

# Wise Social Practices in Age-Friendly Institutions for Older People in Ireland

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# Aims and Methods

- Explore connections between ‘wise’ practices in age-friendly institutional settings and good policy outcomes.
- Analyse elements of sociality involved in successful institutions for older people.
- Based on interviews with key actors in two centres, a day centre in Dublin and a residential nursing home in Galway in the West of Ireland.
- Both centres designated excellent.

# The Care Settings

- Clare centre is located in a Dublin suburb, purpose built in 2000, beside a supported housing complex but serving a 3 mile radius, mix of service users-most ambulatory, some in wheelchairs and a few service users have dementia.
- Connemara: private nursing home near the sea, long-standing, rebuilt 2009, 45 residents

# Wisdom and Older People

- In the past, older people have been thought of as offering important resources to society, notably wisdom, thought of for centuries as one of the highest possible aims for a human life.
- Nowadays ‘wisdom’ may be viewed as inflexible and authoritarian; or else ignored entirely in favour of ‘expertise’.
- We argue that the search for wisdom is still a concern in the way people try to live WELL.
- We treat it as a form of learning which may be expected to DEVELOP with advancing age,
- satisfying those who partake in it / benefit from it and to some extent protecting the status of older people.

‘Wisdom’ in traditions influencing Western thought and as explored in this project

- Used in problems without obvious solutions in terms of everyday/expert knowledge.
- Uses both tacit and explicit knowledge.
- Is applied to oneself, other people, and problems of human existence.
- Entails practical /social knowledge, drawing on socio-political, emotional, ethical experience. Found in all walks of life.

# Structure of Centres

- Clare Centre: ‘Our centre is a bit different ... it is embedded in the community’.
- Flexible structure of voluntary organisation with different sources of funding.
- Use of volunteers.
- ‘There is a very genuine feel to it’.
- Connemara Centre: music, card playing with visitors from local community. ‘Breaking down barriers’, ‘Bringing the outside in.’

# Quality of staff and relationships with older people

Clare Centre: ‘They are amazing’ (manager)

‘I think they are hand picked’ (female service user)

‘It’s the best thing that has happened in my life’ (male service user)

‘T [Manager] is a treasure (local authority official)

Connemara Centre: ‘the best holiday of my life’ (male resident)

# Dignity and respect

- Talking to older people and being present-  
‘you need to listen’.
- Little demarcation between staff - going  
beyond formal duties.
- Getting a cup of tea - indicates hospitality.
- How dinner is served - attention to small  
things.



# Resourcefulness and skills

- ‘No great plan, things just evolved’.
- However, evidence of manager drawing on personal, local, professional, political resources, and displaying
- Patience and persistence.
- Approaching problems on their own terms.

# Principles and values

- ‘The staff have a great feeling for people’
- Fostering tolerance and principles as guides to actions.
- One size does not fit all -Not all activities are popular.
- People should feel safe and happy.

# Wise practices, well-being and social participation

- Wisdom in interaction.
- Well-being is individually focused and oriented towards community.
- Inter-sectoral co-operation.
- Adding value to lives.

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# Computers and Art at Clare Centre









# Connemara Nursing Home



# Connemara area

