Meals 2.2: Personalisation: Promoting independence in care homes

Karen: Oh, let me take that Emily. I thought we'd agreed, remember? You were going to wait for the staff to come in before you came down. There you go, there you are.

Emily: I like a nice cup of tea in the morning.

Frank: Karen - we don't lock the kitchen; the night staff need to get in there.

Karen: Oh, well, if you say so Frank. Just trying to make sure Emily doesn't burn the place down.

Frank: Tea again?

Karen: Yep, third time this week. The staff are busy trying to get everyone up and she's well... you should have seen the place this morning... and we all know electricity and water don't mix.

Frank: We can't just lock her out.

Karen: But surely, we're here to make sure everyone's safe?

Frank: We're not running a prison here Karen, we're running a home and when you're at home you should at least be able to make yourself a cup of tea.

Karen: Yeah, but not if-

Frank: I'll have a word and see if I can sort it out.

Karen: Well good luck with that, then!

Frank: Have you got something to do, Emily?

Emily: I suppose so.

Anything interesting?

Emily: Not the brightest in the village

Frank: Sorry Emily, I've never been much good at crosswords.

Emily: I might be getting a bit forgetful from the old age, but the old brain can still work out a clue or two - but you didn't come here to talk about crossword puzzles, did you?

Frank: No. It's this tea situation.

Emily: I like a nice cup of tea in the morning!

Frank: I'm sure you do Emily, but usually the residents wait until the kitchen staff come in and —

Emily: I've always made my own!

Frank: Ok... but here, we like to try to make sure-

Emily: Idiot!

Frank: I beg your pardon?

Emily: - Not the brightest in the village! Idiot! I-D-I-O-T. Idiot!

Emily: Unusually remote celestial body...

Frank: I'll see you later Emily...

Emily: Meteor!

Frank: I agree, this is absolutely a case of health and safety - and whilst Emily is central to all this, we also need to consider all the staff and residents here. You'll see on file that she has shown slight signs of dementia and let's face it - she is 94. So, the stage 1 criteria for a capacity test have already been met. In which case we move on to stage two and given Karen's observations, I really don't think Emily —

Karen: — Look, Frank, I know it was me that started this whole thing off but I was wondering whether there might be another way.

George: Another way? Capacity assessments are a standard procedure, Karen. And given Emily's age and observations of her, we have to conclude that we can't allow to keep making tea for herself every morning.

Karen: Well, I think there is another way. I rang Emily's niece this afternoon.

Frank: What?

Karen: Consulting family is standard procedure too, isn't it Frank?

Frank: Ok.

Karen: Her niece told me that this tea thing has become a bit of a ritual apparently all started when her husband Charlie was alive. She'd get up every morning, make a cup of tea then take it to him in bed then they'd sit and talk about everything over the cup of tea. Then when Charlie died, she just carried on. Well, it seems to me that for Emily the cup of tea isn't just a cup of tea - it's holding on to a memory of what her life once was. I'm sorry Frank, I'm not trying to step on your toes here.

Frank: I know Karen, it's easy to lose perspective sometimes even over a cup of tea.

Frank: What do you think George?

George: Well as far as I'm concerned if we can work out a best interest scenario which will keep Emily happy and avoid us having to call the fire brigade, then I'll support you.

Karen: Thanks!

Emily: Where's it gone?

Karen: Good morning, Emily! How are you?

Emily: I like a nice cup of tea in the morning.

Karen: I know you do.

Emily: Cheers Charlie!