falkirk & clackmannanshire carerscentre

Meeting Minutes

Consultations for carers to share their views with external organisations

FOR FALKIRK CARERS

Consultation about Dementia, with Yvonne Cairns Dementia and Delirium Nurse Consultant from NHS Forth Valley.

Held on Thursday 19th of November 2026

At the Carers Centre, Falkirk

Chaired by Sharlene Ramage
Online option facilitated by Justine Wilson (Adult Carer Support Worker)
Notes by Dana Horsburgh and Zoom Assistant.

Quick recap

This session focused on stress and distress in dementia, led by Yvonne Cairns, a nurse consultant for dementia and delirium across Forth Valley. The session covered how stress responses manifest in people with dementia, the importance of recognising non-verbal cues, and strategies for managing challenging behaviours. Participants shared personal experiences of caring for loved ones with dementia. The presenter discussed the "Getting to Know Me" document as an essential tool for healthcare staff to understand individual preferences and history when caring for people with dementia. The session included a time machine exercise where participants reflected on meaningful life events to help understand how memory and identity can change in dementia. Participants also discussed the need for better coordination between different healthcare services and suggested including social workers in future training sessions to address assessment and support planning processes.

Introductions and upcoming consultations/conversations.

Sharlene provided updates about upcoming consultation sessions, reminding attendees about fire drill procedures and the importance of completing event evaluations.
Sharlene discussed upcoming consultations on palliative care services and encouraged attendees to participate in the bedded care/respite/short break review meetings, none of the carers in the room were aware of this review and Yvonne suggested that she

would reach out to her contacts. Note (Yvonne did this after the session and an online event will hopefully be delivered for those who cannot attend in person, Sharlene will keep people informed). Sharlene announced a new Dollar Dark Dementia drop-in service starting Monday evenings from 5:30 pm to 7:00pm that will support up to four couples at a time, this service has been created due to Falkirk carers letting Rosie from Dollar Park know that they would like sessions where they can go with the person that they care for, it is lovely to see that professionals are listening to carers and acting upon their needs. Sharlene also mentioned an upcoming NHS Forth Valley Quality Safety and Experience meeting where Rebecca from the Health Team will present draft plans. Yvonne Cairns then introduced herself.

Dementia Nurse Consultant Role Discussion

Yvonne discussed her role as a nurse consultant for Dementia and Delirium across Forth Valley, covering hospitals, community hospitals, and care homes. Yvonne mentioned that she has delivered and is currently delivering dementia training, this training is for all staff, including newly qualified, to those with many years in the profession.

Dementia Care Stress Discussion

Yvonne provided background on the training that she is delivering across health settings, explaining that staff are learning about the aging brain, dementia, delirium, and stress management. The discussion explored how stress manifests in both carers and people with dementia, including communication challenges and the impact on family dynamics, with participants sharing specific examples of how stress affects their relationships and coping strategies.

Dementia Care Experiences and Challenges

A carer shared their experiences including changes in their cared for person's behaviour and communication. This carer discussed the challenges of recognising these changes and managing situations when the person that they care for becomes agitated or distressed. Yvonne suggested that providing information about dementia types and

triggers could be beneficial for carers whose loved one has been newly diagnosed individuals. Yvonne recommended using Carer Centre sessions as a safe space for discussing challenges. The group also noted the importance of considering physical health issues, such as infections, when observing behavioural changes in people with dementia.

Dementia Care Information Tools

Yvonne discussed the importance of understanding and addressing behavioural changes in people living with dementia, emphasising the need to rule out other factors such as infection/pain whilst considering the person's background, past trauma and prior coping skills.
Yvonne introduced the "Getting to Know Me" document, a tool for carers to provide essential information about their loved ones, which can help staff better care for patients in hospital settings. Yvonne highlighted the benefits of completing this document before a crisis and shared an example of how using personal information from the document helped calm a patient. Yvonne also shared an example of how an unwanted situation could have been avoided if the “Getting to Know me Document” had been used.

Dementia Care Personalisation Strategies

Yvonne discussed the importance of understanding individual needs when caring for people with dementia, emphasizing the value of personalised information in care plans and the need for staff to recognise triggers to avoid distressing situations. Yvonne explained Tom Kitwood's five psychological needs model, which includes comfort, attachment, recognition, occupation, and inclusion, and provided examples of meaningful activities tailored to individual preferences rather than generic options like bingo. The discussion also covered appropriate use of doll therapy for people with dementia, noting that it must be carefully implemented considering each person's unique history and experiences.

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Dementia Patient Comfort Strategies

Yvonne discussed strategies for providing comfort to patients with dementia, including using familiar items like family photos on blankets, maintaining consistent washing detergents and personal care products, and playing personalised music playlists. Yvonne mentioned a specific example of a project called "Playlist for Life" and discussed an example where a playlist (music) was created, which helped improve sleep routine and reduced distress during personal care. The discussion then shifted to a group exercise involving memories of first days at school, first jobs, and wedding days, with participants sharing personal accounts of these significant life events.

Dementia Care Challenges Discussion/Case Study (Annoymised).

Yvonne shared a case study about Jack a person with dementia who moved to a care home after losing his wife Anna. This story was shared to let carers see how someone can lose much of their more recently memory and become fixed at an age in their past. The group explored challenges in dementia care, including issues with assessments, communication between different healthcare professionals, and the importance of continuity in care. They agreed to focus on education and training sessions for the following year, potentially including care staff and social workers in discussions about assessment processes and improving coordination between different healthcare providers.

<u>Carers views, comments and suggestions</u>

A carer pointed out that the Dollar Park Self-Referral form needs a professional to sign this, this caused frustration as the carer had to visit their GP to sign this form, this carer feels that staff at Dollar Park need to inform people at the time of seeking registration forms that they need a signature from a professional.

Sharlene explained that all previous sessions with Yvonne have been minuted and are on the webpage under involve.

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A carer mentioned that the person that they care for doesn't recognise when they (the carer) are stressed. There was conversation in the room regarding how difficult this is for the carer.

A carer spoke about the difference in the person that they care for's personality, prior to dementia diagnosis they were a caring person and now they "lack in empathy".

A carer mentioned that there are significant changes in the person that they care for's mood and reactions.

A carer spoke about their ability to recognise when a conversation with the person that they care for may be leading in an unwanted direction, this carer sees the signs and quickly changes the conversation or distracts the person.

A carer spoke about the person that they care for and how important routine is to them.

A carer spoke about black and white photos and how the person that they care for has taken these from photo albums and put them back into photo frames around the house.

A carer spoke about the person that they care for talking about things in the past and how they can remember these things very clearly but unfortunately can't remember more recent events.

A carer mentioned that the person that they care for won't attend social events, a few other carers in the room could relate to this comment.

A carer commented that they would like to learn more about Dementia as they are very new to this, some other carers in the room have been caring for longer and these carers are looking for different types of learning. Yvonne will speak with Carly the training co-ordinator about information sessions that they can deliver together in the centre.

A carer spoke about the importance of recognising "triggers" for the person that they care for, this avoids upset for both carer and the person that they care for.

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A carer spoke about a brief period of aggression in the person that they care for, this was due to a urinary tract infection.

Yvonne spoke about photo blankets to help people recognise their bed when in hospital, she also mentioned photos on the door that are meaningful for the person, familiar smells such as shower gel/toiletries/soap powder.

Yvonne mentioned that sometimes people with a dementia can struggle to communicate pain/infection etc, this can lead to unwanted behaviours such as anger/withdrawal etc. It is important if the person that you care for has a sudden change in their behaviours that you arrange a GP appointment to discuss.

The Getting to know me document is better completed before crisis, a carer said that they always share this document with professionals at appointments and take home.

The importance of the carers and cared for persons Alzheimer's Scotland cards was mentioned.

Playlist for life was mentioned to make music memories together.

It was mentioned that people living with a dementia can sometimes return to a younger age, this can change from day to day, it is important to meet the person living with a dementia where they are.

A carer mentioned that it can be upsetting for family members when the person that they care for thinks that they are someone else.

A carer said that they would like a trained nurse for dementia to be based in GP surgeries, we spoke about this provision also being available in the new walk in GP surgeries.

A carer said that they had asked for support and the GP contacted the DOT (Dementia Outreach Team), the carer said the GP could not refer to the DOT team as they would not accept the referral, as the cared for person was not in the later stages of dementia,

this carer wondered if this is the correct. Yvonne explained that the DOT team support anyone who is in crisis or if there are complex situations at home.

A carer said that they had issues around inconsistent assessments, they also mentioned the need for continuity of assessor so that they are aware of person's base line. Other carers in the room agreed with this comment.

A carer explained that it is difficult for both carer and cared for person when they have to see a different GP or health professional at follow up appointments.

Carers thoughts and discussion around 2027 sessions

For 2027 carers were keen to speak with Yvonne/Emma and other professionals such as Alzheimer's Scotland, Social Work Teams, GPs, Social Care Officer who carry out assessments/reassessments, so that we call all work together to look at processes and procedures to make things work better for everyone.