

## Rehabilitation for people living with dementia: Promoting an Allied Health Professional Human-Rights Based Approach

Our campaigning groups, the Scottish Dementia Working Group (SDWG) and the National Dementia Carers Action Network (NDCAN) strive to ensure that dementia policy and practice in Scotland respects the rights of people living with dementia and their carers. It therefore came as no surprise that members of both groups were delighted to accept an invitation to present at the recent Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) learning event which had an overarching theme of a 'Human-Rights Based Approach to Rehabilitation for People Living with Dementia'.



Active Voice members

Held on 16 November at Napier University in Edinburgh, this 'Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Course' was influenced by the growing global perspective of a human rights-based approach to advance AHP knowledge and understanding of the lived experience of people living with dementia and their carers. The event, which was aimed to empower a partnership approach to and with practice, brought together various AHP's from all over Scotland from a range of areas including NHS, social care, and private practice.

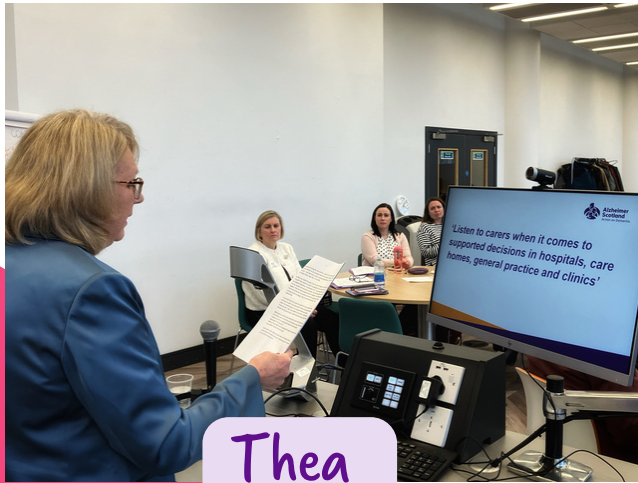
NDCAN members Thea Laurie and Barry Gale both gave insightful presentations on their personal experiences of caring for a loved one with dementia. Thea, who cared for her mother for the 14 years she lived with dementia, spoke about the importance for carers to understand the wishes of a person prior to their incapacity. She emphasised that people living with dementia need to know that their voice can continue to be heard even when they cannot find the words.

Barry, who was also carer to his mother who lived with dementia, highlighted that policy suggests that carers should be recognised as equal partners in care, however in practice this is not always the case. Barry used his personal insights to explain what worked well in terms of support for his mum; and gave examples of areas that he feels could be improved on, particularly in relation to ensuring a person's human rights are protected.



Barry

*“Please have patience when supporting a person with dementia, ‘no’ can mean ‘not now’, therefore its important to ask again later.” - Barry*



Thea

*“Please consider how you can uphold the rights of people with dementia in your working life by listening to carers who have a clear understanding and agreement of the ‘wishes’ or ‘rights’ of the person they support.” - Thea*

SDWG member Margaret McCallion spoke about how basic human rights which most of us take for granted, are often neglected for those living with dementia. Consequently, Margaret outlined that she wants to be listened to, to have choices, and to stay in her own community. Moreover, she called for people living with dementia to be treated with dignity and have their human rights upheld. Margaret finished off her presentation with a powerful message asking for those working in health and social care to ‘always see the person not their age - not their illness but the whole person’.

*“I want to see systems & processes that recognise need, person centred public policy, and people treated with dignity.” - Margaret*



Margaret



*“A huge thank you to Thea, Barry, and Margaret for supporting our event last week - their personal narratives added a huge amount to our AHP CPD module, and the feedback has clearly highlighted how important their contribution is and was very much valued by those who attended.” - Professor Elaine Hunter & Dr Fiona McLean*