



June 2009

Newsletter No. 16



Brain Waves

A monthly newsletter from Innovations in Dementia CIC

The aim of these newsletters is to keep people with dementia and their allies informed about the work of Innovations in Dementia Community Interest Company.

Equal but different?

Innovations in Dementia ThinkTank member, Graham, has been investigating what staff in high street travel agents think about dementia.

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Equal but different?

In March this year Graham and Nada took a trip to Brighton. Graham had suggested looking at how high street travel agents treat people with dementia. This trip was part of our Start Making Sense work about finding out what everyday information is easy to understand.

We walked into six high street travel agents in Brighton. We explained that Graham was with the Alzheimer's Society and asked if a member of staff was able to answer a few questions for us.

Graham had devised the questions, which were:

1. If you know a person has dementia, how would you deal/talk to them?
2. At what age would you expect a person to have dementia?
3. What travel insurance advice would you give them?
4. Are there certain holidays you would advise people not to take if you knew they have a dementia? eg long flights?
5. Do you have any training on dementia - eg when you do a first aid course or any other company courses?
6. Some people do not like to mention that they have a dementia. Would it be easier if they carried a coloured ID card?
7. Do you think anyone in this shop at the moment has dementia?

Graham asked the questions and Nada took notes.

What did we find?

The variation in answers to Graham's questions was amazing. In one travel agent we had to explain exactly what dementia was. In a couple of travel agents the staff had had family experience of dementia and so they understood a little more.

None of the staff we talked to had had any training around dementia - or indeed any training about other disabilities or conditions that their customers might have. At least one person said that they thought that a card stating that someone had dementia would not be useful unless the staff had had training.

Not surprisingly, most people associated dementia with very old age. And all the staff we talked to were very surprised when Graham told them as we were leaving that he has Pick's disease.

Equal but different?

Most of the staff we talked to insisted that they would not treat people with dementia any differently from their other customers.

At first Graham and Nada both thought that this was a good attitude to have.

However, the responses of one person we talked to made us question this assumption. She said that, of course, she would be polite and helpful as she hoped she was with all customers. However she thought that in some ways people with dementia should be treated differently. For example:

- She thought that people with dementia should be given more time to think about the options.
- She thought that it would be a good idea to print out information for people with dementia to take away, read properly and maybe discuss with family or friends before making a decision.
- She said that she would ring the insurance company to find out if there were any issues around a diagnosis of dementia. (All the other companies had said that the customer would have to contact the insurance company themselves.)
- She pointed out that her company would want to make sure that they were able to offer support to a customer with dementia while they were on holiday.

Graham thought that this attitude was by far the most helpful. Yes, people with dementia are equal to other customers on the high street, but a few common sense suggestions like the ones above would make everyone's life easier.

Tell us about your experiences in high street shops

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Innovations in Dementia is run by three directors - Rachael, Steve and Nada. We are a Community Interest Company. This means that any profit we make is put back into the organisation.

We do not offer services for people with dementia. Instead we work with other organisations to make sure that people with dementia can continue to take part in their communities and have active lives.

Please share your ideas, experiences and positive stories with us.

Contact us

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