

Sharing our lived experience to support workforce knowledge

Our Active Voice groups, the Scottish Dementia Working Group (SDWG) and the National Dementia Carers Action Network (NDCAN), have a shared priority to support workforce knowledge and development, to help ensure that health and social care staff working with people living with dementia, their families and carers have opportunities to achieve appropriate knowledge and skills in their roles, informed by people with personal experience.

Group members regularly participate in sessions with existing and future workforce, sharing their experience to inform policy and practice. At the beginning of May 2024 SDWG members Stuart Dougall and Margaret McCallion, and NDCAN member Marion Ritchie participated in an awareness session with social care students at City of Glasgow College, as part of a learning unit focused on caring for people living with dementia.

The members shared their personal experiences with and answered questions from the students, helping them work towards achieving their learning outcomes which included identifying the strategies and skills required to meet the needs of people with dementia; and, explaining the ways to assist the carer in coping with the stresses associated with caring for people with dementia.

“life may have changed but it’s certainly not over”

“dementia is one thing, not every thing”



Margaret & Stuart

Both Margaret and Stuart emphasised the importance of person-centred care with Margaret speaking about the importance of “seeing the person as a person”, whilst Stuart highlighted the tagline of a previous Alzheimer Scotland campaign he had fronted, that “dementia is one thing, not every thing” about a person. Stuart stressed that his “life may have changed, but it’s certainly not over.”

“As you prepare for your new careers, a key message I would give you is – recognise the individual, not their age or their illness. Listen to them and get to know them. Find out about their interests, their feelings, and their views.” Margaret McCallion

“By treating those you work with in your new careers as individuals, supporting and encouraging them to be themselves and do what’s important to them, you will help ensure they are not defined by their situation, but that they continue to live their best life possible.” Stuart Dougall

“It was a fantastic experience for the students and I could see from the number of questions and their engagement just how much they got from the sessions.” – Course Leader



Marion spoke about her experience of receiving help from professional carers at home, in hospital, and in care home settings throughout the time she cared for her husband, Dave, who had a diagnosis of vascular dementia. She shared the stresses she experienced as a carer, and the feelings she had in relation to accepting that she required the support of professional carers, and of receiving that support.

Importantly, Marion highlighted some of the ways professional carers can assist a family carer to accept help by working with them in partnership in the provision of care. She offered suggestions for providing care in hospital that can help alleviate the distress of the person with dementia and the worries of the family carer. And, she shared points to consider when providing care in a care home setting. Finally, she told the students considering a career as a carer that “you are life savers”.



“Please remember that the family carer is trusting you and needs you to look after their loved one as if they were your own family. Think of the person with dementia as your mum, dad, grandma or grandpa and think how you would like them to be treated.”

“And thank you all, for choosing to go into the care profession. I’m getting older myself and one day I may also need your help.”

– Marion Ritchie