

Dementia Champion Case Study

Janet Morrison, Staff Nurse, Ward 5, Dr. Gray's Hospital, Elgin, NHS Grampian

Janet Morrison is one of the Cohort 7 Dementia Champions programme participants who will be graduating on 15 March in Edinburgh.

Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your current role?

I'm originally from Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. I trained as an enrolled nurse and worked at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and in Stornoway before I moved to Elgin with my family. I've worked in Dr. Gray's hospital since 1992 and did a conversion course to become a Registered Nurse.

I work as a Staff Nurse in a 30-bed, mixed surgical ward including: general surgery, gynaecology, urology, Ear, Nose & Throat surgery.

How would you describe your experience of the Dementia Champions programme?

I thought the programme was brilliant. The tutors were so willing to share their knowledge with us and the level of enthusiasm among the programme participants was high.

Although I have been nursing since 1977, I was on a mission to change things in the surgical ward I work in, for staff, patients, carers and families of people with dementia. At Dr. Gray's there are already three Dementia Champions but they work in the medical wards, so I am the first champion working in a surgical ward.

What have been the most positive aspects of the programme for you?

For me it has been acquiring the knowledge and skills to help people with dementia that come to hospital have a better experience. The programme stressed the importance of communication skills, initiating conversation, getting to know people

and their families, and valuing their contribution. It is important to engage with people with dementia in a very person centred way, to show them dignity, respect and friendship and avoid labelling them. And the same skills apply to conversations and interactions with families and carers of people with dementia so that the relationship is one of trust and involvement.

The community placements I undertook in Elgin were also invaluable. These included a musical memory group, a dementia café and dementia buddies. I've kept up my association with these groups as I think it's important to stay involved with the community rather than just in hospital. Since I completed the programme I've started to participate in a walking group and a knitting circle.

What are your plans for taking forward learning from the programme?

As the first Dementia Champion in the Surgical ward, I've put forward a lot of changes – most of which have been implemented. These reflect a more person-centred approach and include: open visiting times; nurses wearing a badge that says "Hello, my name is"; displaying a Dementia Champion poster outside the ward entrance; creating a dementia information resource folder that the nurses on the ward can access.

The Dementia Champions poster lists 10 dementia care actions in hospitals and I've made sure that the resource folder covers each action.

I'm continuing my own learning and attending study days to improve care and practice in a hospital setting. I've enlisted the services of a Dementia Adviser from Alzheimer Scotland who will be coming to the hospital to train colleagues as dementia buddies. And I'll be continuing my participation in the community groups.

What do you consider to be your key successes so far?

So far the key successes have been my ability to share and expand the knowledge and skills I gained from the programme and apply them, where appropriate, in a hospital setting.

Tutors on the programme gave me many tips and taught us about good practice such as how to help a person with dementia eat and drink themselves by supporting their arms, or how to avoid causing stress and distress to a person with dementia in personal care activities such as showering.

I've also been working to share this knowledge with other staff across the whole multi-disciplinary team.

What changes have you brought about?

I've continued to implement changes to our care and practice in the surgical ward at Dr Gray's hospital.

I never thought I would have the confidence to do some of these things but I love being a nurse and I love what the Dementia Champions programme has done for me and my practice and engagement in the wider community.