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# The impact of Promoting Excellence in social service settings: the positive role of Dementia Ambassadors

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## Foreword

I'm delighted to share the third booklet of dementia learning journeys with you. It showcases ways social services are using Promoting Excellence resources, as well as reflecting on the review of the Dementia Ambassador role we completed this year.

With the Scottish Government publishing a third Dementia Strategy in 2017, we continue to work in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland (NES) to embed Promoting Excellence learning by supporting Dementia Ambassadors and social service Dementia Champions in their role.

We continue to celebrate the way organisations have supported the framework. We also welcome the positive way Dementia Ambassadors have been part of supporting dementia learning and development across the social service workforce.

This publication celebrates the hard work and dedication of the social service workforce to improving dementia practice. Since 2016 we have been reviewing the spread and impact of Dementia Ambassadors and we'd like to thank everyone that has taken the time to respond to the many ways we have engaged with you.

The information shared here highlights the way in which the workforce has embraced supporting dementia learning and development, using the Dementia Ambassador role. People's dedication and commitment in this role continues to inspire us and we are delighted to be able to share their hard work publicly.



We'd like to thank all of those that contributed to this booklet. We appreciate the time they have taken to share their hard work and dedication to dementia learning and we are sure it will be a positive inspiration to others. We are certain these stories reflect the positive outcomes that the Promoting Excellence framework is enabling.

We continue to be encouraged by the fantastic work of Dementia Ambassadors and social service Dementia Champions while they work in an ever changing and transforming landscape. Their commitment to using Promoting Excellence to improve outcomes for people living with dementia is to be celebrated.

**Anna Fowlie**

**Chief Executive, SSSC**

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## **Dementia Ambassador review: a thank you**

The Promoting Excellence team at the SSSC have been working on a review of Dementia Ambassadors since 2016. With over 850 Dementia Ambassadors working throughout Scotland in a wide variety of roles in health, social care and other services, this has been no small task.

We would like to thank every single Dementia Ambassador who has taken time out of their work to respond to this review – whether it was completing an online survey, speaking to us on the phone, contributing at a leadership event or taking part in a focus group.

We value every contribution and have been enthused by the willingness to take part in this process. Your continued passion for dementia learning is inspiring. We really appreciate the way you have supported us as we found out more about the reach of the work you do, as well as evaluating the experience of being a Dementia Ambassador.

We wanted to share what we have found during this process and give you an idea of the future direction of Promoting Excellence work in this booklet. We want to continue to celebrate examples of positive working with the Promoting Excellence framework and Dementia Ambassador role and look forward to continuing this work.

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# Dementia Ambassadors review timeline

- 2016 Online survey sent out to all Dementia Ambassadors
  - 2016 Focus groups held throughout the country
  - 2017 Feedback from the 'vision wall' at the Dementia Ambassador conference
  - 2017 Phone contact made with all remaining Dementia Ambassadors
  - 2017 Report of findings presented to the Promoting Excellence Programme Board in June
  - 2017 Reference Group created in September
  - 2017 Feedback gathered during Dementia Ambassador leadership events (Oct - Nov)
  - 2017 Focus groups held in December
  - 2018 Reference Group and action plan presented to Promoting Excellence Programme Board March
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# Themes from the Dementia Ambassadors review

## Role and impact on service

- Dementia Ambassadors saw their role as supporting colleagues and improving practice, facilitating learning and training staff.
- Felt their role and using Promoting Excellence materials resulted in increased knowledge and understanding, improved confidence and motivated and improved staff practice.

## Induction

- This should cover understanding and clarity of the role, information regarding resources available. Need for networking and local contacts.

## Learning events

- Supported them by improving knowledge, sharing of good practice and networking with others.

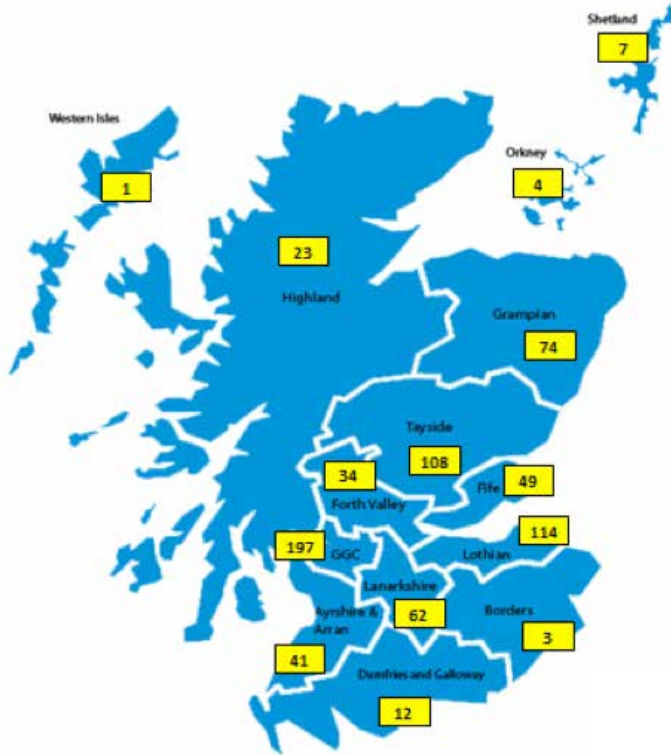
## Communication

- The SSSC provided them with up to date information and support.

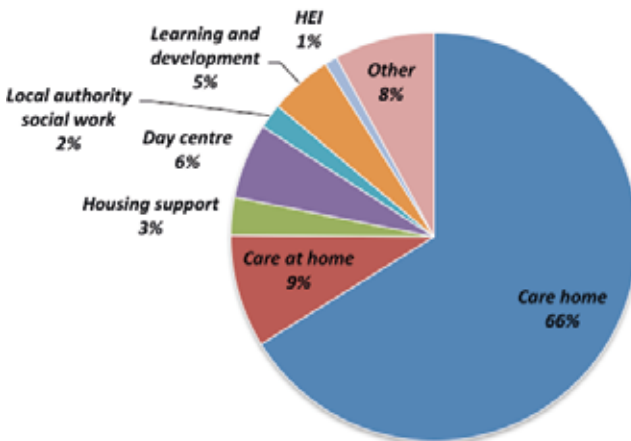
## Further support/learning and development

- Most popular resources used in order were the Skilled, Informed and then Enhanced resource.
  - Mainly used to facilitate learning activities and to support colleagues to access and use the learning resources themselves.
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## Spread of Dementia Ambassadors by area



## Dementia Ambassadors by service type



## Promoting Excellence: our ongoing journey

Trust Housing Association is a national housing, support and care provider, offering a range of accommodation and support services. Primarily serving older people in our communities we also provide housing for families and individuals. We have over 2,500 households across the length and breadth of Scotland.

We launched Promoting Excellence training in September 2014 because we recognised the importance of supporting staff in this area, identifying that all coordinators, housing care managers, housing with care and supported housing workers and mobile coordinators, undertake the Skilled level of the framework. For other staff such as domestics, cooks and handymen we felt the Informed level meet those staff groups best; however some choose to come along to the Skilled level.

When looking over the framework we chose to send out four pieces of work:

- From Module 1:
  - o Understanding Dementia
  - o Types of dementia
  - o George's story
  - o Risk factors
- From Module 3:
  - o Promoting Health and Wellbeing for People with Dementia.

We send out pre-course guidance, asking staff to read through each piece of work and record their thoughts and ideas. We found that by sending out this work, staff were well prepared for attending the course and had thought about the people living with dementia they were currently supporting in particular tenants or personal experiences they had.

Staff told us they found it particularly helpful to read the information in advance as they felt prepared and had some excellent examples of working with tenants who have dementia they could share with the wider group.

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As well as working with staff through the five modules of the Dementia Skilled and Informed levels, we have added the following material:

- Statistics and costs relating to living with dementia
- Dementia and diet
- Music and dementia (specifically Playlist for Life).

### **Statistics and costs**

This was something we were asked about regularly when we first launched the training course – how many people have dementia, what are the risk factors so it felt important to research current figures so we could share this with staff.

### **Dementia and diet**

We have a catering service at many of our developments so it was extremely important to cover this area not only in relation to consuming food and drink but also the social aspect of dining when living with dementia.

### **Music and dementia**

In this section we discuss music therapy, research and ongoing studies relating to music and dementia. We use Youtube clips one from Playlist for Life where there is a significant improvement in the gentleman's communication and one from the USA, where the lady has no verbal communication but can tap out a rhythm to a childhood song. We also link this section to the importance of life story work and knowing the type of music that someone enjoys.

We asked each trainer (four in total) to complete a life story, for themselves including memories, photographs etc. This has proved incredibly popular with staff who, although they knew the trainers, were surprised to find out more about them, that could really help in a support or care setting, sitting alongside each person's individual plan.

Using the Promoting Excellence framework we identified a cohort of eight coordinators who all had multiple tenants living with dementia. This group undertook the City and Guilds Accredited Best Practice in Dementia Care Learning Programme via the University of Stirling. This allowed them to gain a deeper understanding of dementia and alternative ways they could support our tenants.

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## Making a difference

Over the past three years we have trained 204 development and office staff across the organisation and have seen staff confidence in dealing with dementia grow considerably. This has been commented on in recent inspections by the Care Inspectorate and in external audits from Investors in People (IiP). Our last IiP report said: 'Over and above your mandatory training, there are many opportunities for development and people are empowered to source training at a local level that is specific to the needs of the development'.

## Next steps

We are moving towards a digital workplace and as part of that our intranet will have a dementia page which will be kept up to date with relevant articles as well as giving staff the opportunity to post suggestions or queries on a virtual notice board.

We have found the Promoting Excellence a wonderful framework for starting our dementia training journey, we have felt able to add to it as required and use it as a stepping stone onto more in-depth training. The SSSC Promoting Excellence team have offered so much support and we have benefitted from signing up as Dementia Ambassadors and attending conferences and network opportunities.

# The Dementia Ambassador journey



CrossReach embarked on their Dementia Ambassador journey in 2012. We were supported by the Promoting Excellence team at the SSSC

with 12 enthusiastic staff receiving an induction. We first started out with one Dementia Ambassador in each of the older people's care home.

Our head of service for older people was fully behind the idea and agreed that to enable them to make an impact they would be given time to do so. He agreed that each service ambassador would have a day a month off the floor to work on this role.

Pamela Mackay (Dementia Development Coordinator) set about creating resources folders for each of the services. These folders contained information about dementia, the national dementia strategies and other policy drivers relating to dementia care.

The ambassadors were also given the role to help with induction within the service, supporting new staff members to watch the Informed About Dementia DVD. They then work through the Informed About Dementia pack with individuals.

## Support for ambassadors

The dementia development team supports the ambassadors and issue them with a Dementia Ambassador badge. There are three regional meetings a year for ambassadors and also an annual conference when they all get together. Each regional meeting has a theme of leadership and enables the staff to see how their role can make a difference. This is done using the SSSC Step into Leadership tool. All ambassadors are asked to think of an idea to improve something in their service and are supported to work through this with the capabilities.

There has been some great impact from these pieces of work. One ambassador recently had the vision to improve the experience for the men in the care home. The salon they had was very female orientated, so she collaborated with a local business and they have now donated barber's chairs and all the equipment and training to do hot towel shaves for the men.

Other pieces of work include small things, but they have all made a difference. The ambassadors in one service asked to be involved in the King's Fund EHE Environmental Assessment Tool, and as a result bought some two seater couches and made new signage that has improved the experience of people living in their care service. The ambassadors also work with the care team and others to make sure the quality of life indicators

are being achieved, there is participation from families and visiting professional's too, so it is a good way of ensuring quality in the service.

Over the last year we have covered various topics of education and training that the ambassadors have asked for, including, cognitive stimulation therapy, palliative and end of life care and how to use Yammer.

## **Networking and sharing**

The ambassadors have been networking and sharing good practice on the digital platform Yammer. This has been a good way of sustaining the role as the ambassadors are supporting each other. Another role of the ambassador is sharing, so they have a slot at each full staff meeting so they can chat with the staff. They also research best practice and keep their resource folders up to date with things that are relevant in their service.

All our ambassadors are trained to at least Skilled Promoting Excellence level. The role is open to any member of staff who is passionate about dementia care and making a difference. We have seniors, care workers, night care workers and some housekeeping staff doing the role.

It has also been good for career progression. One ambassador started as housekeeping assistant and through increasing her knowledge with the role and gaining confidence she has worked her way to a senior care worker. She is a role model for other staff with her dementia practice.

The conferences have had presentations by the ambassadors on some projects they have done that have made an impact and improved the quality of life for the person living with dementia and their families.

## **Strength to strength**

We now have over 40 ambassadors across Crossreach services. At times we have more than one ambassador in individual projects offering different skills, so they can blend their knowledge and experience and work together to achieve the best for the people using the service.

In the last year or so we have now embarked on having a Dementia Ambassador in each of our learning disability services who now come along to our meetings.

The ambassador journey has gone from strength to strength over the past five years; however it does need to be fully supported in an infrastructure that values the role.

The role is making a difference to people living with dementia every day. It's also a good networking role for the families of people who live in the service, the role gives them a go to person.

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# Care Inspectorate

## Heather Edwards, Allied Health Professionals Consultant

At the end of last year we published the report **My life, my care home (The Experiences of People Living with Dementia in Care Homes in Scotland)**.

In this report we looked at the national dementia standards which include: 'I have the right to carers who are well supported and educated about dementia.' We found that care homes which graded better on this dementia standard had a higher number of Dementia Ambassadors compared to those that didn't.

It was encouraging to see the majority of staff were given opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge so they can best support people living with dementia to live the best quality life possible. There is always the challenge of taking learning into everyday practice and it is here that I have seen Dementia Ambassadors do some fantastic work. As a Dementia Ambassador, you can be a role model for new staff starting out on a career in care as well as a motivator and inspiration to colleagues who may be experienced but feel the need for fresh ideas.

Dementia Ambassadors are to the people who help keep dementia learning alive and relevant to their peers, bringing in new ideas and sharing best practice. I know many Dementia Ambassadors really engaged with the King's Fund EHE Environmental Assessment Tool in looking at the care home environment, making sure that lighting levels were good enough and that colour contrasts were used to promote independence, as well as reducing barriers for good mobility.

As you think about trying new ideas where you work, I would ask that you think about these changes to make sure they really will result in an improvement. Plan your ideas and test small to see if the change does what you hoped it would. Then you can expand your idea slowly, testing continuously to make sure the improvements in one area aren't at the expense of another area.

As Dementia Ambassadors, you are often the person that colleagues come to for support and it is important that you too are supported and encouraged in your role so your own wellbeing and resilience is taken care of and nourished. Person-centred care has at its heart the wellbeing of



Heather Edwards

all care partners, those receiving care and support and those providing it. You clearly have a strong identity as a Dementia Ambassador and you are part of a larger group of ambassadors from all across Scotland supported by the Scottish Social Services Council and NHS Education for Scotland. By being valued in work and valuing yourself, you will be able to truly value those you work with every day. It is important that you receive regular supervision so you are able to continue your valuable and important work. Thank you for the work you do and for being passionate about supporting people living with dementia to live well.

# The impact of Dementia Ambassadors

The Dementia Ambassador review reflects overwhelmingly the value and enthusiasm you all have for the role. We continue to celebrate the role Dementia Ambassadors have in embedding the Promoting Excellence framework across social care and health. We also recognise Dementia Ambassadors have taken on this role while working in an ever changing landscape.

The review reflected the motivations of Dementia Ambassadors – that is, to support people living with dementia in a holistic and personalised manner. It also highlighted the work Dementia Ambassadors are involved in, both locally and nationally, and the positive connections and networks there are.

## Maintaining momentum

We will continue to work in close partnership with NHS Education (NES) to support the Promoting Excellence framework with both the health and social care workforce. We'll also continue to work with other national programmes, including the Focus in Dementia work programme.

We understand the changing landscape Dementia Ambassadors work in and that although they support people living with dementia, it's not the only thing they do. Dementia Ambassadors work with people with dementia and carers in a holistic way: seeing them as a person first and foremost. A person with diverse and individual strengths, preferences, needs and experiences, who may also be living with multiple other conditions.

## Future steps

This review highlights a strong foundation and opportunity to build on the experience, passion and work of Dementia Ambassadors. We will progress the learning from the Dementia Ambassador review, to create a learning resource for Dementia Ambassadors that supports their continuing personal and professional development. The resource will support Dementia Ambassadors to evidence the impact of learning and knowledge on practice and will reinforce connection with personal outcomes, palliative and end of life care and support for Carers.

In future we will focus support on existing local learning networks to build sustainability for dementia learning and strengthen the positive connections already developed.

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