



# **Evaluation report:**

**Pilot placements (2014) for occupational therapy students from Queen Margaret and Glasgow Caledonian Universities with Alzheimer Scotland.**

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## **Background: Health and social care integration**

Education that supports integration, co-production and partnership working in Scotland is essential for both the current and future workforce in health and social care, (Scottish Government, 2010, Scottish Government, 2012, Scottish Government, 2013).

As Scotland's leading dementia organisation with services throughout Scotland, Alzheimer Scotland has been working together with Scottish universities, further education colleges and NHS Education for Scotland to develop new placement models for Allied Health Professions (AHPs) students. This supports a wider programme of work led by NHS Education for Scotland to support the advancement of pre-registration education, in the context of the *Everyone Matters: 2020 vision* (Scottish Government, 2013) for the delivery of health care and the integration of Health and Social Care.

Whilst some AHP students may gain insight into the role of charitable organisations through observational visits or through volunteering, few have been offered formal learning opportunities or core placements within the voluntary, charitable or third sectors.

The objectives for placements within Alzheimer Scotland is set in the context of promoting excellence (2011) and supporting the key drivers in Scotland's dementia strategy (Scottish Government (2013) *Scotland's National Dementia Strategy 2013-2016*). The overall aim of the AHP placements in Alzheimer Scotland are to :

- Provide AHP students with undergraduate experience of working with people living with dementia, therefore contributing to the skills of the future AHP workforce.
- Provide AHP students with first-hand experience of working with and gain an understanding of Alzheimer Scotland as the leading organisation in dementia.
- Provide an opportunity for people who come to Alzheimer Scotland to work with a range of allied health professionals for mutual benefit.

This is also integral to a wider development of AHP intern/placement/volunteer models development.

This report describes the outcomes of a number of pilot placements for Occupational Therapy students within Alzheimer Scotland during 2014.

## **Pilot**

### **Aims**

Alzheimer Scotland, Queen Margaret University and Glasgow Caledonian University agreed to develop and implement pilot placement for four students. For this new

development, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) supported this work in piloting the impact of these new placements in Alzheimer Scotland.

The aims of the pilot placements were to:

- explore potential models and settings for placements.
- evaluate the experiences and learning gained.

### Placement models

Two different placement models were used during the pilot in terms of placement length and setting, learning outcomes and supervision, and the student learning stage.

Two students from Queen Margaret University (QMU) were placed within model one and two students from Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) in model two.

**Table of placement model details**

	<b>Model 1: QMU</b>	<b>Model 2: GCU</b>
Number of students	Two	Two
Learning stage	Level 3	Level 4
Placement setting	Both students in the same Alzheimer Scotland Resource Centre in Kirkcaldy	1 student in Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Centre in Paisley  1 student in Alzheimer Scotland Resource Centre in Greenock
Type of placement	Core Placement	Role Emerging Placement (observational)
Length	Five days per week for eight weeks.	Pre- placement visit and then eighteen days within the placement setting which is most commonly completed at a rate of two days per week for nine weeks

Student selection	Students were selected for this setting in the usual manner as part of the general student placement allocation.	Students chose this placement location from a list of non traditional placement settings available.
Learning outcomes	<p>Placement learning outcomes were the same as those for other core placements within the NHS and social services.</p> <p>This was an assessed placement.</p>	<p>Specific outcomes were set for this placement setting based on student reflection and the development of a service proposal for Alzheimer Scotland. The students were required to consider the aims and ethos of the placement area, the services that were offered, relevant policy context and observed the interactions between resource centre workers and the service users. Based on this gathered knowledge the students produced a service development proposal for the setting which was assessed by Glasgow Caledonian University Occupational Therapy staff.</p>
Supervision for learning and support	<p>Two students on placement in the same setting. This was a Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Model giving the students an opportunity to support and learn from each other.</p> <p>Supervision by QMU lecturer at the university at dedicated times and available at other times</p>	<p>Both students had on-site supervisors from Alzheimer Scotland who provided them with support.</p> <p>There was one student on placement within each centre but opportunities for peer assisted learning when the students met within Glasgow Caledonian</p>

	<p>when support was required.</p> <p>Lecturer visited the site with the AHP consultant in Alzheimer Scotland and there was regular contact with both the lecturer and consultant throughout.</p> <p>The Practice Educator on site was an HCPC registered Occupational Therapist at the time working within Alzheimer Scotland.</p>	<p>University and supported each other with their placements.</p>
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## Evaluation

### Aims

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to:

- 1) Explore the experiences of the Occupational Therapy students who participated in the pilot placements
- 2) To consider what worked well, challenges within the placement and the learning the student gained from these placements.

### Method

A qualitative method of evaluation with a semi-structured interview format with open ended questions was used to gain feedback about the learning and pilot experience. They were conducted at the placement sites by the NHS Lothian AHP Practice Education Lead, with informed consent, with:

- ✓ 4 students who were on placement
- ✓ 1 resource centre manager within an Alzheimer Scotland placement site
- ✓ 1 university lecturer involved

The students were also asked to pick two envision card which best depicted their placement experience. Envision cards (Edinburgh Napier University, NHS Education for Scotland, NHS Lothian, 2012) are a set of visual images which assist people to describe their experiences and stories, thoughts and feelings through the images.

The students consented to their interviews being filmed by Raw Film Productions (<http://rawfilmproductions.com>) to allow their experiences of a placement within an Alzheimer Scotland resource centre to be shared more widely.

## Results

The 2 QMU students achieved their learning outcomes and passed their placements and both GCU students met the agreed outcome i.e. developed service developments proposals.

All 4 students described this as a positive learning experience and valued learning about dementia and how the condition affects people in different ways along the disease continuum.

They reported:

- their understanding of how Alzheimer Scotland supports people to live their lives with dementia was significantly enhanced
- they were able to observe person-centred care in action and described people being treated with 'dignity' and 'respect' despite being concerned that they did not have enough direct 'client contact'.
- the placements differed from previous ones as they were working autonomously in settings that did not have an Occupational therapy service already in place.
- they were able to assess how an Occupational therapist could work within the organisation and developed a clear vision of the potential role of an Occupational Therapist within Alzheimer Scotland .
- they observed people 'working together' to gain the best outcomes for people with dementia.
- they all felt that they would have a much better understanding of how to work with a voluntary organisation in their future practice as Occupational Therapists.

The students also felt that the staff working within Alzheimer Scotland gained better insight into the potential role of an Occupational therapist within their organisation.

For example, one of the students felt that the perception that the main role of an Occupational therapist is to 'provide equipment' was changed as a result of her being within the placement setting. Additionally students took opportunities to provide information on moving and handling to staff and carers, they contributed to several group-based activities and were able to apply their knowledge of the theoretical models for group based work.

In addition to gaining a greater understanding of Occupational therapy and the role of Alzheimer Scotland within this setting, the students reported learning in the following areas:

### ✓ **Meaningful Activity**

- The role of occupational therapy was highlighted when the students witnessed the importance of activities within the resource centre and being able to tap into what was important to each service users
- The student's considered meaningful activity and used an interest checklist to identify activities which were meaningful to the service users.

✓ **Client Centred Practice**

The students advised that the placement had shown them how to practice in a client centred way, treating every service user with the dignity, allowing the service users to make the most of their lives. One of the students commented “it was good to see

✓ **Communication Skills**

- The students’ communication skills especially when working with people with advanced dementia who have communication difficulties.
- The placement highlighted the importance of good communication especially between AHPs and the voluntary sector to bring about the best outcomes for people living with dementia.

✓ **Team Working**

- The students reported they learned a lot about collaborative working and working as a team by observing and working alongside resource centre support workers, other students, service users and supervisor.

✓ **Other Occupational therapy T Skills**

- On this placement the students needed to use their own initiative.
- Being on placement while developing a service proposal within the time frame developed time management skills.
- The students advised the placement increased their interview skills with both staff and service users, Interview skills are regularly used by Occupational therapists to find out about the service user’s family, friends, interests, previous occupations, likes and dislikes.

**What worked well from the students’ perspective**

- The peer assisted learning model for those on site together was beneficial for learning within a new placement setting.
- The excellent support from their University Tutors, and the Alzheimer Scotland staff.
- Having input and support from the Resource Centre Managers
- In one of the centres, the supervisor was an Occupational therapy by background, and the students found this helpful.
- Opportunities to suggest and implement changes, to influence treatment plans and to suggest how an Occupational component could be added to a client plan.
- Having a ‘caseload’ and direct people contact as well as interaction with groups.
- Seeing examples of how Alzheimer Scotland currently works with the health service, provided insight into how integration could work in practice.

- Having to design and deliver a workshop to the resource centre staff improved students confidence in delivering education to others.
- Having exposure to a wide range of people with dementia and developing understanding of the difficulties associated with the diagnosis of dementia.
- Visits to service users' homes with centre staff was valued by the students who experienced this.
- Gaining experience of service redesign and being provided with opportunities to observe and critique services.
- Being able to apply their knowledge of 'meaningful activity' within the centres.

### **Challenges from the students' perspective**

- Students involved in model 2 involving a service redesign proposal reported: the placement was too long and they were less sure of their role compared to those participating in model 1 core placements.
- The supervisors within Alzheimer Scotland involved in model 2 felt that they lacked direction in terms of how best to support the outcomes of this placement model.

### **Positive outcomes of the pilot placements**

#### **Continuation of placement models**

GCU and QMU lecturers involved felt that the further development of placements within Alzheimer Scotland Resource Centres should be continued.

The students also supported future Alzheimer Scotland placements. One student commented that they would recommend Alzheimer Scotland placements to other students as it raises student awareness of how Occupational Therapy fits into a non-traditional placement setting.

#### **Influencing future practice**

The students recognised that their perceptions of dementia and services available had been changed on placement including recognition that:

- The large number of people affected by dementia includes those who have a diagnosis, those caring for someone living with dementia and having a friend/relative with dementia.
- Many people with dementia live active, enjoyable lives and that each person's experience of dementia can be very different.
- Alzheimer Scotland has a positive role to play for people living with dementia.
- One student recognised that one person providing the right support can make a difference to the person with dementia, their families and carers.

The Glasgow Caledonian University students advised they had a greater understanding of how professionals with different roles can link together to provide an effective service. Additionally they highlighted that the placement demonstrated the role they could have working with people with dementia.

The students also spoke about specific aspects of the placements they would take into future practice. This included experience of how the staff related to different service users, their families and carers, treating every person as an individual. They also recognised the importance of meaningful activities to individuals, using interests which have been important to them throughout their lives.

## **Summary**

The partnership of Alzheimer Scotland, higher education institutions and NES, the role of which was to evaluate the placements, worked successfully to offer pilot placements for four students within Alzheimer Scotland resource centres and all involved agree the value of developing further.

Two different models were used. Model 1 a peer assisted learning core placement for level 3 students from QMU and Model 2 an observational placement model where students at level 4 from GCU developed an Occupational Therapy Service Proposal within their setting.

Though the placement models were different there were similarities in the experience reported by the students which were predominantly positive.

The Occupational Therapy students reported that within this placement setting they had gained an understanding of the Occupational therapy role within a what is considered currently in Scotland as a non traditional setting such as Alzheimer Scotland and knowledge of the role of voluntary organisations. They recognised, from their experiences on placement, that people's experience of dementia is individual and people with dementia can lead lively, enjoyable lives. They developed their Occupational therapy core skills and experienced person centred care in action. The few challenges the students found tended to be around the model of practice placement.

Current future requirements of the health and social care workforce will mean more AHPs working within and /or in partnership with non traditional settings such as charitable, voluntary or third sector organisations. AHP training which reflects current practice will continue to have placements in non traditional settings and there would be value in building on this evaluation to expand our knowledge on student experiences within this area.

## **The Next Steps**

In January 2015 Alzheimer Scotland appointed a Scottish Government funded a 14 hour a week AHP Practice Education Facilitator - to take forward the development of

placements for AHP students in their services including building on the results of these initial pilots.

Alzheimer Scotland now has a formal strategic partnership with QMU and has supported a further 4 core occupational therapy placements for QMU students. Building on the results of the evaluation of the pilot Model 1 has been adapted. In the absence of an HCPC registered Occupational Therapist on site NHS supervisors are involved offering long arm supervision. It has also been recognised that though the peer assisted learning model can be helpful for students it is not always possible to offer a placement for two students together given the resources of the placement site.

Glasgow Caledonian University role emerging placements will be considered for 2015-16, following on from Model 2 and there is a hope that Alzheimer Scotland will also be able to support a placement within their traditional placement modules as this partnership develops. In 2014-2015 a split-placement model was offered to RGU students and there will be ongoing discussions as to further developments. An Occupational Therapy Support (HNC) Student from Glasgow Clyde College is currently on placement at Alzheimer Scotland in Clydebank.

In addition to these initial occupational therapy placements, Alzheimer Scotland has supported Art Psychotherapy, Dietetics, Music Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy students with plans to continuing to widen the reach and build upon the established models.

NES Practice Education programme continues to support the development of pre-registration placements in the voluntary sector and care sectors in addition to those traditionally offered within the NHS involving the Practice Education Co-ordinators and Practice Education Leads at Board level ([www.nes.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk)).

## References

Scottish Government (2010) *The Healthcare Quality Strategy for NHSScotland*, Crown Copyright: Edinburgh

Scottish Government (2012) *The National Delivery Plan for the Allied Health Professions in Scotland, 2012-2015*, Crown Copyright: Edinburgh

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Podcast: *Occupational Therapy Placements with Alzheimer Scotland*  
<http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/allied-health-professions/resources,-publications-and-useful-links/occupational-therapy-placements-with-alzheimer-scotland.aspx>

### Information from Alzheimer Scotland

<https://letstalkaboutdementia.wordpress.com/2015/09/03/building-bridges/>

### Publications:

[http://www.alzscot.org/news\\_and\\_community/news/3197\\_three\\_new\\_publications\\_for\\_allied\\_health\\_professionals](http://www.alzscot.org/news_and_community/news/3197_three_new_publications_for_allied_health_professionals)

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