

The Little Things: Cross-cultural communication for personal care work in aged care

'The Little Things' project

The Little Things is a project to develop cross-cultural language training resources. The resources are for Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds working in aged care. The purpose of the training materials is to improve the quality of care offered by PCAs and the career prospects of the PCAs. The project is supported by the Victorian Government and runs from June 2018 to June 2020.

The Little Things project is led by the Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre in partnership with Meaningful Ageing Australia. The aged care project partners are Uniting AgeWell, Arcare and Jewish Care Victoria. The Learn Local Registered Training Organisation project partners are The Centre – Your Community College (Wangaratta), Laverton Community Integrated Services Inc and Westgate Community Initiatives Group Inc.

The project will conduct research at Uniting AgeWell, Arcare and Jewish Care. The research team: Pip Mackey, Project Coordinator and linguist and Angela McKenna, Research Assistant, will follow or 'shadow' PCAs while they work. Through this the research team will identify key interactions between older persons and PCAs for further analysis. Next, PCAs nominated by residents and senior staff will wear a small recording device on their arm to record their interactions with older persons as they work. The research team will analyse the recordings to find the language features that best build rapport between older people and PCAs. This analysis will also be linked back to relevant peer reviewed research.

Participation in the research is voluntary. Older people and their families, PCAs and other staff will be given detailed information about the research so they can decide if they want to participate. All research participants will need to sign a consent form. Anyone may stop participating in the research at any time.

The research will be used to develop written, audio-visual and online training resources. The resources will be trialed at the aged care organisations and the Learn Local Registered Training Organisations. The feedback from the trials will be used to improve the resources. These resources will be designed for use in existing PCA training programs.

The project will be evaluated by experts at La Trobe University. The training resources will be launched at an industry information event and made available through Meaningful Ageing Australia.

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