

UK Meeting Centres Support Programme



Project Overview

The Association for Dementia Studies (ADS) at the University of Worcester was awarded a [National Lottery grant from the Big Lottery Fund](#). The project ran from 1st September 2018 to 31st August 2021, with an extension until 2nd March 2022 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The aim was to help establish new Meeting Centres in different parts of the UK to work with their communities to support people and families directly affected by dementia.

This funding enabled ADS to build real capacity across the UK so that Meeting Centres form a backbone of community-based active support to people and families. By working together with early adopters in their communities and with national influencers, UK MCSP aimed to attain the national visibility, momentum and traction to bring future generations of Meeting Centres on board.

ADS was a co-investigator on a successful research project, MEETINGDEM, that took the learning from the Netherlands to set up Meeting Centres in the UK, Italy and Poland and to evaluate their impact. As part of the project two pilot demonstrator Meeting Centre sites were established in [Droitwich Spa](#) and [Leominster](#). These have now established themselves as charities since the research funding ended in August 2017.

We have had a unique opportunity to develop a sharing of the learning across early adopters of the Meeting Centre model in the UK from different regions and jurisdictions as well as from organisations of different types such as housing associations, faith groups and day centres who could be well placed to build Meeting Centres from their existing provision.

Project Outputs

By the end of the three years, the project aimed to deliver:

- Between 15 and 20 new Meeting Centres opened or under development across the UK for people and families affected by dementia that can act as demonstrator sites and centres of learning for others.

- Greater understanding from sharing the learning of how Meeting Centres function over time in different communities, jurisdictions, locations, rural and urban via the following:
 - o UK MCSP National Reference Group – representatives from a range of organisations across the UK with an interest in the needs of people living with dementia, and including people directly affected by dementia. This group was responsible for guiding and informing the national programme and strategy and disseminating the learning from Meeting Centres.
 - o Early Adopters UK MCSP Core Group - representatives with significant experience of organising and running the existing Meeting Centres, who were joined by those who are actively developing a Meeting Centre or working to develop similar projects that could meet the criteria for a Meeting Centre. It is envisaged that these organisations will become demonstrator sites alongside Droitwich Spa and Leominster.
 - o Meeting Centres Community of Practice – to share learning between different Meeting Centres, to support each other and to help those who are interested in setting up Meeting Centres locally both during and beyond the project period.
- Accessible information, training, skills development and on-going support on how to set up and sustain a functioning Meeting Centre in the UK. To achieve this we:
 - o Reviewed and developed existing resources and training approaches to support the demonstrator and early adopter sites.
 - o Held workshops for those interested in starting Meeting Centres in their communities.
 - o Set-up a help-desk/email support for existing, new and pre start-up Meeting Centres.
- Greater understanding of the costs and benefits to people with dementia, family carers and local communities to be used as an evidence base for policy decision makers on the impact of Meeting Centres.
 - o Evaluating the demonstrator sites and early adopters in terms of benefits and cost-effectiveness in a similar way to the MEETINGDEM project.
 - o Develop a self-evaluation tool in consultation with the reference group to enable Meeting Centres to evaluate and understand the benefits for people with dementia and carers and the wider community and the cost-effectiveness.

- A business and sustainability plan to ensure continuity of the outputs of the project with a view to future operation being self-funding. Aspects of this work included the following:
 - o Developing the Community of Learning and Practice to become self-sustaining so that people, communities or organisations can get the support they need when they leave or move on from our project.
 - o Establishing Meeting Centres so that they become a workable option for local community groups across the UK.
 - o Encouraging other organisations (include statutory organisations where relevant) to respond to what has been achieved by changing what they do or how they do it.
 - o Moving towards a similar model developed in the Netherlands, whereby the main functions are supported by income from the annual training courses and other income generating activity.