

Karen Gray



PhD Student (TAnDem Doctoral Training Centre)

Institute of Health & Society

Contact Details

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Karen Gray is currently engaged in doctoral research into the methodological challenges involved in the evaluation of arts-based activities for people affected by dementia. She is working within [The Arts and Dementia Doctoral Training Centre](#) (TAnDem DTC), a collaborative partnership between the Universities of Worcester and Nottingham, funded by [The Alzheimer's Society](#).

Between 2012-2015, Karen was Research and Evaluation Manager with arts and health consultants, [Willis Newson](#). It was in this role that she first became interested in the potential for the arts to improve the wellbeing of people with dementia and also where she began to understand how challenging it was to evaluate arts and dementia practice.

Qualifications:

PhD (1996) *Creditable Narratives: Washington Irving's American Literary Currency*.
University of Cambridge, Queens' College
BA (Hons) in English Literature (1992). University of Cambridge, Queens' College.

Twitter

[@kcrgray](#)

Research and Knowledge Transfer

Research

- 1 Karen Gray's doctoral research explores the methodological challenges involved in evaluating arts-based activities for people with dementia, with the aim of highlighting possible solutions for evaluative practice. Her work seeks to address some of the assumptions that underpin both research and arts practice, including those related to ethics and to what constitutes 'value' for all those involved in the arts and dementia. She is interested in exploring concepts of complexity, definitions of art and wellbeing, and the potential conflict between the desire to understand the benefits and impact of change for the individual and the need to deliver evidence that is generalisably useful.
- 1 Karen is one of a cohort of students within the [TAnDem Doctoral Training Centre](#) (2015-2019). TAnDem is a collaborative partnership between the Association for Dementia Studies at the University of Worcester and the Centre for Dementia Studies at the University of Nottingham. It is funded by the Alzheimer's Society.
- 1 Karen's supervisory team is led by [Dr Simon Evans](#) at the University of Worcester and includes Professors Amanda Griffiths and Justine Schneider at the University of Nottingham. She started her PhD in October 2015.

Knowledge Transfer

Karen is involved in the following projects within the Association for Dementia Studies:

- 1 **Making of Me mentoring programme (project team member)**. Making of Me is a mentoring programme (2015-2019) for creative artists working in care homes, delivered by the Courtyard Theatre and funded by the Baring Foundation. The Association for Dementia Studies is currently evaluating the project.
- 1 **LINK Group film (joint ethics lead)**. The project will create a set of short films, tailored to the needs of education and training delivered by the Association for Dementia Studies and the wider Institute of Health & Society at the University of Worcester. The films will present the authentic voices of people affected by dementia, through the accounts and experiences of the [LINK Group](#), which comprises people living with dementia, and carers for people with dementia.

Professional Experience

As Research and Evaluation Manager for [Willis Newson](#), the leading UK arts and health consultancy Karen was involved in the evaluation of arts and health projects for a variety of clients. She also developed and delivered training in evaluation skills for arts and health professionals.

In 2014-15, she was a project team member for Creative and Credible. This Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) funded knowledge exchange project between Willis Newson and the University of the West of England focused on improving evaluative practice in the arts, health and wellbeing sector. An important legacy resource for this project is the [Creative and Credible website](#).

Professional memberships

- 1 Associate Member Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) and Member of the RSPH Arts, Health & Wellbeing Special Interest Group
- 1 Member of the British Society of Gerontologists (BSG).
- 1 Member of the INTERDEM Network (www.interdem.org)
- 1 Member of the Social Research Association (SRA)

Event organisation:

- 1 Words and Dementia seminar, University of Nottingham (March 2016)
- 1 *TAnDem Conference 2016: Research into Practice*, University of Nottingham (September 2016)

Committees:

- 1 Student representative, TAnDem Management Group (2017)

Publications and Dissemination

Peer-reviewed journal articles:

Daykin, N., **Gray, K.**, McCree, M., and Willis, J. (2016). Creative and credible evaluation for arts, health and well-being: opportunities and challenges of co-production. *Arts & Health*. Published online 26 September 2016 ([Open Access](#)).

Refereed conference presentation:

Gray, K. (March 2017). *Methodological challenges in arts and dementia: A critical perspective on the literature*. 1st International Arts & Dementia Research Conference, London.

Haragalova, J., Klug, K. & **Gray, K.** (March 2017). *Sensory Palaces: Learning & engagement in the historic royal palaces*. 1st International Arts & Dementia Research Conference, London.

Gray, K. & Burke, E. (June 2013). *Evaluation demystified: How to be confident, credible and creative*. Culture, Health & Wellbeing International Conference, Bristol.

Invited seminars and workshops

Broome, E., Cousins, E., **Gray, K.** & Veale, A. (March 2017). *TAnDem (The Arts and Dementia): An interdisciplinary discussion on the value, content and purpose of the 'evidence base' for the arts and dementia* (Roundtable discussion). 1st International Arts & Dementia Research Conference, London.

Gray, K. (November 2016). *Arts for people with dementia: Why is it so hard to show that it works?* (Provocation) Arts & Health South West Annual Conference, Buckfast Abbey, Devon.

Broome, E., Cousins, E., **Gray, K.**, & Veale, A. (April 2016). *Researching arts and dementia* (Workshop). Creative Dementia Arts Network Annual Conference, Oxford.

Websites

Project team member and copy creator and editor <http://www.creativeandcredible.org.uk/>.

Gray, K. (2016). *The value of words*, blog for Improving Dementia Education and Awareness (IDEA). Dementia Day-to-Day blog <https://idea.nottingham.ac.uk/blogs/posts/value-words>

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<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/discover/karen-gray.html>