##### 21 Talks Episode 06 - Transcript

##### Hello and welcome to 21 Talks, a podcast series from Housing 21 that’s challenging the way older people are represented and talked about in everyday conversations.

##### Laura Gilling: Hello everyone. Welcome to a new episode of 21 Talks. My name is Laura. I'm a care worker at Housing 21 based at Farmers Court in Rugby. I've been in my role now for five years, and one of the areas I'm really passionate about, both professionally and personally, is supporting people to get active and have fun while they are doing it.

I'm a firm believer that you don't need to be an athlete or a sporty individual to be active, and that actually, there's lots of approaches people can take that will help people release endorphins, those feel-good hormones, and get people moving in a way that suits them and their body.

Joining me on today's podcast are two residents. Both have a lot to say on the positive impact social or physical activities can have on people's well-being. Zohra and Austin are going to be sharing their own, but very different experiences in terms of how they like to spend their time and get moving.

But before we jump into that, Austin, would you be able to tell our listeners a little bit about yourself and share how long you've been a Housing 21 resident?

##### Austin: Yes, Laura. I'm Austin Grant. I'm at Lynam Court in Nottingham, and I've been there for about six, seven years now. A very nice court. I've enjoyed my stay there. Everyone's very welcome, and we get along quite well.

##### Laura Gilling: Oh, that's lovely to hear. What about you, Zohra? How long have you been a resident at Housing 21?

##### Zohra: Hi. Good morning, I'm Zohra. I've been here 11 years now in Stoneleigh Court. We do lots of activities. I like to meet people. So we are always interacting with everybody. Our manager is very supportive, very, very supportive, with us, with me. That's me.

##### Laura Gilling: That's really great to hear how your local housing manager supports you and other residents. We'll come back to that later on. Now, before that, both of you live at different schemes. Would you be able to paint a picture of what it's like where you live? Could you let me know about the outside and communal space at your scheme, Austin?

##### Austin: Yeah, there's plenty of outdoor spaces at our scheme, but we don't have any particular area. The garden is just for everyone to enjoy. There is one person that loves gardening, so he probably plants most of the flowers. I'm not a gardener, so. But outside the window, you have just a small space to put a plant pot or a window box. That's about it.

There's plenty of trees at the back of the houses; plum trees mainly. But yeah, it's a very nice garden and benches are out there. We have umbrellas for people to sit out there when sun's out. But yeah, it's a communal garden for everyone to enjoy. Usually, I'll go and sit under the umbrellas or sit at the table just to chill out for an hour or so, have a cup of tea.

##### Laura Gilling: Oh, that sounds really great. Now, Zohra, I heard through the grapevine that you like to garden. What's the outside space like, where you are? Do many of the residents go outside or help with looking after the surrounding area?

##### Zohra: Well, we do, we do. We got a massive, massive garden at the back on the side as well, where we got our big hall where we do all our entertainment and the residents do come out. But we get a lot of sun in the afternoon, so they're not there in the afternoon.

But in the evening everybody's at the back. We were very lucky. We asked for a pond and Housing 21 provided us with a lovely pond. It's nature. We've done a nature thing and they all go out because you've got lots of dragonflies and we've got hedgehogs.

##### Laura Gilling: That's wonderful, Zohra. It's good to hear how you and your neighbours value the outside space at your scheme. Austin, I believe your hobbies are a little different to Zohra's. Is it true that you used to be a basketball coach for England?

##### Austin: Yeah, I'm the ex-England assistant coach for the schools under 16s. Basketball's been my passion and rugby most of my life. I usually coach in primary schools, secondary schools, clubs, national league. I'm always on the go weekday and each day. Most of my week is spent coaching at schools, after school activities in the summer. I coach my own team during the week; well, once a week. Mainly it's been around kids probably 5-18 for most of my life.

##### Laura Gilling: Wow! That's really impressive. How long have you been coaching for?

##### Austin: I've coached for over 56. No, 46. I lost 10 years. I've been a coach for over 46 years. I run leagues for primary schools. Once a fortnight on a Sunday in the afternoon, it's probably 10 teams down there playing hour games, one after the other.

##### Laura Gilling: What do you enjoy most about coaching, and how was your approach changed over the years?

##### Austin: I enjoy coaching because I can see the enjoyment that the younger kids get, especially the primary school kids, when they achieve something. I'm also part of the Special Olympics as well. We have a group of kids that play basketball and their enjoyment is just unbelievable. But yeah, I like to coach and get the kids engaged in what we're doing and they thoroughly enjoy it.

##### Laura Gilling: It sounds like you're a great coach. Is there anything you like to do with the other residents at your court, though? I don't suppose you play basketball with them?

##### Austin: Well, I've just finished my level 2 catering course, and we hope to start doing some cooking or helping the court manager out probably once a month to start with. That's probably something else I do. I do like cooking.

##### Laura Gilling: Well, congratulations on completing your course. What are you looking forward to cooking most for the other residents?

##### Austin: Shepherd's pie.

##### Laura Gilling: Classic. Well, I'll have to see if I can pop over to your court when you're making it and sample some. Zohra, you regularly hold a chair-based exercise class for your neighbours, don't you?

##### Zohra: We have it every week chair-based exercise every week on a Friday morning. We have a games afternoon as well. We've got some board games which some of the residents enjoy a lot.

##### Laura Gilling: Just on the chair-based exercises, what is it that you and the residents do? What does it involve?

##### Zohra: Well, sitting down we first greet one another in every language because it's it's a multicultural court. I started by saying, "What would you greet in your language," and it's very nice. I respond, and then I greet them in the three languages I know. We start with breathing exercises. I don't push it to them. I say to them, "Try and move them."

We do tai chi. I know it's it's standing, but they can do it sitting because I've observed it on the television and I've made interest and they do tai chi and yoga. But we don't cross our legs. They just cross their legs and do breathing exercises. It's a good one hour exercise, we have it here. They attend very, very regularly. They put in 50 pence. It's just something a norm. But all that money we send to charity.

##### Laura Gilling: It's really great that people are coming regularly as well, isn't it? How long have you been doing it for?

##### Zohra: I think about good 11 years, I would say. It started on a slow basis. But yes, since I've been here, I've started it. Really, it was Angie who really supported me into pushing it. I really thank Angie for giving me this little support she gives me.

##### Laura Gilling: Just for our listeners tuning in, can you tell them who Angie is?

##### Zohra: Angie is here. She's the housing manager for our court. Very supportive, very supportive now.

##### Laura Gilling: Just on that, I know across our schemes, residents are encouraged to set up activities themselves. I know our court, we have Knit and Natter we have card games, bowling, all sorts of things.

##### Zohra: Oh, yes.

##### Laura Gilling: How did you go about getting other residents involved with your chair-based class?

##### Zohra: I think we were just sitting. I was talking to the ladies and sitting and said, "Let's have a chair. We're all sitting in our flats, why don't you come down?" I spoke to Angie and she said, "Fine, Zohra. Carry on."

##### Laura Gilling: What about your scheme, Austin? Are there any activities organised by other residents that you like to go along to?

##### Austin: I think at the court they do do other things. There's bingo, there's a monthly cook lunchtime, they do dominoes, and they go out on trips. But I personally have other things to do, so I don't actually get involved.

##### Laura Gilling: That's completely fair. It's nice to have the option, but appreciate people will have other focuses and activities that they want to be involved with and that supports their own well-being and interests.

With that said, across Housing 21, we often talk about well-being and the importance of it for residents, but also our colleagues too. We've implemented a number of initiatives, such as flexible working policy for operational staff and career pathway initiatives for frontline-facing staff members.

For residents, we've incorporated policies that have been widely popular across our schemes. One in particular is our pet policy. Many people who own pets often talk about the value that this has on their health and well-being, due to the associated activities that being a pet owner involves.

I'd be interested to hear from you both what well-being means to you, and if there's anything in addition to your coaching, gardening and chair-based exercise classes that you feel positively contributes to your own well-being.

##### Austin: My well-being is being around kids who are learning. That's my stimulation. The coaching is really pivotal to that. It stimulates me. It makes me want to get there, get set up, and get the coaching going as quickly as possible. That, for me, is my bread and butter. Every morning I wake up, I'm always thinking about what I'm going to do. It makes me think, it makes me plan, and it stimulates my day.

##### Zohra: Well-being to me being, because I'm a widow well—most of us are widows—but it's opening up and they can open up to me and I can open up to them. We tell our little stories. I love gardening. I've always loved gardening. But going into the garden some days, you do remember - oh you've lost your husband and you're far away from your family and you get involved. You can have a little tear there and have a little moan there. That way, I let my adrenaline out there.

But it's nice when the other residents come. Then sometimes they'll say, "Oh, I feel so down in the dumps. I lost my husband." It would have been a long time ago. But sitting around and they look at a plant or something and then they'll say, "My husband used to like that plant," or, "We did that," and you're sharing other person's grief as well, but at the same time, not overburdening. I'm a good listener. I am a very good listener.

##### Laura Gilling: Thank you for being so open throughout our conversation today. You've both inspired me to keep moving and doing the things I enjoy, even if it changes and looks different as the years go by.

To end today's podcast, I wondered if you would share some final advice to our listeners who have maybe always wanted to try a new activity but have been too nervous to do so, or are keen to incorporate something new into the routine but don't know where to start. What words of encouragement would you give to them?

##### Austin: I think everyone has to start somewhere. For me, it's volunteering. If you volunteer to do something… I've just done the London Olympics, which was a phenomenal event, which I got a hell of a lot of enjoyment out of it. Volunteering or setting up a group, it's really hard for some people within Housing 21.

If you start with just 2 of you and then try and build it up to 3, 4 or 5, and hopefully you'll have a group functioning within the court. It's not that easy. Some people like to stay in their flat, which is fine. Some like to get out, walk the dog, sit in the garden, have a chat. That is a group. I think everyone needs to try and talk to someone and not be locked up, as they say, in your own flat.

##### Laura Gilling: I think that sometimes it can be hard to find that motivation to get outside. But you're right, and it's great that you found something that brings you enjoyment. Before I ask Zohra for her final comment, I've got to ask, what was it like volunteering at the Olympics? Did you also volunteer at the recent Commonwealth Games?

##### Austin: Yes, I did. Volunteering at that basketball. I was one of the court managers. The Olympics was phenomenal because it was the first time I've been in London in the underground, and everyone was talking to each other.

##### Laura Gilling: I love how sport brings people together, so I agree. What about you, Zohra? What motivates you to try new things?

##### Zohra: Well, it gives me a lot of pleasure to meet… I've always loved people. Even if you can't speak their language, we say we can be bilingual. It's nice to say, "How would you say that?" I'm a people's person. I love to meet people. I love to because I've travelled a lot in the world. I've travelled a lot. I've seen the world with my ex-husband.

Even now, I mean, okay, I'm down and we can't do a lot of things now because you got to make sure how you go whereabout. But I love meeting people and I love to hear people's views. I like Austin. I'm very honoured to meet you, Austin.

##### Laura Gilling: When you talk to people, you often find you're not alone in your experience. For anyone listening who wouldn't describe themselves as a people person and are perhaps less confident at starting a new activity and meeting new people, what advice would you give to them?

##### Zohra: I think you could start on a very… See, if you start learning to walk, you'd go on the first step and the second step. If you take it gradually, you can win people over. This is my motto. This is my motto. Even if you don't speak the language, but just to smile and just say, "Oh, hello. What's your name?" These little things. I said, "Oh, can I help you with this?" And things like that. Not that we pry into their affairs, but a little courtesy. A hello makes a big difference. Hello makes a very big difference.

##### Laura Gilling: Thanks, Zohra. Thank you both so much for your time and for making your first podcast debut. You've been great guests on today's episode. I'm sure you will have given our listeners at least one action or piece of inspiration to take away. Thank you, again, and to all our listeners for tuning in. Until next time. Bye for now.