

University of Wolverhampton

Dementia Commitment Statement

Working towards becoming a dementia-friendly organisation

Prepared by
The Centre for Applied Research and Education (CARE) in Dementia
February 2014

DAA Dementia
Action Alliance

 Working to become
**Dementia
Friendly**
2014-2015

The University of Wolverhampton Dementia Commitment Statement

Summary

Dementia is a progressive disorder that currently affects around 800,000 people in the UK, and the number of people living with dementia is increasing as the population ages. This document outlines the University of Wolverhampton's commitment to improving outcomes of people living with dementia in the West Midlands, in line with local and national priorities set out by Wolverhampton City Council and the Prime Minister's Dementia Challenge. The University is committed to collaborative working to support education, evidence-based research, practice, policy and innovative products and services that deliver meaningful benefits to people living with dementia and their families. This statement has been submitted to the Dementia Action Alliance, which is a coming together of over 700 organisations that are working towards improving outcomes through committed actions. The University of Wolverhampton is a member of the Alliance and aims for the commitment to become a priority within the University's on-going agenda.

The University of Wolverhampton Dementia Commitment Statement

According to the National Dementia Declaration for England by the **Dementia Action Alliance**, people living with dementia want to have personal choice and to control or influence decisions; to know that services are designed around them and their needs; to have support that helps them to live their lives; to have the knowledge and know-how to get what they need; to live in an enabling and supportive environment where they feel valued and understood; to have a sense of belonging and of being a valued part of family, community and civic life; and to know that there is research taking place that aims to deliver a better life for them now and hope for the future.

To help improve these outcomes for people with dementia and their carers, and in line with local and national priorities set out by Wolverhampton City Council and the **Prime Minister's Dementia Challenge**, the University of Wolverhampton is committed to lending support and knowledge through our own work and that with our partner organisations. With over 23,000 students and graduate employability at 90%, the University is a major player in the UK higher education sector, contributing to knowledge transfer, economic development, wealth creation and social justice. The University is committed to encouraging and providing support for projects that deliver meaningful benefits to people in the local community living with dementia and their families. In particular, we aim to raise awareness and improve education in the community and among health professionals, help to beat the stigma around dementia, and improve quality of life for those living with dementia and their families through evidence-based research, practice, policy and innovative products and services.

Our Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing (FEHW) brings together the schools of Health and Wellbeing, Psychology, Education and Sport, creating a wealth of opportunities for multidisciplinary research and innovation in dementia care. Our **Centre for Applied Research and Education (CARE) in Dementia** is placed within FEHW and is made up of experienced researchers, teachers, practitioners and other professionals who have shared interests in dementia care. This working group was formed to prioritise dementia within the Faculty agenda and to draw upon shared expertise to facilitate high quality research and far-reaching education and training programmes. We will continue to grow the Care in Dementia group to increase research capacity and links to people with dementia in the community and in health and social care settings. The University has a strong tradition of Patient and Public Involvement with around 40 service users overall currently enrolled in the scheme. Over the coming years we aim to build on this involvement to include more people with dementia and their carers to allow their voices to be heard and to inform the direction of our research. We will continue to build on strong and enduring working relationships with local partners to ensure research and innovation is of highest quality and supported by the local workforce.

A further important aspect of CARE in Dementia's agenda is collaboration with internal colleagues across the University's Faculties and external partners – spanning the public, private, independent and voluntary sectors – to maximise the use of new and emerging technologies. There is a focus upon exploring and developing **innovative products** which improve communication channels and methods; extend service and information accessibility; support quality-of-life independence; and heighten awareness in a way that reduces stigma and promotes social inclusion. An early example is an active project to introduce the use of interactive posters to increase knowledge and provide information access points to staff working in a range of community, commercial and retail services across the City. Over the

The University of Wolverhampton Dementia Commitment Statement

coming years we aim to expand these projects to maximise the benefit of such products to the local community.

In addition to research, FEHW also works in part to enhance the quality of health and social care delivered to the people of the West Midlands through **education and training**. We currently have over 2600 students enrolled on health and social care courses including 166 postgraduates. The University has a strong history of collaboration with health and social care organisations and commissioners to promote the transfer of evidence-based knowledge from research to practice, promoting quality of care for people living with dementia and related conditions, such as mild cognitive impairment. Dementia currently features in the content of a number of our degree programmes and is taught by experienced practitioners and educators. Dementia topics will feature more heavily in future years with the introduction of a new **Concept of Dementia Care (MA) module**. This module seeks to develop the skills of existing health and social care professionals to enable people living with dementia to receive appropriate and timely care and support. In collaboration with local Council and NHS partners, the University will develop wider learning and training packages tailored to the needs of individuals and organisations, extending the message of dementia throughout health and allied professions, care services, businesses and the wider community.

The University of Wolverhampton recognises the need to follow by example and aims to place becoming a **Dementia-friendly Organisation** on the University-wide agenda. In partnership with services such as the Students' Union, Chaplaincy, Staff Development Unit, Occupational Health and the Counselling Service, the University plans to implement specific actions that have benefit for people with dementia and their families. In particular, the University aims to strengthen existing support services for students and staff who are affected by a relative with dementia; implement policy change throughout the University to lay the foundations for better understanding and flexibility for staff and students who care for relatives with dementia; and raise awareness and support structures to ensure that staff who are diagnosed with dementia are treated with respect and understanding. As part of on-going work in mental health, the University is also making a 'Time to Change' organisational pledge which includes specific action plans for dementia, helping to reinforce these changes within the University's policy. In addition, support will be offered to other innovative projects that raise awareness of dementia throughout the organisation and in the community, such as awareness events and interactive technology.

This combination of education, research, community project and policy pledges demonstrate the University of Wolverhampton's on-going and genuine commitment to improving outcomes for people living with dementia and their families.

Professor Geoff Layer
Vice Chancellor of the University of Wolverhampton

Date _____