets from the fully functioning shop, feeding the animals or collecting eggs from the chickens or ducks.

The impact has been that families, friends of all ages are much more relaxed, visits are longer and more meaningful whilst being more frequent – strained relationships are being rebuilt all the time and family and friends are losing the sight of dementia but regaining and valuing the role and identity of their loved one. Residents can tap more easily into memories from their past, giving them grounding and inner peace, when they may be feeling dazed and confused. Many residents are now less dependent on the usage of Anti-Psychotic Drugs.
Bloom Awards 2011 FINALISTS (in alphabetical order)

Organisation: Avante Care and Support
Location: Court Regis Care Home
Project: Community Gardening
Type: Residential care home

Court Regis Care Home encourages the local community to get involved in the life of its care home while getting residents to become more involved within the local community. Residents use the local hairdressers, pub, café, and shops. Fund-raisers and events (garden fetes, ‘wine and wisdom’ evenings, and seasonal parties) are held in the home and members of the community are encouraged to attend. Local schools, families and friends are encouraged to visit the home as much as possible – up to date information on what is happening in the home is provided through newsletters, emails, photo-walls and announcement boards. People are asked for their advice, opinions and ideas. Local volunteers help in running the home, assisting at events and attaining work experience. Several small businesses have made the home their main local charity with fundraisers organized throughout the year, which in turn helps to promote their business through the home’s newsletters and contacts with local media. (Photographs of residents are shown at fundraising venues to provide visual evidence to people of who they are supporting).

On a social and therapeutic level, residents have benefited greatly, with some now taking part in community life who haven’t been out of the home in nearly two years. The local community is getting to know the residents and stopping to talk to them in the street and local café. This in turn is creating a greater awareness of the care home, and of dementia in general.

Organisation: Connect Housing Association
Location: Hawthorn Mill Sheltered Housing
Project Name: Achieving Dreams for Mr. O
Type: Sheltered housing

Mr O, a resident at Hawthorn Mill Sheltered Housing, has been playing the piano, organ and accordion since he was nine years old, and has been composing his own music since was just 20. Mr O, now 90, is looking back on a long life in which he has performed for every sort of social club, sports club and church community. Much of that music has been captured on
cassette tapes, but because of their age and the obsolete format they were at risk of being lost forever. Hawthorn Mill staff recruited the help of a computer whiz, a young man called Leon who first visited Hawthorn Mill when he was at the local infant school, who brought along his laptop computer, complete with music transfer software, and working together with Mr O successfully preserved these precious recordings.

Mr O’s friends at Hawthorn Mill – staff and residents alike – also wanted to crown a lifetime’s work by helping him recruit a brass band to play his latest composition, the ‘Hawthorn Mill March’, a tribute to his new home. Hearing one of his pieces arranged and played by a brass band has been one of Mr O’s lifelong dreams. The Senior Scheme Manager at Hawthorn Mill, has been consulting with the Yorkshire & Humberside Brass Band Association, and Mr O’s ‘Hawthorn Mill March’ is now being transcribed to a score suitable to for a brass band. Music is central to Mr O’s life, and it provides a wonderful source of motivation for him to think that he’s been able to make a permanent record of his life’s musical work whilst at the same time getting so close to achieving one of his lifelong ambitions. Just as significant has been the impact on the other residents of Hawthorn Mill. He provides a clear example of how motivating and sustaining a hobby can be, and how we are never too old to try new things and reach new heights.

Organisation: Greensleeves Homes Trust
Location: Queen Elizabeth House
Type: Residential care home

Queen Elizabeth House has a unique way of encouraging and supporting residents to lead fulfilling lives. Firstly, it encourages staff to get to know their residents by asking about their life stories. Key workers meet up with residents each month to discuss their wishes and needs. Secondly, it gives residents jobs to do. Residents are encouraged and supported to get actively involved in daily activities around the home. They make their beds with staff if they want to. Residents take part in staff interviews. Three of the residents take turn to show prospective residents or relatives around the home and tell them what the home is all about. One resident runs the home’s main office and answers the phone at weekends. Two residents have set up a shop and run it weekly, selling the merchandise, budgeting, balancing the takings, stock control etc. Residents manage the dining room and set tables. Residents water the garden, one resident has a dedicated patch in the garden and manages it with her daughter. Another resident carries out surveys on social activities and provides feedback. The residents committee is producing an information pack for
all the rooms. Relatives are also involved and drive the minibus to take residents on outings, produce newsletters, chair meetings etc.

Organisation: **Midland Heart**  
Project Name: **Magic Moments**  
Type: **Extra care and sheltered housing**

Residents at Midland Heart's extra care and sheltered housing schemes are offered the chance to experience exhilarating **Magic Moments**. The project took 130 people on helicopter flights which took in views of the castles at Warwick and at Kenilworth. Three hundred people have been taken to Albrighton Moat and Sensory Gardens where they fished for carp, played croquet and picnicked in landscaped gardens. Other residents have enjoyed canal boat trips, cruising to the Norwegian Fjords on the QE2 and taken a ride on the Orient Express's Northern Belle. Trips to the West End, the seaside and the Ashes, and the experience of scuba diving, abseiling and looping-the-loop in an aeroplane have all been fun for residents who might usually spend a lot of time at home. Staying active helps residents to stay fitter and happier for longer. One 92-year-old woman looped-the-loop in a Slingsby aeroplane and later enjoyed telling her grandchildren about the experience. She said, "It's a bit different to when I tell them I've been to the hairdressers and had a game of cards with the lady at the end of the corridor."

Magic Moments is also developing scheme-based activities for people who don’t feel quite so adventurous including darts and dominoes tournaments, snooker, bowling, arts and craft classes, thai chi, line dancing, Nintendo Wii, garden parties and playing ‘Deal or No Deal’. Due to Magic Moment’s popularity and success within Midland Heart’s extra care housing schemes and sheltered housing schemes, there is a plan to roll out opportunities to the wider community to target older people, who may be able to live independently, but who are isolated and would benefit from the social interaction and enjoyment that Magic Moments provides.

Organisation: **St Helen’s Council – Arts Service**  
Project Name: **Art of the Unexpected**  
Type: **Community**

**Arts of the Unexpected** engages older and homebound people in arts, poetry and reminiscence activity in the Four Acre Neighbourhood area in St Helens. There is no sheltered housing, care home or extra care settings within the area and so the project takes place in the local library,
GP’s Surgery, Community Centres, Church Hall, Bingo Sessions, Local Tesco Store, Schools, 1 to1 activity in people’s homes.

Arts organisation Arthur and Martha deliver a series of workshops encouraging older and homebound people to participate in various activities including writing poetry about people’s life experiences on cakes and plates; working with the local bingo group to create group poems; training school children to become journalists to interview their grandparents or older people in the community about their life experiences; and working with homebound people in reminiscence, poetry and arts activity in their own homes. Though still in its early stages, the project has already generated positive feedback:

“It has been really great to be involved in this project, I never used to think that art was for me! – However being involved in this has been fantastic – it hasn’t really felt like art at all”

“Telling my life story and having read back to me has been a really cathartic experience, it has made me feel like I have had a rich life, a good life, it’s been good to get it off my chest”

Bloom Awards 2011 SHORTLIST (in alphabetical order)

Organisation: Carmarthenshire County Council
Location: Nantyglo Sheltered Housing Scheme
Project Name: “Clwb Iechyd Da” – Good Health Club
Type: Sheltered housing

Responding to the closure of Council-run luncheon clubs, residents of Nantyglo Sheltered Housing Scheme and the surrounding community wanted to continue with the option of having meals provided (which they were more than willing to pay for) but also saw the end of funding as a great opportunity to extend the scope of and interest in the Club. “Clwb Iechyd Da” currently has over 50 members, who are instrumental in developing activities which include a daily gardening club, weekly reflexology sessions, weekly holistic therapies, foot care clinics, regular day trips, and breakfasts, lunches and teas provided by a local restaurant.

Residents also ‘adopt a charity’ (currently Macmillan Cancer Trust) and run headline-grabbing fundraising events such as the Annual Mobility Scooter rally with tabletop sales and a carnival atmosphere. Residents say it has brought the surrounding community together and allowed
them to develop new friendships and build on existing ones. Some residents have stated “it makes them feel good about themselves”. Closer links have been forged between young and old (young volunteers help run the café) and the work has brought together private enterprise and the voluntary sector.

Organisation: **Cross Keys Homes**  
Location: **27 Sheltered Housing Schemes in Peterborough**  
Project Name: **Remain Active – Nintendo Wii Challenge**  
Type: **Sheltered housing**

**Cross Keys Homes** has used the Nintendo Wii in seven of its schemes to encourage residents to remain active, having fun playing sports and improving their digital skills into the bargain. Having a structured programme of events is key to the project’s success. An introductory event gets residents to learn how to navigate from game to game and to set up their Mii characters. Then there’s a weekly ‘sporting’ event where residents choose a sport of their choice and compete with other residents. (Promotional material is sent to all residents telling them about the selection of games available). Further interest and excitement is generated by a monthly ‘family’ event where residents invite family members to attend and compete with other families. Also planned is an annual mini Olympics event, with all 27 Cross Keys Homes sheltered schemes coming together in time for the 2012 Olympics.

Residents at one scheme, Becketts Close, enjoyed the Wii bowling game so much that they organised a trip to the local bowling alley to play for real. At De Montfort Court, one lady who finds it difficult to sleep, often visits the communal centre at night to practice her Wii skills. One centenarian at Pinetree played the bowling game and scored a strike on her first go. And at Loxley sheltered scheme residents teach the young people dominoes and whist in an exchange for the youngsters’ Wii skills.
**Clovenstone Care Home** run by Edinburgh City Council has a wish tree that grows fruits of aspiration, person-centred dreams and wishes. Each resident makes a unique personal wish and writes it on a leaf. Wishes are usually achievable activities that are agreed in consultation with a care worker. Examples are a trip to the butterfly farm or an evening at the theatre to see a particular show. One resident wished she could see Barry Manilow in concert. Unfortunately he was in Las Vegas, which was a bit out of reach unless he came to Scotland, but in his place she said she also enjoys Tony Christie who was appearing in Falkirk town hall in June so she was happy to go and see him instead! By encouraging clients to express their wishes and what makes them unique as individuals, the initiative has created an environment of good communication between staff and residents that embodies a person-centred approach to care.

---

**The Rainbow Project** brings together services from local partners to improve the well-being of elderly people living in sheltered housing schemes. Residents take a lead role in deciding on activities and services through regular meetings, questionnaires, open day surgeries and feedback forms. Activities include gardening, Tai-chi and gentle exercise, music sessions, Nintendo Wii session, reminiscence and quiz sessions, film sessions, games (carpet balls, cards, darts), talks on health and well-being, summer day trips to the seaside, computer training, health eating and cooking programmes, and a ‘good neighbourhood’ project which encourages more able residents to befriend frail ones. Monthly Afro Caribbean music sessions have proved particularly popular, giving residents from different extra care schemes the opportunity to get together. The sessions have also demonstrated the effectiveness of music as a therapy for people with dementia and those with mild memory loss. One resident, Mrs S, suffering from severe dementia, was encouraged to attend the music session but was initially reluctant to join in. However, within a few minutes, her face lit up by listening to the drums and the songs. She soon joined in and danced throughout the session.
The other residents were happy to see her interacting with them as they haven’t been able to hold any meaningful conversation with her for a long time. Mrs S has been able to remember the musical interest she once had and during the period of the project, she has been able to remember some collaborative movements taught by the project director.

**Organisation:** Gentoo Living  
**Location:** Croftside House Sheltered Housing Scheme  
**Project Name:** Croftside House Intergenerational Project  
**Type:** Sheltered housing

**Croftside House Sheltered Housing Scheme** ran an ‘intergenerational experience day’ where tenants of the scheme met with children aged 9/10 from a nearby school to share their memories and thoughts on the royal wedding. They asked each other different questions about royal weddings and recorded answers on a DVD which was placed in a time capsule for future generations to find. One of the key factors in making the event a well-attended success was sending personal invites directly to the older people *(Bloom top tip)*. There were also posters positioned in focal places and the support co-ordinator built the momentum by talking to the older people in the scheme in the run up and reminding them that it was an event not to be missed.

The tenants and school children are continuing their relationship as both felt that they gained a lot from the intergenerational event. The tenants are visiting the school to see firsthand how a modern school operates and to discuss the differences between current education techniques and when they went to school. The tenants will also help the children to assist with aspects of the current curriculum, for example World Wars and rationing. The project has enabled sheltered housing tenants to learn from children with the most popular request being to learn to text from a mobile phone.

**Organisation:** Gwalia Neighbourhood  
**Location:** Llys Dewi Sant, Swansea  
**Project Name:** Llys Dewi Sant and Spill Media Swansea Telly Project  
**Video Link:** [http://swanseatelly.org/video/33/good-times](http://swanseatelly.org/video/33/good-times)  
**Type:** Sheltered housing

**Llys Dewi Sant** gave its residents the chance to make a film about their lives in a sheltered housing scheme for an online TV station, Swansea Telly. Spill Media provided workshops on film production, script writing and pre-production, and organised the filming day. During the workshop, residents talked about life when they were young and how different things are
today. Residents discussed various topics from working in the docks to the food they ate. They remembered life during the World War II, the celebrations during VE day and the impact on their friends and family. Residents also produced a “Welcome to Llys Dewi Sant” DVD for newcomers to the scheme to hear about activities that take place and hear some testimonials from some of the residents. Building on the technical skills developed by the project, residents have now started a digital photography club. There are also plans to set up a Facebook page for the scheme to encourage residents to upload their experiences of living in sheltered housing and to dispel some of the myths surrounding communal living.

**Organisation:** Health In Mind  
**Project Name:** Communities Connecting  
**Type:** Community  

**Communities Connecting** - operating in Western and South Central Edinburgh - supports older people with a range of needs and who are socially isolated to build social networks and links with the community through being matched with a volunteer based on shared interest, availability and personal traits. When matched, Communities Connecting volunteers visit the older person on a regular basis, and over a period of time work with them to look at the kind of things they would like to do and to identify achievable goals. Volunteers have access to a service directory which gives them knowledge of what’s on in the local community and enables them to link in with services, activities and events. Goals vary greatly with each individual. For example, one person’s goal is simply to get out of her flat to the communal lounge in her sheltered accommodation to enjoy the company of other residents; another person’s goal is to join a local Tai Chi group. The project also offers regular social get togethers for people using the service where older people have the opportunity to build relationships with others involved within Communities Connecting, either as service users or volunteers.

**Organisation:** Living Lively  
**Project Name:** Living Lively Choirs – Silver Birch Singers, Sing @ Boughton, One Voice and the Whitstable Warblers  
**Type:** Community  

Living Lively choirs aim to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for older people living in the community. Groups meet weekly for a total of 36 sessions per year. Anyone over 50 is welcome to attend and there is an open access policy. Sessions are led by musicians who have considerable experience in delivering community based music initiatives with older people. They’re much more than being simple sing-a-long sessions - each 90 minute session includes breathing and singing exercises, songs in multiple parts and challenging new material.
Participants are always surprised to discover that they are capable of producing results beyond their expectations. In addition to the regular groups, there is an initiative called ‘Discover Your Voice’ which offers 6 weekly group singing lessons to older people who have not previously had the opportunity to participate in vocal activities. Over 135 older people attend the groups each week.

Older people are actively involved in all aspects of the work. They volunteer to assist with week-by-week tasks that ensure the groups run smoothly (venues, registers, refreshments etc.) and play a pivotal role in attracting new members to the groups. Many assist with identifying and accessing sources of funding or running local fundraising activities. There is a policy not to impose a centrally branded name on the groups - each chooses a name that reflects the character of that group and this builds a strong sense of ownership and identity.

**Organisation:** National Youth Theatre of Great Britain  
**Project Name:** Ghost Office  
**Type:** Community

**Ghost Office** was a community project involving the National Youth Theatre and Age UK Dudley that produced a piece of interactive theatre discovering and presenting true stories of individuals who had worked in local offices that have since closed down. The piece was rehearsed and performed in Custom House, a disused office block formerly occupied by Barclays Bank as a phone centre on the Waterfront in Brierley Hill, an area that is still suffering from the effects of the industrial collapse in the late 70s/early 80s. Age UK Dudley invited its members to take part in reminiscence workshops to collect stories that they recalled about their working lives. These stories were used as important source material during the devising and rehearsing of Ghost Office. 350 people watched Ghost Office over 3 performances.

The project gained high praise from younger and older participants alike:

“This summer I have been involved in the NYT production Ghost Office and I can honestly say that of the 14 summers I have been on this earth, this is certainly the BEST. I have really enjoyed meeting the older participants with all their experience and knowledge.” – James Stockton from Brierley Hill

“There was no age difference between us. I never felt old. I only had a small walk-on part but I was made to feel like a star. The young people were so kind, thoughtful, well mannered and ambitious; it was a pleasure to be in their company. I do hope this work continues.” – June Hill from Dudley
Orbit South ran a series of Nintendo Wii and intergenerational events across 7 sheltered schemes involving local scout groups. One of the first activities to take place was an inter-scheme Nintendo Wii bowling competition. Once residents were confident with the controls and appearance of the computer games, local scout groups then held evening events. The scouts introduced residents to their favourite games such as ‘Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games’ and ‘Wii Party’. Scouts and residents formed mixed teams to battle against each other in figure skating, cross country skiing and snowball fights. After the first evening with the scouts, residents soon asked when they would be revisiting. This feeling was shared by the scouts and leaders who were keen to arrange the second event.

Trio, delivered by PSS and commissioned by Conwy County Borough Council, provides person-centred sessions of day care to people who have dementia. It is a flexible service that works to the ‘Shared Lives/Adult Placement’ model and is provided in the homes of specially recruited and trained carers and in the community. Activities reflect service user interests and preferences, and are wide-ranging and diverse. Times of sessions also match service user need. Activities facilitated by an Adult Placement Carer in their home include cooking, sewing, painting, drawing, puzzles, board games, listening to music, reading, singing, dancing, and poetry. Activities facilitated by an Adult Placement Carer in their community include swimming, walking, bird watching, cinema, fishing, visiting family and friends, visiting garden centres, coffee mornings, gardening, pet therapy, photography, shopping, drives in the country, train and bus rides, and visits to places of interest such as gardens and bird sanctuaries.

The project has enabled service users to remain in their own homes for longer as their partner gets a break from caring. Many of the carers have been recruited from health and social care staff who wanted a change of career.
**Organisation:** Relationships Scotland, Family Mediation South Lanarkshire (supported by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation)  
**Project Name:** Connecting Generations – Grandparents Matter Too  
**Type:** Community / floating support

**Connecting Generations** provides family mediation, child contact centres, counselling and parenting workshops to support meaningful and on-going relationships between grandparents and grandchildren where relationships have broken down. Outreach workers spread the word about the project within the heart of the community and services are delivered in a variety of locations in urban and rural areas to ensure that the project is accessible by all. The project is developing in a number of ways. An educational DVD is being made to promote the importance of grandparent’s relationships within families. Grandparents, parents and grandchildren are also working on a project to produce artwork for an exhibition celebrating the differing roles of grandparents within families. And the project is also in the process of developing new procedures to deliver services via video conferencing enabling mediation and child contact services to be made available online.

**Organisation:** Riverside ECHG  
**Project Name:** The “Get Digital” Campaign  
**Type:** Sheltered housing

The **Get Digital** campaign has introduced residents to a range of social, leisure and creative opportunities offered by IT and computers. Residents are improving their links with family and friends via e-mail, skype and social media, while others are enjoying increased choice, freedom and independence by exploring the possibilities of shopping on-line. Participants have made new friends and become “pen pals” with residents taking part in similar programmes at other sheltered schemes. As a result of the skills developed some residents now contact Riverside with their tenancy queries by e-mail and look up information on services on the organisation’s website, instead of calling. Many have enjoyed the gentle exercise of Wii bowling, golf and tennis and others have found a new lease of life by investigating the art of photography through the new Digital Camera Club. The initiative has encouraged links with the local community, with the recruitment of a young IT whiz kid who has become the scheme’s volunteer “computer doctor” (Bloom top tip). Volunteers are also getting involved from local schools, churches and businesses to help residents develop their computer skills further. Staff from IBM recently visited the scheme to
share some of their knowledge and experience, helping to further assist and inspire residents in their IT endeavours.

Organisation: Sanctuary Housing  
Location: Sheltered schemes in Brighton - Silver Birches, Holt Lodge, Clare Walk  
Project Name: Sanctuary’s Got Talent  
Type: Sheltered housing

Sanctuary Housing organised a talent show **Sanctuary’s Got Talent** for three of its schemes. Coffee mornings were used to encourage people to take part and to find out about their hidden skills and talents. Backing track CDs were assembled and an accompanist drafted to help the performers. Each scheme had a competitive event with residents being the judges. Each member of the audience had to give the act a mark between 1-5, the scores were then added to find 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. The acts varied from singing, a drag act, an assisted wheelchair dance with audience singing, classical guitar and even the dance of the seven veils performed by an 84 year old. The winners (1st, 2nd and 3rd place) from each scheme were then invited to perform at a joint event. They were supported by friends from their scheme. The residents are still talking about the event six months later. The whole event gave the performers a real boost and many of them were extremely proud of their achievements. Next year a much bigger event is planned involving 6 schemes.

Organisation: Sanctuary Housing  
Location: Macklands House  
Project Name: Macklands House Community Triptych Wall Hanging  
Type: Sheltered housing

**Macklands House** has embarked on a community project that uses arts and crafts to tell its story. Building on the strengths of its well-established craft afternoon, the project is collaborative and people work together to decide what is to be included using the expertise available including a visiting artist. A wide range of people are involved, many of whom are disabled and some have mental illness. The skills they bring range from knitting, needle work, tatting, crochet, paper craft, poetry and drawing. Some people act as support providing the tea and just being a part of the event and adding ideas. Ages range from 65 -90 years.
The project has gained momentum over the weeks with people drawing on old skills and welcoming new ideas to apply them for different effects, downloading images from the Internet to provide inspiration – a knitted sky, a barbecue represented by flames and the letters ‘BBQ’. Many of the items contributed by people have stimulated imaginative conversations - over the previous life of a button, or fabric remnant. The Triptych Wall Hanging, the final piece, is to be assembled as all the pieces come together. A day of celebration will launch the work, with invitations to friends, families, the Mayor, Press and a local Hindu group who are contributing to the art work. It will be displayed at the library and health centre, and will be displayed at other homes and communities where members of the group are invited to speak.

‘Isn’t it amazing what we can do together with a few odds and ends’ - Eleanor, group member.

Organisation: Sanctuary Care  
Location: Rosary Nursing Home  
Project Name: Identity and Interests / Relationships  
Type: Residential care home

Rosary Nursing Home has created an environment of fun, fulfillment and friendship by stimulating interaction between residents, having animals around, encouraging people to spend time outside in the fresh air, and involving volunteers and families on a day-to-day basis. The aim is to make residents feel that they matter and that their feelings matter. The presence of volunteers, students and relatives bring in news and conversation into the home. There are themed evenings and afternoons. The home has an in-house café and an in-house pub for the residents to socialize in a relaxed mutual environment. The sensory garden has a ‘beach area’. There is an ‘oversized’ pets corner where residents can go into the rabbit run and have the rabbits on their knees and running around them. There are guinea pigs and chickens and also large ‘pot animals’ like a pig and donkey that, though not real, encourage conversation and put smiles on the residents’ faces. Staff also take the animals into the home for residents that are less able. There are painted murals on the walls in the dementia unit of flowers and trees with birds and butterflies.

For more examples of improving the quality of life, dignity and well-being older people by promoting relationships, identity and interests, and independence – visit the Bloom website – www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/bloom.