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‘We’re in It Together’: Living Well with Dementia Creating a Regional Strategy for the East Midlands

ABSTRACT

We have been creating a strategy for living well with dementia in the East Midlands using Appreciative Inquiry. Challenging ourselves to find the highlights and golden moments, we have been inspired in our search by stories and pictures. We would like to share some of them with you – the essence of being with and working with Appreciative Inquiry.



Photos © John Thomson photography@redmail.com

‘If you are saving for a rainy day, you need to recognise it when it comes.’

Heather was so relieved to have the diagnosis of Alzheimer’s and to know, for sure, what was happening to her. Now she and her family could plan and start to live – enjoying the time they had together, travelling – doing things they might never have done – while they could. Her husband left work and together they are now living their life to the full. They are creating great times and great memories for the future, and in the process impacting positively on Heather’s well-being and the progress of her dementia.

Using Appreciative Inquiry, we set out to discover what living well means to people affected by dementia and to build on their best experiences in creating services and support so they can live like this all the time.

On Friday, 2 October 2009, 180 people from across the East Midlands, UK and from all parts of local health, social care and community services came together with people with dementia and their carers to create a regional vision for living well with dementia.



Jill Guild – Welcome to the summit

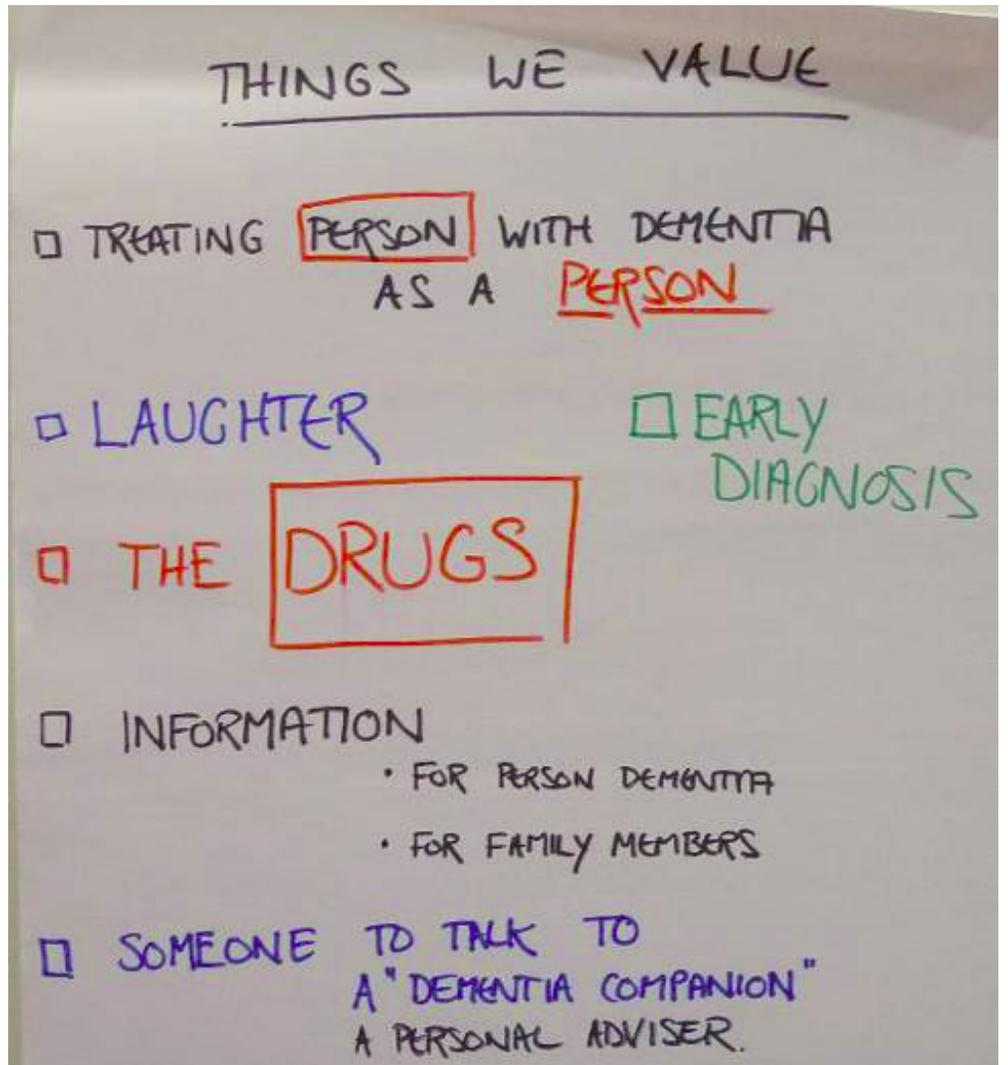
Building on the discovery work surrounding people with dementia and their carers, the summit inquired into what it means to live well with dementia and what it will mean to live even better; creating images and words for a compelling future – creating a live vision for the regional strategy.

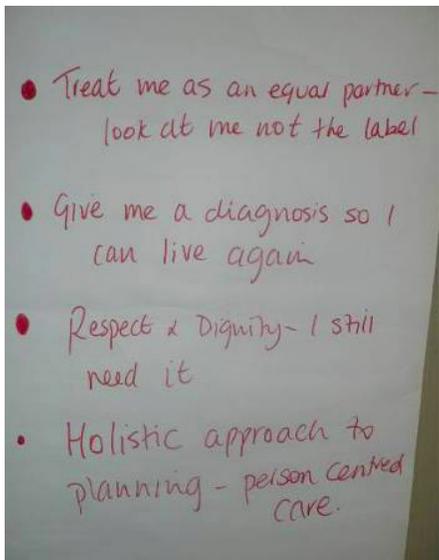


Participants worked together, telling and listening to stories about living well – powerful and inspiring stories of times when people felt most valued, most connected and most supported.



Inspiring stories – spellbound listeners





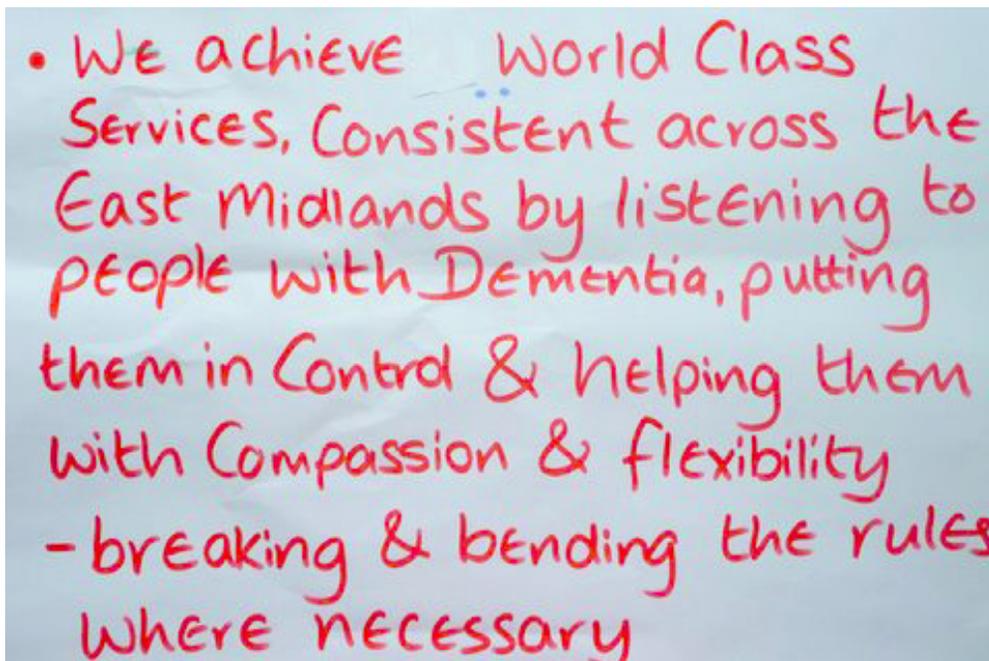
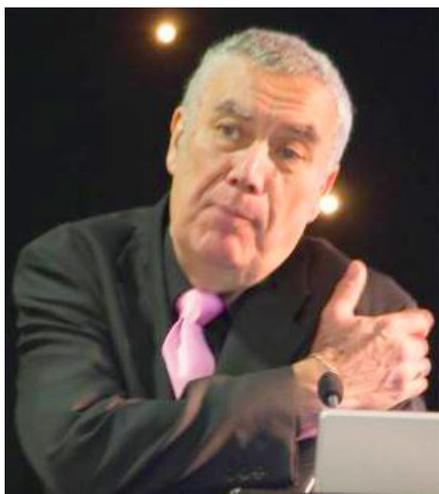
Speaking from the heart

Together we started to discover what 'living well with dementia' means ... and dreaming about what it will be like to live even better.

These powerful images and conversations are inspiring local practitioners, people with dementia and their carers as they start designing and creating local services based on what people with dementia and their carers value most in living well. This is just the beginning ...!

And...for me as an AI practitioner...and the daughter of someone living with dementia....this work has touched me deeply, particularly the courageous and generous people that I have met along the way.

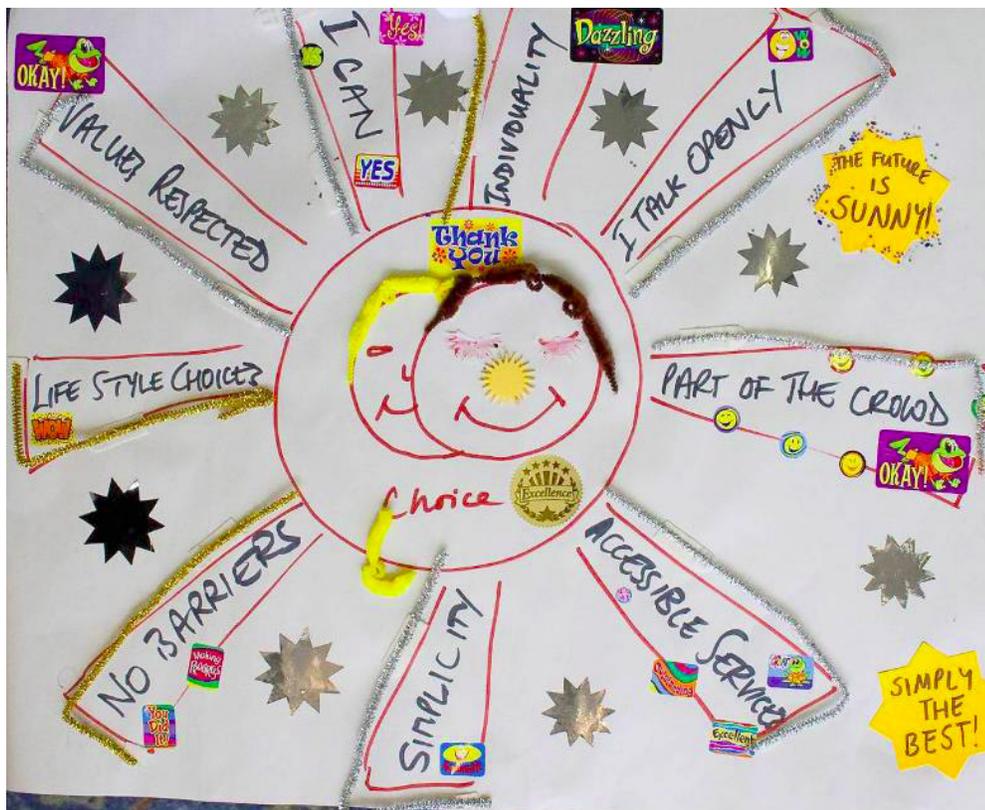
Co-creating a space in which they have shared their stories, expressed their feelings, connected with each other and listened to each other has been a privilege and filled with rich learning for me.



The vision for living well with dementia in the East Midlands



Moving conversations



Simply the best - Vision picture created at Regional Summit October 2009

My highlight has been watching carers grow in confidence and assertiveness through this process. The journey of one carer stands out, from her anger at the first discovery meeting, to the positive action she had taken for herself and her family by the second; her commitment and enthusiastic contributions to this whole process; and her generosity in being filmed and telling her story simply and powerfully. She, and others like her, brought the regional summit to a silent standstill in appreciation of her testimony – and she thanked us for the experience! I am so glad that, as a core group we were able to listen to her frustration, making room for new possibilities and actions. This for me is the power and joy of being of an appreciative facilitator – valuing all our feelings and experiences, welcoming them into the conversation and harnessing all our energy for positive action.

With thanks to Jill Guild, Lesley Moore, Lesley Wilson, Kay Morgan, the Lincoln AI Foundation Training Series Group (September 2009) and all of the people who are contributing to the success of this work.



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IAPG Contacts and AI Practitioner Subscription Information



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Purpose of AI Practitioner

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