



Written by  
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# Running a 'Holiday at Home'

- Plan an interesting programme
- Build a team of helpers
- Feed the body and soul
- Think through practicalities
- Consider adapting 'Holiday at Home' for care homes and the housebound

## Background

A 'Holiday at Home' is a special event for older people, providing several days of activities, entertainment and food. It is an opportunity to make new friends, relax and have some fun – just like you might do on holiday, except that you return to your own home at the end of the day. It has great physical, mental, emotional and spiritual benefits. Guests feel valued, relationships are built, memories are created and people experience God's love, often resulting in a new openness to spiritual things. The event might last between one and four days.

## 1. Plan an interesting programme

Having a theme allows for creative imagination in decorating rooms and having themed activities and food. Suggestions for a theme include: a cruise; the 'good old days'; the seaside; one (or all of) the seasons; the Olympics; a country. The daily programme might include: registration, welcome and coffee; activity choices; lunch; relax/chat/snooze time; activity choices; tea and cake; thought for the day.

Offer plenty of choice – a mixture of hands-on activities and entertainment, balanced to suit various people, tastes and abilities, and things that appeal to men too. Ideas include: gentle exercise; flower arranging; cupcake decorating; hand massages; choir singing; indoor games; arts and craft; one-to-one help with computer or mobile phone skills; poetry; discussion groups; tea dance; wine and cheese tasting; reminiscence; board games; therapy pet visit; musical entertainment; speakers on a variety of subjects; input from the younger generation and the local community. Something extra special or someone famous will create even more special memories.

Only choose speakers who will be fully engaging and clear in their delivery. Give them clear guidelines beforehand. They should make their session interactive or visual and must keep to time. They should bear in mind that some of their audience may have visual or hearing impairment or mental frailty. Good PA equipment helps. Some guests may choose not to go to a session, but to sit quietly, chat, read a newspaper, do a quiz or help with a jigsaw. Allow plenty of time in the programme for moving from room to room, comfort breaks etc.

## 2. Build a team of helpers

You may need people to cook, help with administration, set up tables and chairs, provide transport, welcome, lead sessions, help with refreshments and chat to individuals. Be mindful of having sufficient volunteers to support individuals with visual impairment or dementia or who are wheelchair users. Give attention to the safe recruitment of all volunteers including, for some roles, a DBS check. Consider training needs relevant to the needs of those who will attend. Encourage volunteers to see themselves as part of the holiday community.

Enlist people to pray for your 'Holiday at Home' as you plan the event. These people could pray for specific issues while the event is taking place. Consider having a first aider on your volunteer team. The bulk of the work happens before the event and things will run smoothly if all the helpers know beforehand what is expected of them. The overall organiser should be free to keep a general oversight. Send helpers a handwritten thank you card afterwards, perhaps gathering them for a celebratory meal.

## 3. Feed the body and soul

Make meal tables look special. A good lunch will bless your guests. The loving kindness shown to guests will speak volumes about God's love. Consider including a 5-minute 'Thought for the Day'. Gifts or goody bags could include prayer bookmarks or blessings cards. Consider how you might maintain contact, for example, a follow-up tea or an invitation to church services.

## 4. Think through practicalities

Requiring guests to complete a booking form in advance will let you know of any dietary requirements and any help that a guest might require or medical problem you need to be aware of. Consider if this is an event that you want to charge for, bearing in mind the cost of meals and outside speakers. Consider how accessible all the facilities are. Can you provide some comfortable chairs for those who want a snooze? Assess and manage risk; for example, think of trip hazards – walking trolleys could be labelled then 'parked' at the side.

## 5. Consider adapting 'Holiday at Home' for care homes and the housebound

When offering to run this type of event in a care home, think through how you might explain the concept to the manager. Show that you have knowledge of care home life and the need to fit round daily routines. Adapt ideas from above, keeping everything simpler and shorter, with a smaller team. Send in details beforehand so that everyone knows about the event. Ask about decorating the lounge and speaking to the cook who might produce themed food. Include time for your team to sit and chat with individuals. Have times when no team member is in the lounge, so that the residents have a complete break from the hustle and bustle. For housebound people, a 'holiday in a bag' with activities, crafts, quizzes and afternoon tea could be delivered to their door.

### Further resources:

'How to run a Holiday at Home for Seniors' by Elizabeth Stacey (2013). This can be downloaded free from the Embracing Age website: [embracingage.org.uk/ministryamongstseniors](https://embracingage.org.uk/ministryamongstseniors)

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