



A big, massive, huge point about ward activities is that they not only provide opportunities for constructive involvement, but that they also turn observation (which can potentially seem somewhat detached or even obtrusive to patients) into meaningful engagement, which in itself is a rich source of important information. How better to get a real, direct understanding about how a patient is feeling than to encourage them to get involved in an activity? Ward activities give staff opportunity to make invaluable, unobtrusive, assessments and observations of patients. And so documentation and record keeping is also essential here.

The best source of help with activities is OTs. They're magnificent in their ability to plan, deliver and evaluate sessions which are enjoyable, therapeutic and also provide the staff with invaluable perspectives on how patients are managing life, hospital and their recovery.

**Imagine this...**

"I wouldn't call myself an activity coordinator but I do enjoy organising special days on the ward. So far we've done: National Women's Day, pancake day, the Royal Wedding, Comic Relief, Children in Need, World Book Day, Breast Cancer Awareness and the Olympics. It gives patients something to look forward to and everyone can get involved and have a laugh together. There's always cake making and eating, display and poster preparing, as well as plenty of glitter and jokes along the way!" – Teri, Healthcare Support Worker

Running activities is all about being resourceful (you may have noticed that resourcefulness gets a regular mention throughout Ward Stars. That's because HCAs are just that – resourceful!). One HCA called Mayuri collected lots of free fabric swatches from furniture shops and upholsters. These sample books were full of all sorts of lovely patterns, colours and textures which the patients on her ward loved. Mayuri used these swatches in the art and craft group she ran, and also helped patients create personalised 'mood boards' by sticking various pieces of the fabric to sheets of cardboard. That's resourceful!

Yes, we believe (almost) anything can form the basis of a ward activity!

This Star is for the HCA who researches, leads and champions activities like health promotion or recovery groups, for example. Fundamentally, it's about using specialist skills to develop therapeutic relationships with patients. This may involve doing further training to gain skills in order to run certain activities. "I asked if I could go to a short CBT training course the Trust was putting on," says one HCA, "I had been wanting to learn about talking therapies for some time and saw it as an opportunity to find out more. My manager was happy for me to attend the course, even though it was advertised as a post-registration course for Staff Nurses. It felt a bit daunting but I soon found my confidence. I learned some good techniques which I often use on the ward. They especially come in handy when I help the psychologist run the problem-solving group. It's really whet my appetite to learn more and it's good to see patients benefit from some basic CBT methods."

## **Related Wardipedia features and examples**

### **23. Media**

- Using Come Dine With Me as inspiration/format for ward dinner parties!

### **24. Wii**

- We have found the Wii Fit units offer a perfect exercise solution for our older service users.

### **25. Jobs**

- A vocational group develops skills for CVs and job applications, and for adding to individual achievement folders.

### **26. Ward newsletter**

- We now make our own reminiscence weekly news for a dementia ward using the BBC resources. [www.bbc.co.uk/onthisday](http://www.bbc.co.uk/onthisday)

### **27. Books**

- Staff bring in their good condition, once-read books for patients.

### **28. Funny stuff**

- The ward has up-and-coming comedians give performances

### **29. Food presentation**

- Herbs from the ward herb garden used to decorate the mash potato

### **30. Fun indoor sports**

- Improvised space hoppers!! Perfect for the exercise-reluctant patient (or member of staff), using giant gym balls for corridor races

### **31. Dance**

- Staff member has undertaken training in armchair exercises for the elderly and frail run by local College

### **32. Football**

- The Friday football team consists of inpatients, outpatients and staff from across the wards.

### **33. Men's stuff**

- Eg Bird watching, card school, chess, darts, DJing, map appreciation, Men's Shed, metal detecting, model making, Scalextric, Subbuteo, traditional pub games

### **Some of the ways patients may benefit from the Activities Star:**

- Opportunity to access sociable, recreational, physical, therapeutic and fun activities
- Constructive, safe and helpful stimulation
- Comfortable social contact with others
- Development and acquisition of self-management and life skills
- Less boredom and more meaningful engagement

### **Resources**

- <http://www.wardipedia.org/activities/>
- *Switch On!* by Cary Bazalgette and Marion Janner Introduction to media literacy course for creative ways of using TV and radio to engage patients.  
<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/switch-on.pdf>
- *Doing Stuff – Men’s Activities* by Nick McMasters: <http://www.wardipedia.org/33-mens-stuff/>
- *Ward Buddy*: <http://www.wardipedia.org/ward-buddy/>
- *The Handbook of Humor* by Elcha Buckman