



# West Midlands Education Innovation and Notable Practice

**FOUNDATION DEGREE DEMENTIA CARE MODULES**

**2010 - 2011**



## FOUNDATION DEGREE DEMENTIA CARE MODULES

*BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY*

<b>Overview:</b>	The modules are designed for people working in care assistant roles providing care for people with dementia. They run concurrently at L4 & 5. Students attend university for 5 days spread over 7 weeks. The modules are taught using a wide range of experiential active learning opportunities and have been evaluated independently, showing measurable impact on practice.
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The modules are specifically targeted at front line care staff: those with most contact with people with dementia but least likely to get access to relevant educational opportunities. The purpose of developing the modules was to respond to the National Dementia Strategy through improving the care for people living with dementia while also contributing to widening participation in education. The key stakeholders are people with dementia, their families and friends, care workers, Birmingham City Council, residential and nursing home and home care providers and Birmingham Care Development Agency.

Most students had no previous experience of studying at University and some had not studied since they left school. Teaching approaches are almost completely active and offer engaging opportunities to develop empathy, positive person-centred attitudes and useful practical and sensitive skills for practice. A range of innovative teaching techniques are used to promote engagement and motivation and to ensure that different learning styles are catered for. Teaching techniques include a range of games, tricks, stories, interaction with an actor and the opportunity for each student to take a leading role in a seminar presentation.

### Examples

Coping with 'challenging behaviour' – a game in which small groups of students choose a service user, represented on a card with photos to hint at a 'life story', then analyse how the interactions between the person, the staff, the environment and context may combine to lead to identified problems. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own and others' belief systems and make recommendations for change.

Students are given a piece of paper and told they are taking part in a test, under 'exam conditions'. They then are given speedy origami instructions. This exercise illustrates how 'outpacing' is frustrating and damaging. Students are then invited to give top tips for improving communication techniques.

Another involves use of a large box of resources (wipes, gloves, aprons, pads) that might be needed when helping someone in the toilet. Students are asked to take each other to the toilet, give their

colleague a wash, put on a pad and return. This causes huge objections and leads into a discussion of the reasons for 'resistance to care'.

Students have the chance to practice their own communication skills with an actor playing the part of someone with dementia. The actor has been extensively prepared and his input provides a realistic but safe experience.

Throughout the module stories from practice illustrate points and encourage students to relate their own practice to theory. A carer tells her story which is a very moving experience and reminds students how dementia affects family members as well as the identified service user.

The combination of challenging, active learning in a supportive social environment seems to meet the needs of the experienced carers. The assessment seems to drive commitment to change.

Obstacles included students' anxieties about studying, lack of experience with digital technology, and the wide range (including complete lack) of previous academic experience. The factors that made a difference were modelling sensitive person-centred teaching/care in the classroom, support via whichever means suited the students, and establishing a strong expectation of mutual support, sharing and learning from each other. I would advise that the relationships formed in the classroom enable students to overcome anxieties, take risks and build commitment to themselves and those they care for. Use of warmth, humour and games enables difficult ideas and issues to be addressed in a non-threatening way.