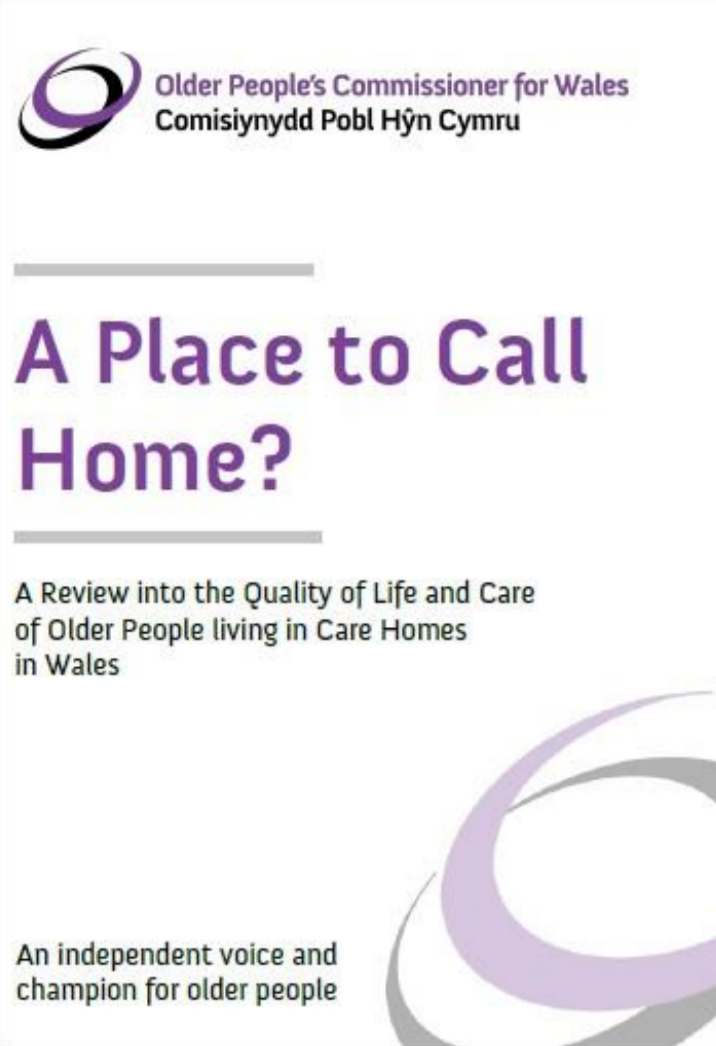


# Creative Conversations: An arts based dementia care staff development programme



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- Rather than helping care staff understand how to communicate with older people, including those living with dementia, training for care staff in the UK tends to focus on manual handling, fire safety, and safeguarding .
- Previous research indicates that when staff have taken part in arts activities for people living with dementia, they often reported a deeper understanding of the people they care for, although they were not the target of the activity.

**Research Question:** Can 'Creative Conversations'\* staff development programme improve the quality of interaction between care staff and people living with dementia and the knowledge and skills of the dementia care workforce?

## How?

A collaborative approach ensured that those thought to benefit from the staff development programme (care staff, people living with dementia, older people, family carers and Social Services) were involved in the design and implementation.

A pragmatic stepped-wedge cluster randomised trial explored whether the programme led to a change in:

- quality of interaction between care staff and residents living with dementia,
- knowledge and skills, job satisfaction, and burnout of care staff,
- social care-related quality of life of residents with dementia



	Time						
Cluster	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7
1	C / Pre	I	I	I	F / Post	F	F
2	C	C / Pre	I	I	I	F / Post	F
3	C	C	C / Pre	I	I	I	F / Post

A schematic representation of the stepped-wedge design showing control (C), intervention (I), and follow up (F) observation phases and before (pre) and after (post) intervention interview time points for Clusters 1-3 at Months 1-7.

## Results

14 care homes



49 staff completed

Staff Demographic data	
Age (Mean)	41.74
Gender, Female (%)	100
Ethnicity, White British (%)	100
Total years of employment in care homes (Mean)	11.85

- Positive response from care staff
- Learning through the arts strengthened their understanding of residents and role of non-verbal communication
- Arts can be weaved into everyday interactions
- Valued space to reflect on own practice
- Opportunity for discussion and to learn from other staff

"...simplest things you can do, not particularly, 'I'm going to do this activity'. You're with a resident giving them personal care. You can just go through a few things [from the sessions]. You're surprised, sometimes, at the results they...bring out in them [residents]." CH05



## The Creative Conversations Programme\*:

- Aims to develop skills of dementia care staff using the arts (e.g. Poetry, visual art, film photography, music).
- Has a remit for developing compassionate communication and quality of relationships between staff and those they care for.
- Encourages staff to use the skills developed in sessions in everyday interactions in the care home (rather than a time-limited activity session)

**Conclusion:** An arts-in-health approach to care staff development offers an alternative to traditional training. Important implications have been learned regarding the feasibility of a stepped-wedge cluster randomised trial in care homes.

\*'Creative Conversations' staff development programme is based on and takes its inspiration from two earlier programmes:

- 1) The Descartes project conceived by Hannah Zeilig, (Zeilig, Poland, Killick & Fox, 2015, The arts in Dementia Care Education, in Journal of Public Mental Health 14(1) 18-23.) Descartes innovated the use of arts based material to educate care home staff.
- 2) The Arts and Older People Project and John Killick at The Courtyard, Hereford. This project used poetry to enhance creative conversations and enable compassionate communication. (The Arts and Older People Project and Killick, J. (2015) The best words, in the best order: A toolkit for making poems in dementia care settings. The Courtyard Centre for Arts, Hereford).

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