

Dementia

'Emotional intelligence key to care'



David Sheard has a passionate and uncompromising stance on dementia care. *AAA* meets the instigator of the Butterfly Care Home ahead of his Australian speaking tour in June.

Step inside a Butterfly Dementia Care Home in the UK or Ireland and you will find the people working there are genuinely transforming lives through colour, movement, touch and stillness.

That's according to Dr David Sheard, CEO and founder of Dementia Care Matters, the national movement in dementia care in the UK.

Gone are the uniforms, drug trolleys, staff toilets, large dining rooms and other institutional features.

People are no longer seen as residents but as family; the old culture of 'them' and 'us' is swept away, says Sheard.

"Task orientation, standing around watching people eat, and 'doing to' people have no place in this model of care. Detached management styles and a focus on process belong to the malignant social psychology of the past," says Sheard.

"Instead, people living and working together come alive sharing their histories, eating, laughing, and supporting each other to recall who they were. Helping people to be reached and connected to whoever they now need to be."

The movement started in 1995 when Sheard left the UK's National Health Service after 15 years of employment. "I won't run factories in dementia care anymore," he said at the time.

Speaking to *AAA* ahead of his Australian speaking tour in June, Sheard says he set out with a philosophy that "feelings matter most" and a core belief that people living

with a dementia are more feeling beings than thinking beings.

"When you can no longer rely on facts, logic, reason or memory, it is your feelings and emotional truth that you trust," he says.

Sheard's proposition is that quality dementia care needs to be measured in terms of peoples' lived experience. He maintains that policies, procedures and systems focusing on quality of service rather than quality of life produce hospital-like care. This, he argues, is far removed from the households we all live in that bring out the best in us.

Similarly, Sheard dismisses a reliance on "tick box training" which produces "robotic skills and competencies". Holding on to this model of training limits and controls people working in residential aged care, he says. Instead, in his workshops people are encouraged to connect to each other's identity and life history; sharing their journeys and learning about what matters most in life. "Emotional intelligence is seen as the primary competency in providing emotional care," he says.

Residential aged care homes in Sheard's model are divided into small domestic households, with their own front doors. People are matched in houses at similar points along the journey to decrease stress and increase wellbeing, avoiding the "explosive cocktail of muddling people all up together," he says.



David Sheard

Twenty years on from trialling his model of care in the first care home Merevale House, Butterfly Care Homes continue to gain momentum and are about to be launched in Canada and Australia.

Sheard has been called "The Marmite Man of Dementia Care" in the UK – you love him or loathe him for his passionate, emotional and uncompromising stance.

In 2014 he received the award of Care Personality of the Year, with the judging panel noting his "beliefs, values, boundless energy and passion have driven changes that to many were only a dream."

Sheard cites data showing that in one Butterfly Care Home the use of neuroleptic drugs was reduced from 70 occasions to just one, over a six-month period. Similarly, comparative weight gain in the same group and over the same period increased from six people to 23.

"Feeling you matter is at the core of being a person," he says. "Knowing you matter is at the heart of being alive. Seeing you matter is at the centre of carrying on in life. It is time for residential aged care to prove that people living with a dementia really matter most." ■

David Sheard and Dementia Care Matters director Peter Priednieks will be in Australia from 2 to 19 June presenting a series of talks on achieving culture change in residential aged care. Go to dementiacarematters.com