



THE INTERACTIVE TABLE THAT CREATES MAGICAL MOMENTS



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The Laurels Residential and Nursing Home in Derby is part of Sanctuary Care. In 2019, staff embarked on a fundraising mission to buy a Magic Table for its residents.

Created in the Netherlands, the Magic Table is a box – very similar to a projector – which is mounted on the ceiling and casts simple light games onto a table or floor. It is used in several of Sanctuary Care’s homes and since launching at The Laurels, staff have already seen significant benefits to the health and wellbeing of its residents.

The Magic Table was appealing for various reasons, as manager Jo Graves explains.

“We were looking for technology that is simple to use and engaging but also innovative, because we know that residents can be tech-savvy, having used technology for a while.”

The Magic Table is designed to be highly engaging and stimulating for people of all ages.

“Our residents love to spend time with children and when children visit, the Magic Table provides an activity that everyone can take part in and really enjoy,” says Jo.

She has noticed changes in the habits of residents – particularly the small number who have dementia – who could get restless.

Now they will sit for more than two hours, engrossed in the game they are playing on the Magic Table.

While it’s too early for The Laurels to evidence any direct health outcomes, the signs are positive, particularly in relation to residents’ eating habits.

Jo explains: “We put snacks and drinks around the table and residents happily help themselves. They are eating more, and taking on board more nutrients, which is so important. They are so distracted by the games that they eat without thinking about it, even when they don’t have an appetite.”

The Magic Table is enhancing the schedule of physical activities at The Laurels, which includes skittles and ‘Sit to Fit’ sessions. While residents remain seated at the Magic Table, a fishing game gets them moving their arms and upper bodies and for football, the game is projected onto the floor, so participants move their legs and feet to control the ball.

The games require thought and coordination and, crucially, they give the residents things to talk about, laugh about and enjoy together.

Among them is Joan, 81, who has been a resident at The Laurels for three years and loves word searches.

Joan, who has mild learning difficulties, is now a regular user of the Magic Table. She enjoys the puppy game, in which she gets to stroke and feed the animals, and ‘Autumn Leaves’ where she uses a small brush to sweep up virtual leaves, uncovering red and yellow ladybirds that she can hear fluttering around her.

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Joan is spending time with other residents and enjoying these interactions. “I enjoy group activities, sharing equipment and playing football,” she says. “I like to push the football in the goal.”

The Magic Table has given Joan something different to do. Staff at The Laurels describe her as being “happy and engaged” and Joan is distracted from the things that might otherwise cause her anxiety.

She has also noticed the benefits, explaining: “When I have finished on the Magic Table I like to sit in my chair and do my word searches feeling relaxed.”

Technology is embedded into the culture at Sanctuary Care, from interactive games such as the Magic Table, to helping residents to become tech-savvy internet users.

Sarah Clarke-Kuehn, Sanctuary’s group director – care, says: “Technology plays a significant role in enriching the lives of residents in all of our care homes.

“As well as embracing the use of Magic Tables, such as the one at The Laurels, we have introduced an innovative bespoke care planning system called kradle, which enables our staff to record information at the point of care allowing them to spend more quality time with the residents rather than paperwork.”

In a short space of time, the Magic Table has enriched the day-to-day lives of residents at The Laurels, bringing about healthier habits, better interaction and increased movement.

For Jo, above all else, seeing her residents so engaged is the best indicator of success.

“The look on their faces when they are chatting, having a laugh and a joke about things they haven’t seen before, is by far the best thing about it. It’s a joy to watch.”