

## OVERVIEW

Table talks can be helpful for spreading the Dignity Principles to the wider community. As a reminder, the Dignity Principles ensure that people feel:

- A sense of control
- Able to take part in community
- Nourished and supported
- Involved in decision-making
- Valued and able to contribute

Table Talks are designed to prompt conversations about dignity in a relaxed and friendly way around the course of a community meal. We don't intend for this activity to interfere with people's enjoyment of the meal, so it could be introduced perhaps before the food is served and followed up on after it has been cleared, when things are winding down. It introduces the Dignity Principles in Practice, it encourages discussion about the ways in which these are implemented in different contexts and how participants feel about this. The outcomes can then also help staff and volunteers think about how practice can be adjusted accordingly. This exercise is particularly suitable for volunteers who already have a basic understanding of the Dignity Principles in Practice and provides a chance to share their learning more widely.

## AIM

This activity enables volunteers and staff to deepen their understanding of the Dignity Principles in Practice through informal discussion. Additionally, it gently familiarises participants with the Dignity Principles in Practice, intends to generate new ideas about how everybody feels about these principles and what else can be done to implement them, and generally equips everybody better for introducing these principles into their everyday practice.

## MATERIALS

- Pens and Post-it notes
- Print out of a Short Note about Table Talks, one copy for each table or group. [Click here to access document.](#)
- Print out of different Principles Cards, [click here to access.](#) At least one Principle Card is needed for each table or subgroup. You could also decide to have each table / group discuss more than one principle,

in which case you will need as many different Principle Cards as you decide each table or group will discuss.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### Step 1: Preparing for running a Table Talks event

1. Recruit volunteers to engage people in discussion around the course of a meal. Offer them Dignity in Practice training or other ways in which they can familiarise themselves with the Dignity Principles before the event.

2. Emphasise the importance of sharing what they have learned about the Dignity Principles with others and explain the aim of the Table Talks activity. The aim of the exercise is to run an open discussion about how dignity can be introduced in practice in general, and to identify opportunities for improving practice in this and other settings by engaging everybody in a conversation about each of the five Dignity Principles.
3. Print the following handouts: ***Short Note about Table Talks*** and at least one set of the different ***Principles Cards***. The Principles Cards should be printed one-sided and each cut out so that each principle appears individually, together with its questions, on a separate slip of paper.
4. Using the Short Note about Table Talks and the set of Principles Cards, describe to your volunteer facilitators how the activity works. Mention that the Short Note about Table Talks is designed to be put on tables before the start of the meal to introduce the Table Talks activity to participants. Mention that the Principles Cards provide participants with

the questions they are supposed to discuss during the Table Talks.

5. Explain that this activity can be run in different ways: participants can be invited to discuss the full set of five principles in one sitting, or alternatively, each table or subgroup can focus on a different principle in parallel discussions. The full set of principles can then be introduced slowly over the course of several meals, focusing on one or two principles per session.
6. Decide on how you will introduce the principles and which principle(s) to which tables/groups and relay this to your volunteers. Explain to them that this will then tell them how many copies of the different Principles Cards are needed and how they are to be set out on the tables.
7. Ask volunteers to follow the instructions in Step 2 on Engaging people in discussion and invite their queries about this.
8. Tell them that there will also be a debriefing to reflect on the Table Talks activity after the event, as described in Step 3 below, and inform them of when and where this will take place.

## Step 2: Engaging people in discussion during Table Talks

It's important to make sure the environment is comfortable, welcoming and inclusive.

There should be enough volunteers to support people to engage with the questions on the Principles Cards throughout the session.

Check that there is one copy of the Short Note about Table Talks, and pens and sticky notes on each table/by each group.

Make sure also that each table / group has the Principles Cards that they are tasked to discuss.

This might be the full set or just one or two specific principles, as decided in advance (discussed above in Preparing for the event, 5).

Once everybody is seated at your table, or in the little group(s) for which you are responsible, call everybody's attention, and:

1. Say that you are asking them to participate in a Table Talks activity today.
2. Introduce the general idea of the Dignity Principles to your group.
3. Describe how the activity will work, pointing to the Short Note about Table Talks handout and the Principles Cards, and invite people to comment or ask questions.

4. Then discuss each principle in turn by highlighting the questions that are printed on the Principles Card(s) that have been put on their table.
5. Ask your group(s) to take note of their ideas on sticky notes/paper that is provided for them and/or where there is time, make notes to keep track of discussions yourself so that especially new ideas can be taken back to the whole group.
6. It may be that some participants come up with challenging or negative statements. Ignoring or avoiding these contributions is unlikely to make them go away and these can sour the mood for all. One way to respond might be by starting a discussion directed at everybody in the group about how these particular issues could be tackled, generating positive contributions.
7. After the meal, thank everyone for participating, gather final thoughts and explain how staff and volunteers will reflect on these discussions, using their ideas to improve the project. Say also that they will let participants know what has been changed as a result of these discussions.

## **Step 3: Reflecting on the discussions after the Table Talks have been held**

1. Remind everybody of what the aims of the Table Talks were.
2. Ask facilitators to report on what they learned from participating in the Table Talks:
  - What was the overall feeling about the Dignity Principles at your table?
  - What challenges did you experience during the Table Talk? How did you manage these?
  - Is there anything you would do differently at the next Table Talk?
3. Ask facilitators to make a personal note of anything they would like to do differently in a next Table Talk.
4. Review the outcomes of the Table Talks and discuss specific action points that emerged from these:
  - What examples of good practice did people mention?
  - What new ideas came up for improving the way we introduce the Dignity Principles in our practice?
5. Discuss the best way of feeding back the learning from these Table Talks to participants and make a plan for doing this.