



Members' Newsletter

May 2021

Hello and Welcome

Hello and welcome to our May 2021 Newsletter.

I am Clare Watson, the new CEO of Dementia NI. I joined you at the end of February and I am delighted to lead such a unique and dynamic organisation.

It has been an eventful and enjoyable time as I have been getting to know Dementia NI. I've been meeting our staff, board, members and volunteers. In an ideal world, that would have been out and about and face to face. But we are living in this very different COVID world just now.



The next best thing is connecting virtually, and I have been using Zoom a lot. It is really positive to see how Dementia NI has been able to continue to engage with members virtually, and I enjoyed meeting members in the Zoom Empowerment and Support groups.

There have been some important benefits with this switch to virtual. Groups in different areas have been able to connect in a way they couldn't easily do before. But we all miss face to face contact and all it brings. As positive as the switch to virtual has been, we know that we are not able to reach everyone this way. We are constantly learning and evolving in the new environment we all find ourselves in, and we will continue to explore new ways we can engage with members.

Rest assured, when the time comes and we are able to meet again we will keep the best aspects of virtual, alongside all the things we love about meeting together.

We have a great staff team at Dementia NI and I'm delighted that it is growing as we bring in some extra resources to support our work. We have recruited a Development Manager to lead the Empower and Support project, and to develop our campaigning approach. An Administration Assistant will help with all the vital tasks that keep us operating effectively. In our next newsletter we will introduce these two new staff members to you.

We are also making some changes to how we support our communications and fundraising activity. We will introduce two part time fundraising officer posts, and a part time communications officer post to help us with this. Fionnuala, our Income Generation Manager has moved on from Dementia NI and we wish her the very best for the future. We will be advertising for the new roles in the coming weeks and look forward to welcoming them to our team.

My role as CEO is to deliver the new and ambitious strategy for Dementia NI. I know that you were all involved in developing this and are committed to its goals and outcomes. It is an exciting time for Dementia NI as we look to the future. That feels reflected in the world around us as we see progression with the vaccine rollout, and the first tentative steps of opening up society again.

I look forward to being able to meet you all in person in the near future and working together to bring about positive change for people living with dementia.

Clare

GET TO KNOW...

Empowerment Officer Hannah Coon



WHAT PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT ME

I like to look on the bright side and always try find the positives in life's moments.

I love to chat and enjoy meeting people.

I am hard working and I try and give my best to everything I do.

I am easy to talk to and I am always happy to try and help others.

I love to laugh and live life to the full.



WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO ME

My family, I come from a big family, with two brothers and three sisters, so there is always plenty going on.

I love walking and exploring new places, so most weekends I'll be outside enjoying the fresh air. My love of walking has even led me to participate in Marathon Challenge Walks.

I like travelling and have been feeling a bit grounded since the pandemic. However, have been planning and getting ideas for different adventures I can go on as soon as it is safe to do so.

I am a serial tea and coffee drinker and generally have a cup in hand throughout the day.

I enjoy learning new things and developing my skills, so much so, I have recently completed a Master's in Business Administration.

HOW BEST TO SUPPORT ME

I have just started with Dementia NI and I am just finding my feet, so please be patient with me as I begin to find my way round.

I am looking forward to getting to know you all, so please feel free to get in touch. I will be more than happy to hear from you.

If I don't answer right away, leave me a message or send a text and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

I am full time, working Monday – Friday, 9am-5pm. You can contact me via email - Hannah@dementiani.org or via phone - 07966 881 422. I am based in the Omagh Office and I cover both the Western and Northern Trust areas.

Launch of the Inspired App

Did you happen to catch Dementia NI member Davie McElhinney on BBC Newsline over the Easter holidays?

Davie was explaining more about Dementia NI member's involvement in developing the newly launched Inspired app and the benefits that it brings to people living with dementia and their carers. The Inspired App enables people living with dementia, their carers and families to create a digital memory book to store photographs, videos and sounds; aimed at sparking conversations and providing opportunities to share experiences and maintain relationships.



For most people, the thought of a dementia diagnosis and the fear of losing their ability to recall treasured memories is devastating. However, many people living with dementia have problems with their short-term memory and find it easier to remember things about their past. Reminiscence draws on this strength by supporting people to share their life experiences, memories, and stories and in doing so to maintain and build connections with other people.

Davie tells us more about his experience of the interview:

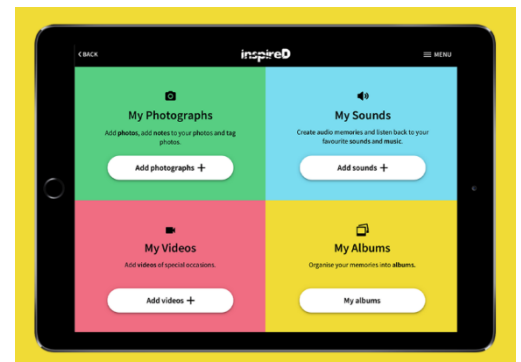
"I was very nervous leading up to the interview but Keiron Tourish put me right at ease. We did some rehearsals and when the interview started, I didn't notice the camera at all. I found it a very positive experience and it was a good chance to raise awareness about dementia if I can do it, anybody can!"

To watch Davie's interview, type in the following link to your internet search bar:
<https://fb.watch/4J92D3GEq3/>

Learn more about the Inspired App

You can download the app for free on Apple and Android smartphones or tablets. Search for 'The Inspired Reminiscence App for Dementia' in your app store.

It is also freely available on the HSC Apps4Dementia library (<https://apps4dementia.orchu.co.uk>) as part of its ongoing activities to increase the uptake of technology in supporting people living with dementia. To find out more about the app please visit: <https://www.theinspiredapp.com/>



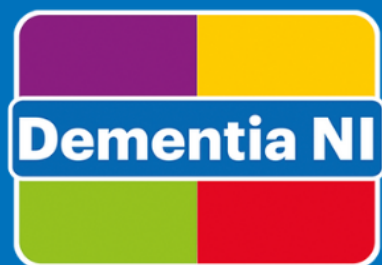
The Inspired app has been coproduced by Dementia NI members alongside Professor Assumpta Ryan and her team at Ulster University. The Inspired app was commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board NI as part of a wider Dementia eHealth and Data Analytics Pathfinder Programme.

In Memory

In March, Dementia NI members joined with others for a National Day of Reflection to mark the first anniversary of the first UK lockdown.

We paused to reflect and remember our Dementia NI members that we have lost over the past year during the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope that our tribute has gone a little way in supporting others that have also been bereaved, as we join to reflect on our collective loss.

Dementia NI member Liz penned a poem on behalf of Dementia NI members to mark the day.



In Memory

Memories are physical that come to mind
When you least expect it they become deeply entwined
Like a cracked mirror, having Dementia doesn't help
matching the pieces, forming those emotions that are felt.

People say our memories are the first thing to disappear
But remembering a dear friend makes them feel so near
That memory takes control of your mind
With visions of the person it still feels their alive.

First you feel happy, sadness follows behind.
There are times you feel tearful
or just going quite crazy in your mind
Tears start to fall hiding behind that fake smile
You see that person is still here,
remembering the special times.

Liz Cunningham

What has been happening in Dementia NI?

Since January we have been involved in a whole host of activities to raise awareness and make positive changes in Dementia Services. Below showcases some of the fantastic work Dementia NI members have been involved in.

Voices across the Lands – DEEP group

Members Allison and Davie have been taking part in a weekly online friendship group, with members from across the UK. As well as making stronger friendships and connections, it has been a good opportunity for different regions to share their activity.

Firmus Energy Dementia Awareness Training

In February, Dementia NI members Liz, John, Davie, Allison, Yvonne and Frances participated in a Training Session for Firmus Energy. This session gave their staff insight on how to support customers who could potentially be living with dementia.

Ulster University – Speech and Language Therapy – Swallowing Research – Steering Group

Members have been working alongside Michelle O'Neill, a Speech and Language Therapist to support her in her PhD research. Members and their families have shared their experiences of eating, drinking, and swallowing changes impacted by living with dementia.

Consultation with Department of Health on the Adult Protection Bill for Northern Ireland

Members had the opportunity to consult with Adele Willis and others from the Department of Health in relation to the Adult Protection Bill for Northern Ireland.

Patient Client Council Consultation - 'Restarting HSC services during 2021'

Dementia NI Members were able to voice the opinion of people living with Dementia on how they felt the Covid-19 pandemic had affected their healthcare experiences.

Ulster University – Speech and Language Therapy – Webinar

Working with Speech and Language Therapy Students to raise awareness of Dementia NI and the work we do. Sharing Dementia NI members experiences and discussing the importance of Service User Involvement in improving services.

Belfast Dementia Friendly Neighbourhood Celebration Event

Dementia NI members hosted sessions on how Coronavirus has impacted their lives over the past year. Members explained to others the benefits of Dementia NI and how our online activities and peer support have helped during the pandemic.

Arts 4 Dementia's Northern Ireland

Dementia NI Members Allison and Violet spoke at the Conference on Social Prescribing to Arts and discussed the benefits of Art for living well with Dementia.

Thank you everyone for all the good work you do!

Dementia Hero Awards 2021

Dementia NI members and staff were overjoyed to discover that have been nominated for several Dementia Hero awards.

We are delighted to be finalists in the Alzheimer's Society Dementia Hero award for Innovation category. Thank you so much to all those who nominated us.

Our members have adapted to very difficult times over the duration of the pandemic, but have continued to support each other, raise awareness, and work with researchers and service providers, remotely, and virtually. It is fantastic to have their hard work and perseverance recognised.

Well done all, and good luck in the final!



Dementia Hero Awards 2021

Dementia Hero Award for Innovation

This award recognises individuals or groups who have developed a new product, project or service for people affected by dementia. This can range from a new piece of research or innovation, to a dementia friendly project, breaking new ground to support people affected by dementia, especially during the challenges of the pandemic.

Dementia Hero Award for Innovation



DEEDS – Dementia Engaged and Empowered Derry & Strabane

Dementia NI

Margaret House and TDW Radio

Upcoming Activities

We have a number of upcoming activities for you to enjoy. They include:

- Empower and Support Group meetings
- Yoga with Ruth

We also have a range of other activities taking place through the year. If you would like to take part in any activity, please contact us on 028 9693 1555 or email info@dementiani.org

Empower and Support Group Meetings

We have loved seeing everyone at our virtual Empower and Support Group Meetings. Members have enjoyed the peer support, keeping in contact, and have hosted several guests at these meetings.

If you would like to join a meeting, please get in touch with your Empowerment Officer to learn more or contact Dementia NI on 028 9693 1555.



Hazel Haworth

Southern Area

Hazel@dementiani.org



Hannah Coon

Northern and Western Area

Hannah@dementiani.org



Ashleigh Davis

Belfast and South Eastern Area

Ashleigh@dementiani.org

GET TO KNOW...

Chief Executive Officer Clare Watson



WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO ME

Doing work that matters – I love working in the voluntary sector, with and on behalf of great people and causes.

Learning and developing – I love to learn from other's experience and it enhances my life in so many ways.

Balance – Spending time with my family and seeing my daughter having fun.

Before lockdown I would have said my hairdresser but as my mum has cut my hair three times now I'm rethinking that one.

Making a difference – Being able to see that we can help change things and improve people's lives.

WHAT PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT ME

I'm a really good listener.

I am clear and direct in my communications while being kind and compassionate.

If I can help, I will help.

I'm a very positive person – my glass is always half full.

I get things done – no matter how complicated or challenging a situation there is always something that can be done to improve things. I don't wait for perfection, making progress is always best.

HOW BEST TO SUPPORT ME

Tell me what works for you in Dementia NI and what you want to see more of.

Share your lived experiences within the groups and know I will respect and value everything you bring forward.

Be patient with the changes and developments underway – we'll get there and be stronger for it.

Understand that at times I am balancing a lot of different demands and some things can be frustrated by external factors.

I work full time, Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. You can contact me via email on clare@dementiani.org or call 028 9693 1555.

Creative Writing and Quilt Making Project

Dementia NI Members have been enjoying a Creative Writing and Quilt Making Project.

Hugh Jervis has been busy!



Allison Batchelor shares her experiences - "Just want to tell you all about a project I have been involved with. It is creative writing and quilt making.

We started the project by doing what I do best and that is talking. We spoke about our interests, what is important to us and what basically makes us tick. Anne who works with words drew up a piece of writing capturing everything we had said. This was then passed onto Hilary who developed a piece of art which captured in an image what we had spoken about.

At this stage the fun began. We received a package through the post and in it was one image that we would produce every week using a different technique. We have eight pieces to produce altogether. We have finished four. When we have completed the eight pieces these will be posted back to Hilary who will use small sections of each piece to apply onto the final piece and this will be our quilt.



I personally can't wait to see the finished item. It has been so enjoyable, and I have learnt so many techniques that I had never heard of or tried before. Plus, the sessions have been such fun. Xo"



Contact Us

Call: 028 9693 1555

Email: info@dementaini.org



Nice to meet you ... Christopher Higgins

My name is Christopher Higgins. I have just recently been diagnosed and was fortunate to find Dementia NI rather quickly. Ashleigh and the team have been a lifeline for my wife Angela and me.

I am enjoying our Zoom meetings; it has opened new interests for me and a new circle of friends. I love the story telling with Liz Weir, Colin Urwin is a great singer and such a comedian. We all have a good banter every week. The Zoom meetings are not just for fun, we also get involved with every day serious situations and can still make a difference in the world.



We had a talk with Michael from the War Memorial Museum on the upcoming 80th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz. It was informative and we were able to give Michael some information he was not aware of.

I will be taking part in a reading and creative writing project Queen's University are setting up headed by Jane Lugea and Paula Devine.

When a person is first given diagnosis, it is a terrible shock to the system. The first thing that happened to me was my HGV and bus vocations on my driving license were removed. This rendered me unemployable. There is a lot to take in when you feel your life is just crashing down round your feet, but please do not dismay. Dementia NI is run by people in the same situation as you and a professional team at your fingertips.

Hope to meet you all soon.
Chris

Marie Curie and Social Care Council Research

Marie Curie and NI Social Care Council are designing important training for health and social care professionals who support individuals after a bereavement.

Dementia NI members worked with Beth Mulhern from Marie Curie to support the development of a module in the training about how to support a person with dementia through a bereavement.

Beth attended an online Empower and Support Group where Dementia NI members shared their experiences of recent bereavements, offering helpful suggestions on how to support people with dementia during this difficult time. Beth Mulhern would like to extend their thanks to these members for their input. Once finalised the training will be rolled out to hundreds of health and social care staff across the province.

Have you been recently affected by a bereavement? Marie Curie Hospice provides a Bereavement Support Team that offers one-to-one counselling support. Individuals can self-refer by emailing bereavementbelfast@mariecurie.org.uk or by phoning the Support Line on 0800 090 2309. The information and support line also offers up to six sessions of telephone bereavement support, as well as a 'Check in and chat' service for people that are socially isolated and feeling lonely.



MEET THE MEMBER

My name is Hugh Jervis and I've been a member of Dementia NI for a few years now.

I have really enjoyed getting involved with Dementia NI activities.



My wife Aileen and I have 3 grown up boys and 6 grandchildren

I worked at a senior level in the Housing Executive during the Troubles.

I gave up my job and joined the ministry, where I was involved in building a church for over 30 years.

The online Empower Groups have opened up more friendships for me as we meet people from across Northern Ireland.

The friendship and support from others recently diagnosed has been great for me and we always have great craic!

I had retired before we noticed any symptoms of dementia.

My diagnosis was a shock but there's a sense of relief that we knew the reasons for the symptoms. It was confirmation of the unknown - it was a long time of not knowing.

I have taken up online Yoga through Dementia NI which is helping me maintain my balance and given me another interest which I would not have had before.

I try to keep positive outlook on life and I have kept my faith strong. My wife says I've kept my wicked sense of humour!

Age Concern Causeway – Empower & Support Group

Dementia NI members were delighted to welcome staff from Age Concern Causeway along to an online Empower and Support Group. The organisation wished to learn from Dementia NI members about using technology to connect with people living with dementia during the Covid 19 pandemic.



Members shared their experiences of using online platforms such as Zoom and Facebook to join groups and engage with each other.

Age Concern Causeway manager Fergal said “listening to the positivity and enthusiasm for using Zoom as a means of engaging with one another and with Dementia NI made us take the decision to develop a Zoom Support and Activity Group. Dementia NI made us realise our members did not need to be fearful of technology or participation. Even as a charity with over 20 years of experience of supporting individuals with dementia, we are amazed at the engagement and relationship between Dementia NI and the members present. It clearly demonstrated a person-centred charity and we were privileged to get a precious window into the world of your service”.

Together in dementia everyday (tide)

tide, ‘together in dementia everyday’, is a UK wide involvement network of carers and former carers who are working together to build a better future for carers of people living with dementia.

tide facilitates carer sessions where carers have the opportunity to catch up in an informal and friendly environment.



A session specifically set up for carers of members of Dementia NI takes place fortnightly on a Wednesday afternoon 3.00-4.00pm via Zoom. If you are interested in more information visit the tide website – www.tide.uk.net or contact Bev, Carer Involvement Lead NI. Email: beverley@tide.uk.net or call 07841 421158.