

## Scaling the Peaks; Understanding the needs and experiences of people affected by dementia in rural areas.

Alzheimer's Society Senior Research Fellowship 2015-2019

This 4 year research project aims explore the ways in which older people with memory difficulties and/or dementia manage their everyday lives in the Peak Park area of Derbyshire. The work will include people and carers who have lived all their lives in the Park and those who have recently moved to the area to retire. We know that in the Park there are high numbers of older people and carers compared to other areas of England. Fiona Marshall is leading the work, which is kindly funded by the Alzheimer's Society and supported by the Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and the Institute of Mental Health, University Of Nottingham.

The research is important because little is known about the ways in which older people with memory difficulties manage their lives in rural areas. As such the work will examine a variety of factors which can impact upon live such as closeness to services such as pharmacies, GPs, post offices, food sources and social groups. Service providers such as social services, NHS, voluntary, community groups and private businesses will be approached to provide their perspectives of meeting the needs of those who require services.

Geographical aspects of the Peak Park such as terrain, climate and related housing and travel will be considered to determine the ways in which they influence the building of sustainable services and meet the needs of older people with memory difficulties.

There are two components to the research: geo-spatial mapping and an ethnographic enquiry. Overall this study is considered to be a qualitative enquiry. It will not seek to diagnose people with dementia or to provide any interventions.

The mapping part of the study will construct a visual map of the area by using multiple types of information derived from public health, social care and other organisations. None of the information used will be identifiable at an individual level. The map will be used to help establish the closeness and types of services available within the area and so support future decisions about the range of services and their locations. Some services may be more suited as mobile ones to reduce travel challenges.

The second part of the research will seek to invite people living with memory difficulties and carers to take part in an in-depth study of how their experience everyday life. Up to 90 people living with memory difficulties will be sought from all walks of life, including those who are still working, those who are retired, own home, residential and nursing home occupants. Participants will be invited to take part in a series of discussions within their home about their lives. These discussions will be in confidence. Fiona will also attend community groups and meetings such as the Singing for the Brain, church groups, carer support groups and related groups to determine the types of community activities in the area.

Service providers, such as GPs, mental health nurses, social care and commissioners of these services will be invited to take part in interviews. The interviews will enable providers to discuss some of the challenges in designing and providing services in the rural area and the ways in which future plans are being made to address any unmet needs. These will be in confidence.

The concluding part of the research will be to draw together all the information and provide recommendations for building dementia friendly communities which are sustainable and viable. This will be achieved by providing the spatial map and evidence to support users and providers, as an open resource to promote collaboration within the communities. Evidence will also be used to develop rural care development models and a toolkit which can support collaborative decisions about service needs and delivery in the Park.

If you would like more details about the study then please contact;

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Map of the Peak District National Park