SONA –
Aged Services Achieving Real Happiness

Nicole Devlin - Director of Services, BallyCara
A/Prof Evonne Miller - Creative Industries, QUT
Graham’s Day at the Races
SONA: Gaelic for Happiness

BallyCara has a culture of “family”, where the ultimate lifetime goal is to foster “happiness”

Mission & Vision

“A community of happiness, respect and friendship”
SONA Ethos

- **EMBRACE**
  Know the individual

- **ENHANCE**
  - Program for passions, strengths and abilities

- **PROSPER**
  Inject motivation, energy, hope & happiness

Focusing on **hope**, consciously challenging the ‘deficit approach’ – focuses on what residents can do & enhancing that
• San
  – Non-English Speaking, Palliative, severe Parkinson’s disease (unconscious for days at a time when admitted; verbally abusive to family when awake & hallucinating)
  
  – now walking safely daily, gaining weight, going on home visits on weekends, actively engaging in art therapy & beats everyone at Chess
• **Isobel**
  
  – Moderate dementia, extremely dangerously low body weight from malnutrition, suffering Gastro-intestinal issues and pain
  
  – Self-isolated, living in a neglected environment, with compromised communication skills
  
  – Admitted to hostel: gained 10 kg, joins in exercise, walking and falls groups. Is confident to communicate, very social and attends all activities & outings
Living the SONA Ethos

Ethos embedded across Organisation
  • systems built around it
  • guiding principle for organisational strategic growth
  • staff recruited & measured against it
prospective job candidates are asked to provide a written response to the question: “Do you think happiness is achievable for elderly people?”

Building happiness into our DNA

People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel – Maya Angelou
## Staff Perspectives on Workplace: Great Places to Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pride</th>
<th>BallyCara Score</th>
<th>2014 Best Places to Work Score</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel I make a difference here</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>Equal to GPTW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work has special meaning, it’s not “just a job”</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>Equal to GPTW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I look at what we accomplish, I feel a sense of pride</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good about the ways we contribute to the Community</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>Equal to GPTW</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BallyCara Statements</th>
<th>BallyCara Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We live the SONA Philosophy</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We enjoy working with the elderly</td>
<td>91%</td>
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<tr>
<td>We encourage feedback from all staff</td>
<td>81%</td>
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KEY RESEARCH QUESTION - What is daily life like in aged care?

Investigate and track everyday lives of older people living in aged care - in a participatory way - through qualitative & creative arts approaches

‘Facilitating active ageing in residential aged care: Strategies, opportunities and future directions’ (Evonne Miller, Laurie Buys & Nicole Devlin). Three Year Semi-Longitudinal Qualitative Research
Applying the WHO “Active Ageing” Conceptual Framework to Aged Care

ACTIVE AGEING
“the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age” WHO – 2002

HEALTH
“encompasses all aspects of physical, mental and social wellbeing, as expressed in the WHO definition of health” (WHO, 2002, p47-51)

PARTICIPATION
“provide education and learning opportunities; recognise and enable participation in formal and informal work; encourage full participation in community life” (WHO, 2002, p51-52)

SECURITY
“ensure the protection, safety and dignity of older people by addressing the social, financial and physical security rights and needs of people as they age” (WHO, 2002, p52)

three determinants of active ageing

The well known WHO 'active ageing' dictum: 'years have been added to life, we must add life to these years'

Builds on United Nations Principles for Older People
1. **Stage 1 – the Pilot**
tracked expectations & experiences of 10 new (LOW CARE) residents over a year *(2012-2013)*

2. **Stage 2 – “Inside Aged Care”**
~n=110 (Dec 2013 – 2016)

- OLDER COMMUNITY RESIDENTS
- PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA
- AGED CARE RESIDENTS
- RESIDENTS LIVING IN INDEPENDENT UNITS
- KEY INFORMAL NETWORK MEMBERS (FAMILY)
- SERVICE PROVIDERS (STAFF)

**Traditional qualitative methods**
- Semi-structured long interviews, focus groups, field notes, observations, informal interviews

**Participatory creative arts methods**
- PhotoVoice
- Poetry / Drawings/Video/Visual & reflective diaries

**TRACK AGED CARE EXPERIENCE OVER ~ A YEAR**

TIME 1. What it is like to live in Residential Aged Care *(Your Home)*
TIME 2. What value in relationships with family, friends and staff *(Your Relationships)*
TIME 3. Finally, your beliefs and feelings about ageing *(Your Beliefs)*
Participatory Creative Arts

PhotoVoice

Poetry

Art
You’re taken care of.

You’re taken care of.
I’m very satisfied
with my room.
I got me own furniture,
so why wouldn’t I be?
It’s just like my own home,
only I don’t do no work.

I got me friends here,
I go to bingo,
I join in exercises,
I go for any walks,
I have a good family,
they take me places.
though I haven’t been able
to find a nice man yet.

Ethel, age 80

SONA: A Positive Psychology Approach

- Evolutions in service delivery: person-centered care, consumer-directed care... positive psychology and happiness?

- SONA - drawing on positive psychology & positive ageing literature. PP argues that even during inevitable challenges and losses that often arise in later years, both older people and the institutions that support them have ability to make choices that are adaptive (or not) to facilitating happiness

How to create a positive aged care environment?
SONA consciously positions and prioritises ‘happiness’ as the central organisational goal, which enables active ageing.

SONA: How BallyCara Fosters Happiness

SONA values strongly embedded in organisational culture & everyday practices

- **HEALTH**: .... holistic wellness model
- **PARTICIPATION**: .... school holiday child care
- **SECURITY**: .... value unique individuality

Fostering active ageing through SONA

State of art facility and holistic wellness model

Meets legislative requirements for child care; boosts staff & resident morale

Valuing and nurturing unique individuality in a communal, institutional environment
The SONA vision embeds a changing organisational culture that - like PCC - requires staff to be people, rather than task oriented; a critical difference however is that, as well as being resident centred, SONA prioritises happiness.

“we want them to be happy”: Building on existing strengths and leading through action

“SONA in Practice”:
- Initiatives fostering happiness
- “living happiness together”: Transforming care practices and work culture

SONA was seen by staff as enabling them to focus on great, fun things: “because just like your family, you don’t spend all of your time on the bathing...feeding and the washing. You actually get through all of that, so you can go and have some fun”

“Sit down and talk to them. They have been somewhere. They have done something. You know, they belong to someone. They have made a difference to someone’s life. I want the best care for them. And they deserve it” (SP1)
The organisational focus on happiness transformed care practices and work culture. SONA resonated strongly with staff individual motivations for working in aged care; as one explained, the “only people that can work in aged care are people that love what they do” (SP4).

Staff actively engaged with the SONA care philosophy, viewed as “living happiness together” (SP4), taking pride in “permeating happiness through the facility” (SP7)

"Yes people are fed, they are given their medication, they are cleaned/toileted, but it’s that next step. They have got to feel wanted, needed, a sense of purpose” (SP29)

“to lift them.. and make them smile and take their worries away” (SP7)
“SONA is happiness, and happiness is the best feeling”: Initiatives fostering happiness

SONA enriches the care-giver/care-receiver relationship, with this philosophy fostering actions that lead to wellbeing, positive individuals and a thriving community: for example, Graham’s Race Day

Dalai Lama: “Just imagine if we all lived with no compassion, thinking only of ourselves. We would suffer greatly. The more you think of others, the happier you are”

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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION DICTIM

“Years have been added to life; now we must add life to years”
Graham's Happiness
A SONA Story