EMPOWER Dementia Network+

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Dear EMPOWER Colleagues,

We hope you are well. Lots has been happening at EMPOWER since our last newsletter, and we are excited to share some of the latest developments and progress we have made together.

In this issue, we highlight our recent Policy Lab, the launch of the Small Research Project Fund, our upcoming Co-production Training, and more. We are also honoured to include a poem written by Ronald Amanze, one of our lived experts.

What EMPOWER Means to Me

Through creativity and art, I find myself.
When I feel challenged, tired, or misunderstood,
When I just want to be Ronald
Not a label, not a condition, not a research study
Just Ronald.
EMPOWER gives me the space to be that.

It lifts me when I'm unsure how to speak
Or when my words feel tangled.
It gives me a way to express what's inside,
Without needing permission or perfect speech.

And should I feel like I don't fit in,
It doesn't ask me to change,
It changes the space to fit me.
It welcomes me with empathy,
Not just as a participant,
But as someone who belongs.

EMPOWER gives me voice
When I feel silenced or shy.
It gives me courage
When I've doubted my worth.
It gives me breath
When the conversations feels too heavy.

And through art I write dementia diaries,
A poem, a picture, a rhythm, a song ,
In fact, you can Google and find some on Spotify,
Or check out my show on deepnessdementiamedia.com
Where I get to tell my story in my own way.
That is how I reclaim my power.
That is what EMPOWER means to me

Policy Lab

On 26th March 2025, the EMPOWER Network collaborated with the Policy Institute at King's College London to host a Policy Lab. The event united lived experts, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to identify and discuss how we can inform policy and practice in ways that are useful, important and meaningful for those affected by dementia.

Our driving question was:

'How can we reduce the most significant inequalities in care for people living with dementia and their families?'

Highlights of the day included:

- Powerful testimonies from people with dementia and carers helped set a clear tone for change.
- Lively group discussions explored big challenges in our health and social care systems, including disconnected services and staff shortages.
- Clear and practical suggestions were shared to help guide EMPOWER's next steps.

Discussions led to **three** core proposals:

- Work closely with diverse communities of people with dementia to understand their needs, empower them on their terms, and support their ongoing participation in community life beyond dementia-specific spaces, including intergenerational activities and sharing diverse stories to challenge stereotypes.
- Recognise that people with dementia living alone are a varied group but generally more vulnerable This group of people need to be actively identified, and we need to think carefully about how we ensure they access the resources they need.
- Put relationships at the heart of care by training staff to communicate with empathy, allowing time to build trust, connecting people to local social networks, and including public health experts in care planning.

These insights have directly informed EMPOWER's Small Research Project Fund, ensuring resources are invested in solutions that address the most urgent inequities in dementia care.

Small Research Project Fund

We are pleased to announce that the **Small Research Project Fund** is now open for Expressions of Interest, with a deadline of **Friday 11th July at 1pm (GMT)**.

This fund is designed to **support collaborative research** that addresses inequalities in dementia care and research, especially for people who need greater support. By "greater support," we mean the important moments in a person's dementia when they go from being able to manage on their own to needing extra help and care, whether from professionals or family and friends. These might include individuals from marginalised communities, those living alone, or people navigating complex needs later in life.

We welcome expressions of interest from people with lived experience of dementia, family, friends, and unpaid carers of people living with dementia, researchers, community organisations (including charities, foundations, and local grassroots groups), practitioners, and volunteers. You do not need a full research team in place; our team will support you in finding the right collaborators and shaping your idea.

Projects should focus on **at least one** of our four priority areas:

1. Raising public awareness and addressing stigma and social exclusion.
2. Supporting families, friends, and unpaid carers.
3. Building a compassionate, skilled, and supported workforce.
4. Inclusive uses of technology (e.g., digital tools, online platforms, Virtual Reality, Artificial Intelligence).

Co-production is central to this work. We expect all projects to be co-designed and co-delivered with people with dementia and community partners.

We know that creating change takes shared commitment. This fund is our way of nurturing that commitment, helping seeds of local innovation grow into lasting improvements in care.

Find out **more** and submit your Expression of Interest **here**.

Co-production Training

We are offering an online co-production training session on **Tuesday 17 June, 10:00-11:30**, to support anyone interested in applying to the Small Research Project Fund.

This session has been co-developed by researchers, lived experts, and community partners. The training aims to be inclusive and practical, providing:

- What co-production means in practice
- Key stages of co-production in research
- Practical tips and reflections from Lived Experts, researchers, and community partners
- Real-world examples and challenges
- Q&A session, including questions submitted in advance

You can register for the Co-production Training webinar **here**.

Growing Our Lived Experience Panel

We are looking to expand our lived experience panel. This group includes people directly affected by dementia, including people living with dementia, carers, family members, and friends, all who provide steer and direction for the Network. We particularly welcome people who often do not get chance to take part in shaping dementia care and research - including those who live alone, and people from ethnically diverse, rural, and socio-economically deprived communities. If you, or someone you know, would like to be involved, please reach out! We would love to hear from you.

Events, Opportunities & Developments

These are events, opportunities and developments that members of our network have asked us to share.

Webinar: Making Shared Care a Reality in Care Homes

TIDE – Together In Dementia Everyday will be launching their Making Shared Care a Reality in Care Homes report on 10 June 2025. The session will explore key findings, lived experiences, and practical recommendations for creating more inclusive and collaborative care environments.

This is a valuable opportunity for carers, professionals, and advocates to reflect on how shared care approaches can improve trust, continuity, and wellbeing in residential settings.

You can register for the webinar **here**.

Webinar: Creative Arts for Dementia – Final in the Series

- NIHR Applied Research Collaborations (NIHR ARCs) are hosting the final webinar in their dementia care series, focusing on the role of creative arts on 9 July 2025, 13:00-14:00. This session will feature three short talks from researchers exploring the impact of music therapy, singing and dancing interventions, and how creative arts can involve people with dementia in research

The webinar will be chaired by Dr Stephen Lim, Clinical Research Fellow and Honorary Consultant Geriatrician at the University of Southampton.

You can register for the webinar **here**.

Job Opportunity: Research Fellow in Law (0.5FTE)

Northumbria University is recruiting a part-time Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Law to join the Working with Dementia Network Plus, funded by ESRC, NIHR and the Alzheimer's Society. The role involves qualitative and quantitative legal research under the supervision of Dr Lyndsey Bengtsson. This is a one-year, fixed-term post based at the Newcastle campus, starting in Summer 2025.

Application deadline: **13 June 2025**

View the full job description and apply

Course - Dementia Care: Living Well as Dementia Progresses

Newcastle University are relaunching a free online course to support understanding of dementia progression and how to prepare for this.

In summary, the course supports learning about:

- Understanding the progression and symptoms of dementia
- The potential for involving the person with dementia in decisions
- Signposting to services that may be useful to families as the illness progresses
- Exploring sources of support for carers and people living with dementia across a range of different settings
- Exploring ways to ensure care and communication is person-centred
- Identifying ways to maintain quality of life and ensuring comfort for the person living with dementia
- The course will support learners to apply these learning resources to their own situation.

The course is suitable for all health, social and voluntary care professionals; people living with dementia and family carers/supporters.

There are limited spaces on this course, so please sign up using **here** before the 16th June 2025.

Launch of the Dementia Journeys Website

The Dementia Journeys website is now live: www.dementia-journeys.com

The exhibition was created in response to Empowering Better End of-Life Dementia Care (EMBED-Care) – a 6-year research programme jointly led by University College London and the Cicely Saunders Institute at King's College London that aims to generate a step-change in how care is provided for people at any age with any type of dementia.

This website tells the story of the exhibition alongside sharing resources from the EMBED-Care programme.

Thank you for being part of EMPOWER.
Catherine, Emma, Andy, Stefanny & Laiba

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