

Communities for Dementia

Research Project Update August 2024

'Communities for Dementia' is a research project that aims to develop a framework and approach to support local Dementia Friendly Communities (DFCs) to evaluate their impact.

The project is led by A/Prof Lyn Phillipson (Uni of Wollongong, UOW) as part of her DCRC Mid-Career Fellowship which is funded by the Dementia Australia Research Foundation.

Other members of the research team include: Dr Keryn Johnson (UOW), Dr Louisa Smith (Deakin Uni), Dr Diana Karamascoska (Western Sydney Uni), Dr Maria O'Reilly (Central Queensland Uni) and Prof Lee-Fay Low (Sydney Uni).

Progress to date

Development and refinement of the DFC Evaluation framework

The DFC Evaluation framework has been refined after feedback from the Advisory group, co-Investigators, DA DFC staff, and DFC stakeholders. This was collected via a number of follow-up meetings including a major online presentation to stakeholders

in November 2023 (attended by thirty people including DFC community members, Dementia Australia DFC staff, our advisory group and project researchers).

A revised practice framework and preliminary results from our consultations and desk-based analyses was then circulated for further feedback in December 2023. Feedback was very positive for the DFC Evaluation Framework, and people found the mapping of the scope of aims and actions that DFCs in Australia are currently doing very informative to their current practices.



Building DFC Capacity for Evaluation

Commencing in late February 2024, we have been working with DFCs and the Dementia Australia Community Development Officers to pilot the DFC Evaluation Framework and resources. As part of this, we recruited n=8 dementia alliances to participate in a pilot project with 2 to 4 representatives from each community consenting to participate in online evaluation training.

A series of four two hour workshops were conducted in February, April, May and June. All participating Alliances have also been supported with workbooks, group activities and 'drop in sessions' with the research team to assist with using the DFC Evaluation Framework. All of these resources have supported each Alliance to work through the steps in an evaluation cycle including:

- developing aims
- defining evaluation measures/indicators
- selecting tools
- reflecting on ethical considerations
- analysing and making meaning of data, and
- creating useful reports.

Each evaluation project developed was appropriate to each community's context, skill and experience. The focus for the evaluation projects in each DFC is listed in the table (right).



DFC Focus Activity for Evaluation Projects

| Alliance | Focus Activity | Evaluation Focus |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Ballina | YOD Carer Support Group | Program Impact |
| Canterbury Bankstown | CALD dementia service expo | Effectiveness to promote knowledge and connections |
| Logan | Dementia Choir | Program Experience |
| Port Macquarie | Dementia Choir | Program Satisfaction and needs |
| Holdsworth | Dementia Awareness Sessions | Program Satisfaction and needs |
| Goulbourn-Loddon | Main Street Accessibility | Environmental barriers and enablers of access and social participation |
| Swan | CALD Outreach | Effectiveness of current strategies to reach CALD communities |
| Tasmania | Dementia Cafe | Program Impact |

While the workshops are now completed, the research team will continue to support the evaluation working groups from each DFC to analyse and report their results and use a reflective process to recommend changes to their program as needed.

The impact of the project on the evaluation capacity of participants will also be reviewed at the end of this pilot period. The draft framework and resources have continued to be adapted and refined as needed during this pilot evaluation. The evaluation framework can be viewed on Page 3 of this newsletter.

Participant feedback

'The workshops have helped me in many roles I undertake and helped me juggle of the different balls I juggle and the different hats I wear.'
Anne, Dementia Friendly Tasmania

'Your H frame model and discussion yesterday really proved just how important it is to have your scaffolding right prior to moving ahead.'
Althea, Swan Dementia Alliances, WA

'I love the resources and the collaboration you are providing!'
Louise, Dementia Friendly Ballina, NSW

AUSTRALIAN DFC SELF EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

AUSTRALIAN DFC PRACTICE DOMAINS

DFC LOCAL SELF EVALUATION

DFC ACTION PLANNING

FOUNDATIONS
 Involvement of People with Dementia
 Equality & Inclusion
 Informed & Reflective Practice

COMMUNITY
 Dementia awareness and education
 Inclusive community activities, resources, groups, services, and businesses
 Inclusive health and care services
 Inclusive Physical Environment

PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DEMENTIA
 Dementia awareness and education
 Activities, groups, or resources for people living with dementia

ALLIANCE
 Leadership & governance
 Partnerships & collaborations
 Resourcing and sustainability
 Promotion

| DFC Evaluation Resources, Training & Toolkit Support of Research team + DA Community Development Officer | | |
|---|--|---|
| Data Collection Steps | Making meaning | Reporting |
| Take Stock - Baseline assessment | Reflect on Results What? Has been achieved So what? Why is it important Now What? How should our learnings inform our practice | Disseminate Results Create and promote easy read summary for community Create and provide report to Dementia Australia (DA), funding bodies and for Alliance self-monitoring |
| Evaluation Planning - Clarify goals, priorities & ethical considerations | | |
| Record Outputs - # activities - #attendees - # DF businesses | | |
| Assess Community Outcomes e.g., Dementia knowledge/attitudes | | |
| Assess Outcomes for People living with dementia e.g., social connections, knowledge of services | | |
| Assess Outcomes for Alliances e.g., Satisfaction of community partners | | |

REFLECTION & TRANSLATION INTO PRACTICE



What have we learnt?

DFCs have members with a wide range of skills and expertise who are passionate about what they are doing in the community and are enthusiastic to build their capacity to evaluate and improve their activities.

Every community is different and evaluation needs differ across each community. Any evaluation framework therefore needs to be accommodating for this diversity, and to allow a scaffold where groups can make their own decisions on what is important to evaluate at each point in time.

What's happening next?

In the next months we plan to continue to support our eight Dementia-Friendly Communities using our draft framework and developed resources, alongside and supported by Dementia Australia DFC Community Development Officers.

Toward the end of the year, we hope to re-convene our DFC groups to facilitate discussions on theirs and our evaluation learnings, and to refine our evaluation educational resources based on their feedback.

We will also be working with Dementia Australia to discuss a strategy to support access to more DFCs to the Evaluation Framework, resources and training.

Future research

In our consultations, many stakeholders stressed that some evaluation activities were beyond the capacity of DFCs and required specialised skills to undertake. Of particular note was research to assess DFCs impact on community level knowledge and attitudes and also on the quality of life for people living with dementia.

In response to this need, we are taking preliminary steps towards the conduct of this research, with ethics planning and funding applications underway to support our research team conduct quality of life assessments with people living with dementia who participate in DFC activities in their communities.

We have also sought ethics approval to conduct a wider community-based survey of knowledge and attitudes towards dementia in places where DFCs are active. So watch this space for further news!

For more information

If you would like to know more about the preliminary results of this project, and/or the new DFC Evaluation framework or how to get involved in the pilot project, please email Lyn Phillipson lphillip@uow.edu.au.

For more information on Dementia-Friendly Communities, please visit the Dementia Australia website: <https://www.dementiafriendly.org.au/>



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