

**Wolverhampton: Dementia-Friendly City
– from roots to blossom and seeds**

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On June 5th Worcester University and the Journal of Dementia Care hosted a conference on Dementia Care in the Community, the fourteenth in a series, which began in 2000.

It was wonderful to find this launched with a showcase and discussion of current work being undertaken to make Wolverhampton a dementia-friendly community (see <http://www2.wolverhampton.gov.uk/council/news/2012/august/280812d.htm>). Santosh Kumari (the Commissioning Officer for Wolverhampton Council) fronted the meeting with live contributions from others on the day and video contributions from colleagues and partners in the traditional health and social care sectors as well as the retail sector, schools and other agencies.

For those who have travelled with Wolverhampton in its trials and triumphs, we looked back to the creation of the Wolverhampton Branch of the Alzheimer's Society through the efforts and passionate commitment of Moira Low its first Chairman in the early 1990s. Moira received great support from the Council and the Director of Social Services at that time, Martin Shreeve. They would be proud to see the massive changes and improvements in knowledge and understanding of people with dementia, their needs and the needs of their families, which are being realised in the City and shared with other leaders in the field.

Having seen Alzheimer's disease in her grandmother, Moira then saw it emerge in her mother and began to share with her father the task of caring for her. They wanted to learn as much as they could about dementia and to be sure that mum, and other people with the condition, could receive the best of assessment, treatment and support. There was no branch of the Alzheimer's Society in the town at that time and formal health and social services had not given it high priority. Moira turned to the Dudley Branch of the Society and received generous support, which she reciprocated several fold. Her efforts were rewarded by enthusiastic responses particularly from Wolverhampton Social Services through Martin Shreeve. Moira met Tom Kitwood of Bradford University and became deeply influenced by his work on person centred care. She was involved in helping to set up the first residential-respite care for people with dementia, the Kinver Unit at the Mandela Residential Home. She was honoured Citizen of the Year for Wolverhampton, 1996.

Moira knew about dementia, cared about it and did as much as she could to improve services and support for people with dementia, their family carers, and professionals working in the field. Her impact was greatest in Wolverhampton, but she became known throughout the country. She was a very spiritual person and a regular member of St Jude's Church on the Tettenhall Road. She recruited and inspired support from other carers and colleagues in Social Services and health care, most notable amongst whom is Moni Grizzell, a dedicated nurse who continues to lead the Memory Clinic in Wolverhampton and has represented safety and sense to generations of people with dementia, their family carers and professionals and trainees of every discipline. Together they encouraged others to join them; to have a vision for better services; and to deliver it (Jolley 1996, Jolley et al 1997, Jolley, Jenkins and Dixey 1997, Read and Jolley 2005, Benbow and Jolley 2012)

When Moira died in 1999, she left substantial legacies for continued work in Wolverhampton through the Alzheimer's Society Branch, Social Services and research. A fund, which had its origins in Wolverhampton Health Care NHS Trust, was renamed in her honour. It has sponsored training, education and research in dementia for and by people working with people with dementia in the City. Monies to the fund came from donations and proxies for lecture and training fees and averaged one to two thousand pounds per annum. Additional money came from modest research grants.

Education and training:

The fund provided financial support for staff of the PCT (and its predecessor) and Local Authority employees to attend courses. These have included half day and full day release events. Larger sums have supported training in Horticultural Therapy and Social Work and a commitment was made from 2004 to support one candidate per annum to enrol on an MSc course relevant to the care of older people with dementia or other mental health problems at a local university. Wolverhampton University, Staffordshire University and Birmingham University all initiated such courses during this period with contributions from practitioners and

academics from Wolverhampton. Five individuals have been supported on full Masters courses and others have attended targeted modules.

Research outputs, presentations and publications

An initial survey of dementia in Wolverhampton: An analysis of the characteristics and needs of people known to have dementia and their carers in North East Wolverhampton: the work was presented at the Science Park Wolverhampton December 1996.

Studies of spirituality and faith in dementia: This study of faith and stresses amongst people with dementia and their carers attending the Memory Clinic at Penn Hospital (Dopson 2005) culminated in presentations to the College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) (Jolley et al 2005), to the British Society of Gerontology (BSG) (Jolley D 2007), plus the John Young Lecture (Stafford) 2006, and talks to local groups. Further collaborations were generated with groups of similar interest in Bradford, Manchester, London and Hull and from these publications have followed (Jolley et al 2010, Moreland and Jolley 2011, Benbow and Jolley 2010).

Studies of dementia amongst the South Asian and African Caribbean communities of Wolverhampton: These studies included the Twice a Child series and a collaborative venture with colleagues in Bradford. Presentations have been made at the BSG, RCPsych and several other centres. Karan Jutlla (now of The University of Worcester) has obtained her PhD in extending these studies and there have been several publications (Dementiplus 2001 and 2003, Dementiplus and Bradford Social Services 2004, Moreland et al 2005, Jutlla and Moreland 2007, Kaur et al 2010, Jutlla 2011).

Studies of Memory Clinic clients and outcomes: Moira's close friend, Moni Grizzell, led this work. Presentations have been made at the Royal College of Nursing, National Memory Clinic conferences and in several other settings. Sarah Lyle presented findings in her MSc dissertation for Keele University. Others of the team established the West Midlands Memory

Clinic Network, produced reviews of Memory Services and extended the concept to create a Memory Clinic in Primary Care (Lyle 2003, Grizzell et al 2006, Jolley et al 2006, Lyle et al 2008, Greaves et al 2008, Jolley and Graham 2009).

Care of people surviving into late life with chronic mental illness: Whilst dementia has been the biggest issue for mental health services addressing the needs of older people, it is important to recognise that other groups may experience even greater neglect. Pioneering studies of the circumstances of people 'graduating' into old age with chronic or relapsing serious mental illness may lead to better services by greater understanding (Clark et al 2002, Jolley et al 2002, Jolley et al 2004, Bawn et al 2004, Bawn et al 2007)

People with Learning Disabilities: Two projects were carried out relating to dementia and people with learning disability. One was a national project carried out for the Faculties of Old Age Psychiatry and Learning Disability Psychiatry, Royal College of Psychiatrists, which resulted in several presentations, a report (Benbow et al., 2010) and a paper (Benbow et al., 2011). Alongside this a psychology assistant was employed and carried out a local project to establish a database of people with Down syndrome in Wolverhampton who were at increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease later in life: this also resulted in presentations and a published paper (Hobson et al., 2012).

Reflection

So the inspiration stemming from Moira Low, including the activities of a small fund which has carried her name, has yielded blossoms and seeds of hope and possibilities where there appeared to be very little. This tradition goes on and is celebrated in the work described at Worcester. It is wonderful to reflect that the determination and love of one small person can lead to such sustained benefit.

The Moira Low fund has recently been closed with the remaining monies diverted to support new ventures: evaluation of tea dances at the Blakenhall Resource Centre, Alz Café, the

Dementia Carers Support Group in Wolverhampton and Dementia Pathfinders

<http://dementiopathfinders.org/>. Dementia Pathfinders is a newly formed enterprise aiming to deliver therapeutic care and support for people with dementia and their families, and programmes of education and learning for people working in the dementia care field. It will have a base in the City.

So well done Wolverhampton for taking up the challenge via Moira and Moni 20 years ago, for growing and nurturing understanding and better services through listening and teaching, and well done Wolverhampton, Moira, Moni and others for laying seed for ever more improvements in these years to come. 

Well done and thanks too to the Journal of Dementia Care and Dementia UK (previously *fordementia*) for the series of annual study days on Dementia in the Community, based in the West Midlands.



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