

# Dementia Action Alliance

Lewisham

September 2016

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Lewisham DAA Newsletter

Since our first Newsletter in March lots of very exciting things have happened in Lewisham and our DAA.

Dementia Awareness Week in May was a great success and we would like to thank everyone who made this week possible. Some of the activities that took place are described in further detail in this newsletter as well as how the activities of the week were perceived by one of our former carers, Ann Pownall.

Additionally, Catford South and Lewisham have formally been accredited as 'Working to become Dementia Friendly' in late June. This is a great achievement and reflects all the work that has been done in Catford South and Lewisham to become more dementia friendly since the launch of the DAA. It also gives the Lewisham DAA a framework for targeted interventions to become more dementia friendly in the years to come.



## Dementia Awareness Week in Lewisham

Lewisham MindCare:



The Lewisham MindCare Team were out and about in Lewisham as part of Dementia Awareness Week (15th - 21st of May). They had two stalls over two days in and outside of the Riverdale Shopping Centre with the aim of engaging members of the public in conversations about dementia, answering any questions they might have and ensuring people affected by dementia were aware of what support is available.

The team did a great job of striking up conversations and promoting the Lewisham MindCare service, answering questions like, "What is the difference between Alzheimer's and Dementia?" and offering advice to people who were worried about their own memory or a loved one. The team is already looking ahead to next year's

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Dementia Awareness week so watch this space in 2017!

**Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust:** Dementia Awareness Week at the Trust has been very special this year. Across the Trust 1,300 Dementia Friends have been made. A fantastic achievement! The Dementia Team also had an information stall in the orange corridor at University Hospital Lewisham. This included a reminiscence wash-day theme with music and cake.



**Community Connections:** Community Connections, Age UK Lewisham & Southwark, Sydenham Garden and Carers Lewisham visited the Horniman Museum and Gardens to celebrate this week. We explored the herb, dye, food

and material gardens. Strolling through, members of our group talked about the use of the different plants, the colours and the things they remembered about each plant or tree "I loved the gardens, I liked everything, I loved the colours."

We then spent some time in the Hands on Base, where we played a game of "what is it?" Using some objects as prompts we acted out different uses for them and had the group guess what we were doing. A giant shell became a hat! Everyone enjoyed this and got very creative with their ideas.

Each person then moved around the space and chose an object they liked best from the cabinet. "I loved the room in the museum where we could see the costumes and other things. I loved that. Holding the table was very nice. The mindfulness exercise was good. The garden was very nice too."

Objects chosen were related to past memories and experiences, drums, flutes, birds, shells and more were chosen by the group. Some of the stories that emerged were incredible to hear:

"I chose the bird from the case as it reminded me of a bird I found in Jamaica, as a teenager, which had a broken wing. I was able to use some gum from a tree and two lollipop sticks taped to the broken wing as a splint. The bird's wing healed in about one week."

The objects sparked the interest of the group and opened up a window into their childhoods and previous experiences:

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"I chose a silver flute to hold. It reminded me of my school friend who played to me when I was young and living in Devon. I always loved her music, it was so sweet, soft and relaxing. I never saw her again after we moved. I missed her music."

The activity also brought out people's skills and talents and this was a brilliant thing to share:

"I chose an Indian drum. Taj and I played the drums together."

The visit to the museum felt like a great afternoon out and we would like to thank the Horniman museum for hosting us.



Lewisham Dementia Awareness Week from Ann Pownall's (a former carer) point of view:

As a volunteer with various dementia projects in the Lewisham area, Dementia Awareness Week was a busy and exciting time, and I was delighted to support many events.

#### *Friday 13 May*

The week kicked off early at Carers Lewisham with an invite for dementia carers to attend a talk on 'Sexuality in Dementia' by Ester Wiskerke-den Heijer, the manager at the Ladywell Day Centre. Ester has done research on this rarely talked about subject and provided an enlightening and thought provoking session.

#### *Monday 16 May*

Carers Lewisham provided the dementia carers with a Relaxation Evening. Two massage therapists were in attendance throughout the evening and there was food and drink and a chance for the carers to socialize. It was lovely to welcome some new faces to the centre and a delight to see the relaxed, smiling faces as one by one the carers emerged from their massage session.

#### *Tuesday 17 May*

I was unable to attend the tea party held for the dementia carers by Carers Lewisham, which I heard was a big success, with music and dancing. Instead I was off to the Horniman Museum and Gardens with the Sow and Keep Growing group from Sydenham Garden. We all travelled together on the minibus, which delivered us at the museum entrance, where we were met by Rosa Parker from Community Connections, who led the event. The gardens provided a wonderful sensory experience for our co-workers (the title given to

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the people with dementia who attend Sydenham Garden). The wonderful planting provided a varied sensory experience with their scents, colour and texture, and also a chance to reminisce. We then adjourned to a private room for much enjoyed tea and cakes before heading into another area of the museum reserved specially for workshops. It was a real treat to have all the glass cabinets unlocked so that everyone could handle the objects (clothing, musical instruments and an array of items from around the world) and choose one for themselves. There was the chance to talk about your chosen item, which led to reminiscence. A lively session concluded with a mindfulness exercise with everyone's chosen object.

The importance of dementia friendly activities/trips became very apparent to me following the Horniman visit. As a former dementia carer for my mother, I had taken her to the Horniman a few times, and as wonderful as the place is, the site has a steep incline when accessed on foot from the park gates, the café can be very noisy and busy, and static objects behind glass had limited appeal and engagement for my mother (the aquarium and gardens was of great appeal however). Had a trip such as the one I did with Sydenham Garden been available she would have found the experience so much more enjoyable. One of our co-workers

did in fact say that he had visited the Horniman with his family and had enjoyed it, but this visit he had really loved.

#### *Wednesday 18 May*

I was delighted to be heading back to the Horniman, but this time with Carers Lewisham for a visit for both the dementia carers and their cared for, again arranged by Rosa. The weather was not so kind on this occasion allowing only a short visit to the gardens, so instead we spent some time in the main museum. The handling of objects in the workshop area was again a highlight for everyone and, appropriately for the Horniman, produced reminiscence of past travels.

#### *Thursday 19 May*

Carers Lewisham concluded their exciting itinerary for Dementia Awareness Week with a workshop with Spare Tyre, a participatory arts charity. The workshop was for the dementia carers, and it was lovely to once again welcome some new faces to the centre, as well as more familiar ones.

Having been to a public viewing of Spare Tyre's multisensory and interactive installation, 'The Garden', for people with dementia, I was fascinated to see how they would take use the material as a workshop for the carers. Fauve, who lead the sensory workshop, covered themes such as non-verbal communication, the importance of playfulness and stimulation of the imagination, in

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order to engage in a meaningful way with someone with dementia. The workshop produced much fascination for its participants - who knew how much fun could be had with a piece of fur fabric! It also sparked off lively discussion, with the carers telling their own personal stories and supporting each other in their shared experiences. One comment that particularly resonated with me was, "I do wish society understood dementia better". At the end of the workshop however I got a definite sense that those leaving were feeling much more inspired, supported and positive than when they arrived.

### Dementia Friends Champion Induction in Lewisham:

The Lewisham DAA approached Alzheimer's Society to host a Dementia Friends Champion Induction Session in Lewisham. On the 11<sup>th</sup> August 2016 a Champion Induction Session took place in the Deptford Lounge. This was a great success with 15 new champions at the end of the day. It was great seeing some of our Lewisham DAA members but also locals and interested from Lewisham and further afield at the induction. We are hoping to be able to host a further champion induction in Lewisham later on this year or early next year. This will be advertised as soon as a date is available.



### Other News and Reminders: Appeal to Carers:

The Lewisham DAA-Steering Group is currently looking for a volunteer who is able to represent Lewisham carers for people with dementia in the Lewisham DAA. Should you be interested or know of someone who might be interested please contact Karin Barthel: [karin.barthel@nhs.net](mailto:karin.barthel@nhs.net)

### Action plans:

We'd like to remind all members to update their action plans on a regular basis but at least once a year. If you have any questions with regards to your action plans, please contact Karin Barthel: [karin.barthel@nhs.net](mailto:karin.barthel@nhs.net)