

Workforce

People power

An extensive six-month consultation process with stakeholders informed the development of our new values and relationship-centred model of care, through which staff work with the same elders, writes **Daniella Greenwood** and **Matt Archdall**.



Arcare CEO Colin Singh with Knox elder Joan at the values day.

In late 2011, it was determined that although Arcare's care was well respected in the industry, our dementia services needed improvement. In 2012 Daniella was appointed as Arcare's dementia strategy manager to investigate this.

After initial discussions with elders, families and staff, we realised that we couldn't begin this journey with our old values guiding us, so the first step was to engage stakeholders so that we could re-imagine our values together.

This work was conducted over six months during 2012; consisting of 60 hours of focus groups, working groups and in-depth interviews with over 280 elders, staff, volunteers and family members. Participants were encouraged to share their positive stories and to explore a shared vision for our future.

This Appreciative Inquiry methodology was chosen because it matched our commitment to shifting our focus from the management of problems to what was working well – and then building on that.

FOCUSING ON RELATIONSHIPS

The findings from these conversations highlighted that people's most valued experiences were set in the context of relationships. It was not about what happened to, or for, but between people. Together we began to create a set of organisational values that reflected the meaning of relationships in the lives of elders/clients, relatives, staff and volunteers.

In December 2012 we invited 60 elders, relatives and staff to finalise our new values statements. Neal Bethune, a family member who attended the values development day, said: "I sat at a table with the CEO of Arcare, an elder, a cleaner, a volunteer, and a personal care worker. Together, we really worked hard to come up with values that represented what everyone cared most about."

Our next challenge was to develop a model of care and practice that would prioritise and support the development and deepening of relationships.

Almost 12 months after embarking on this journey, we were ready to implement our relationship-centred model of care – a

major component of which is our dedicated staffing assignment, where staff commit to working more shifts and to working with the same elders.

IMPLEMENTATION & RESPONSE

We had our CEO Colin Singh's support, we knew what everyone in the caring relationship wanted, and we had the Senses-framework to help guide the delivery of it (adapted from Nolan et. al 2006). The next step was to launch it all.

In September 2013 we conducted a values roadshow at our 18 residences in Victoria and Queensland, consisting of three and four two-hour interactive sessions a day to over 1,500 staff, where they were introduced to Arcare's new values, our relationship-centred model of care and our dedicated staffing assignment.

As we introduced dedicated staffing we encountered initial resistance to the changes from some of our clinical and operational staff who had been trained in the medical model. We overcame much of this through further intensive daylong workshops around change management, communication, group work and transformational leadership. Care staff embraced it – with some willingly accepting a reduction in pay to be involved. As for families and elders, this response from Joseph Connor, a relative, is indicative: "For the first time in three years I can sleep in, because I know exactly who is with Irene that morning, and I trust them."

Although only initially intended for our dementia areas, it is now the model that guides our whole organisation.

Throughout this journey there have been times when we almost relapsed into the older 'problem-solving' approaches, but with the support of our chief executive, we were able to get back on track. This strengths-based approach has worked for us on many levels, it underpins the way we think about dementia, about old age, about our own organisation and ultimately, the wider aged care industry. ■

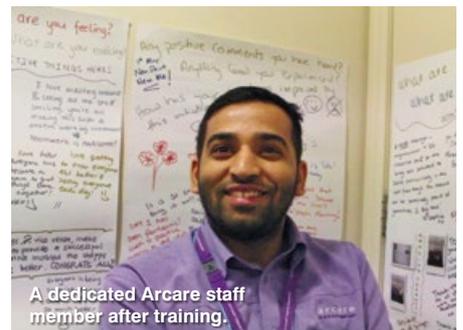
Daniella Greenwood is innovation and strategy manager and Matt Archdall is marketing manager at Arcare.



Daniella Greenwood performing at the values roadshow.



Arcare staff at a values roadshow at Arcare Delbridge.



A dedicated Arcare staff member after training.