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Creating a dementia friendly generation

Rebecca Rylance & Jill Pendleton describe the awareness-raising work of the Innovate Dementia team

Schools can play a pivotal role in the development of dementia-friendly communities. By educating children and young people about dementia, it is possible to create a dementia-friendly generation – one that is more aware of dementia and more supportive of people who live with dementia.

The Alzheimer's Society (2013) also believes that educating young people is a fundamental part of creating dementia-friendly communities. It is becoming more and more likely that young people will come into contact with someone living with dementia. Furthermore, as the Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) points out (2013), the young people of today are the employers and employees of tomorrow and may take on caring responsibilities at some point in their lives.

In response to this, Innovate Dementia – a three year transnational European-funded project between Liverpool John Moores University and Mersey Care NHS Trust, with partners from Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands – developed an



Tommy Dunne with students in a training session

intergenerational educational package for children and young people children in Liverpool.

The Innovate Dementia team went to a number of secondary high schools throughout the city to deliver dementia awareness training to sixth-form children (year 12). Although each school had differing requirements in terms of their existing timetable and curriculum demands, the team was able to visit each school to do the training as part of the school's non-statutory PHSE aspect of the national curriculum.

The team was joined by Tommy Dunne, who has

dementia and lives well with it, and the training broadly followed the components of the 'Dementia for Schools' curriculum: understanding dementia; learning about carers; meeting someone with dementia; and assistive technology. Sessions were planned with the teaching staff from each school so that they were well matched to the learning needs and learning styles of the pupils.

Teaching approaches used by the team were varied: tutorials, games, quizzes, activities, simulations and group discussions. At the end of the programme the students were

each given a project to undertake which required them to disseminate their 'new' knowledge around dementia to younger members of the school. This was done either through school assemblies or in small group classroom sessions.

At the time of writing the dementia awareness training had been given to approximately 200 young people and the school's dementia champions and friends continue to cascade their knowledge across their schools. Feedback from students has been extremely positive. "I found it helpful to listen to someone with dementia and how they get on with life," said one, while another said "I would like to meet more people with dementia." ■

References

Alzheimer's Disease Society (2013) From Alzheimers Society website: <http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/youngpeople> [accessed on 09/12/2014]
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