

Facilitating Family Carer Dementia Education: We All Need to Learn



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Aim

This research explored the learning experiences of facilitators delivering a knowledge and skills based education programme for family carers of people living with dementia. The Scottish Carers' Academy is designed around a theory-guided approach called Care Empathia.



Methods

UWS HLS School Ethical Approval was granted to conduct a mixed methods study. Facilitators from two Carers' Academy Hubs were invited to complete anonymous facilitator questionnaires (n=19) which asked them to reflect on:

1. **Their expectations about their facilitation experience.**
2. **Aspects of the session that they found thought provoking in relation to their own learning.**
3. **Areas of personal learning for development.**

To capture learning over time, two hour-long online synchronous focus groups six months apart were facilitated to explore with thirteen facilitators' individual and shared learning experiences over time.

Findings

Questionnaire findings highlighted the learning gained from being a facilitator, observing expert facilitators in action, and listening to and learning from the testimonies of family carers. The findings from the focus groups identified six themes including safe learning approaches, the art of facilitation, emotional work, team learning, and leadership.

In the beginning it was really good to get the chance to go through that with somebody else and talk about the stages and the things we're trying to discuss and really analyse what we talk about and think about it from a learning perspective as well as what we're trying to put across the carers

So I think for me, that's what our ethos has always been about, keeping people safe.

Now, if I'm doing Carers Academy, there are no visits getting done after that because, I'm emotionally drained by the end of it if I'm honest.

So, I think the program has been crafted over time to resonate with everybody but allow the professionals with that expertise to answer the particular problems that some family members may be experiencing

Conclusions

Findings highlighted the importance of facilitator preparation and the advantages of co-delivery models that combine clinical and practice education expertise. Facilitators need to understand how to walk the talk of theory-guided educational models, be open to reciprocity in learning, and be prepared for the emotional work of delivering trauma-informed practical dementia care education to family carers.

References

Jack-Waugh, A., Holland, S., Macrae, R., Mimnaugh, J., & Tolson, D. (2024). Facilitating family carer dementia education: we all need to learn. Healthcare, 12(20), Article 2096. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12202096>