

# Dignity Newsletter



Adults, Wellbeing and Health

May 2010 - Fourth Edition

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Dignity Newsletter, in this edition we consider

- **Outcomes from the Dignity Conference 3 March 2010**
- **Re-Cap on what was discussed at the conference and share evaluations from a range of people**

We will also return to the roots of the Dignity Campaign which is about how treating people with dignity is not “rocket science”. We can all do it. It just means that we have to think about the everyday things that we do, most of which do not have cost implications and ask ourselves **“Is this how I would like to be treated.”**

Within this edition we showcase two ways in which service users dignity have been improved by illustrating simple but creative approaches to improving dignity in care.



Within the newsletter we would like to share other good practices. If you have examples of how dignity in care has been demonstrated please contact:

**Dawn Richardson**  
Practice Development Officer  
Safeguarding and Practice  
Development Team  
e-mail: [dawn.richardson@durham.gov.uk](mailto:dawn.richardson@durham.gov.uk)  
Tel: 0191 3835214

# Dignity Conference 2010



The Dignity Conference was held on March 3rd as a good practice event for staff from Adults Wellbeing and Health. The conference was attended by over one hundred staff.

The aim of the conference was to highlight some of the positive work we are doing in Durham to promote dignity. A number of presentations and workshops were provided focusing on local and national work around dignity.

The conference was underpinned by the themes of safeguarding and personalisation, as zero tolerance of abuse and personalised services are standards in the Dignity Challenge.

- An overview of the Dignity in Care Campaign was given by Faye Wilson, Dignity Lead for Social Care North East.
- Lesley Tickell Head of Adult Care, Adults, Wellbeing and Health advised of lessons learnt from serious case reviews.
- The Safeguarding Practice Officers advised of their role in promoting dignity and safeguarding. A DVD on dignity provided examples of how people are deprived of their dignity by the actions of others.
- Nicola Stefanou, Essence of Care Lead, County Durham and Darlington Community Health Services advised of areas of good practice and areas identified for improvement.
- New Vision, a social enterprise group whose members are mainly people with learning disabilities gave the service users perspective using drama, video and poetry on dignity and person centred work.

[www.newvisiontraining.org](http://www.newvisiontraining.org)

## Workshops were held on:

- Risk Enablement Panels and how these are used in Durham. The panels have been newly introduced in Durham.
- Personalisation and Dignity, looking at the themes and principles underpinning personalisation and how it fits in with the Dignity Campaign.
- The National Dementia Strategy, and how it links with the dignity principles or people with dementia.
- Mental Health First Aid, a national initiative aimed at promoting positive mental health, how it may help practice and promote dignity.

## Examples of evaluations of the day:

- Feedback from the conference was very positive and the majority of people found it very interesting.
- The service user perspective from New Vision was praised by many as the best part of the conference. New Visions presentation was described as educational and inspirational.
- The conference was a reminder that dignity is the core of customer care.
- Having the opportunity to be aware of what is happening in Durham.
- Being able to share knowledge and experiences with other colleagues.
- Having the opportunity to reflect on practice.

## Dignity Champions

On 25 February 2010 Dignity Day, one particular home celebrated the day by introducing their four Dignity Champions to residents in the home and their relatives.

### Q1. As one of four Champions in your care home, how did this come about?

A. We were approached by the management of the care home and asked if we were interested.

### Q2. So what made you say yes to this request?

A. I have been involved in care since the age of 10 when I had to help to look after my Grandmother with my mother. This gave me some understanding of how my grandmother felt and how I felt looking after her. This has had an impact on me and now I feel quite passionate that I am supporting people to live in what I think should be seen as 'their home' even though it is a care home.

### Q3. So what do you do to ensure as a carer, to ensure that dignity is achieved for residents?

A. It is simple things like, knocking on the door before I enter, being considerate when entering their room, gently opening the door so that they know I am entering, say good morning, and ask if they are ready to get up. When I go in to assist someone with personal hygiene or washing and getting dressed, that I take the time to actually get the resident to a stage where they would feel they were presentable and would want to go out. This means taking the time to do such things as cleaning their spectacles, brush their hair in the style they like, straighten clothing that they have chosen.

### Q4. How do you ensure that other carers follow your principles?

A. As a senior carer I guide other carers, show by example, observe their approaches and comments and I have regular meetings with staff to highlight and share good practice.

# How the Hallgarth Poetry Group Started



My wife, Maeve, was diagnosed with dementia in 2004. Following a period at our home in my new role as carer, her condition deteriorated and, following a hospital visit, she was transferred to Hallgarth Care Home in September 2007.

Following an article in the Guardian newspaper by Blake Morrison describing the Reader Group in Liverpool, I phoned Dr Jane Davis and travelled to Liverpool to meet her. The Reader Organization has been running similar poetry reading groups in many centres in the Merseyside area for a number of years.

After an intensive course spread over one week, I qualified as a facilitator accredited by Liverpool University. Shortly after this, I asked to meet the dementia consultant, Dr. Colin Sheeran, and outlined the plan to set up a group in Hallgarth. He agreed that it should proceed for a three month trial. This was agreed when we agreed to maintain anecdotal records of individual residents' progress in the group.

After the trial period, it was agreed by the home to continue the group which clearly showed it was beneficial to the wellbeing of those who took part.

The reading group has now been in operation for over two years. It provides a stimulating environment even for people who are unaccustomed to reading aloud, whether for reasons of illness, disability or lack of education. The ability to listen is all that is required.

The event is now established in Hallgarth's programme of events. It is eagerly looked forward to. In the words of one resident:- "I look forward to reading because it provides a welcome change from routine and sitting in the lounge watching daytime TV".

Anecdotal records confirm how individuals are better at communicating with a feeling of wellbeing and obvious enjoyment in being part of a group opened up by a shared love of literature and poetry in a comfortable, safe environment. This work is enjoyable for all who take part and it is a confirmed way of making people happy in what can be a difficult time in their lives.

## James Freeley

Facilitator, The Reader Organization, a registered charity

For more information please visit:  
[www.durhamreadertogether.co.uk](http://www.durhamreadertogether.co.uk)

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[altformat.awh@durham.gov.uk](mailto:altformat.awh@durham.gov.uk)

(0191) 370 8838



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