

2015 Newsletter

The Project

Helpcare is working with carers and companies that provide care to identify the main issues affecting recruitment and retention of workers and to develop learning materials and accredited qualifications that will help professionalize care.

The research phase of the Helpcare project is nearly at completion, ready for the work of the team to start improving the recruitment, retention and professional development of care workers across the European Union. This will ensure that those vulnerable in our communities have access to well-trained carers, passionate about providing care. In order for to spread the word about the project and help all those affected, we need to let as many people as possible know about our findings, collectively we can make a difference to the lives of many care givers and those they care for. The Helpcare team from across the EU, including the U.K., Bulgaria, Greece, Poland and Italy, has made a strong start and this newsletter will provide an update on the efforts of the team.

Who We Are

The project is managed by Lancaster University in the U.K. in collaboration with the excellent support from across Europe from the following institutions:

- Lancaster & Morecambe FE College, U.K.
- South East European Research Centre, Greece
- Commune de Ortona, Italy
- Znanie Association, Bulgaria
- University of Lodz, Poland.

Further to the project partners we have been very fortunate to have a strong support [network](#).

What have we been up to?

The UK Advisory Meeting at Lancaster University

Our 1st Advisory meeting in the UK held at Lancaster University brought together service providers, practitioners and experts from the care sector, including The Right Honourable Professor Paul Burstow from City University of London. The purpose of the meeting was to showcase the project and increase stakeholder interest in our project activities. It was also an opportunity to discuss our recent research results and their implications for the future of the care sector and the development of an accredited professional development framework across the EU.



Helpcare Partners' Meeting

The 2nd HELPCARE partners meeting took place at the premises of the South East European Research Centre (SEERC). Each partner's progress on the objectives of current work packages and the wider program were discussed in full detail. At this stage, the Helpcare project's efforts are concentrated around collecting quantitative data, as well as analysing the training needs of the informal and formal care providers identified across 5 European countries.



Lancaster & Morecambe College Reach Out Directly to Practitioners and the Community at the Town & Gown Event

Lancaster & Morecambe College (LMC), core partners from the HelpCare project attended a special event designed to engage practitioners and members of the general public in the North West. The full day event was held at Lancaster Town Hall and attended by over 150 delegates from the sector. This event aimed to showcase some of the newest and most innovative research around Dementia and Health and Social Care currently being undertaken in the UK by universities, private and third sector organisations and projects. This informative and interactive event was an ideal platform to communicate our project outputs to a relevant audience and gave us the opportunity to exchange information and knowledge. LMC set up an information stand to share the Helpcare project information and many delegates showed interest.



Keynote speakers from around the UK included Dr Penny Foulds from Defying Dementia, Dr Susan Davidson from Age UK and Dr Hazel Morbey & Dr Yingying Wang with a presentation on 'Evaluating dementia training for NHS staff in acute NHS hospitals'.

KETSO Training at Lancaster & Morecambe Conference Centre

As part of the next stage of the research element of the HELPCARE project, Dr Carolyn Downs ran a workshop to train six volunteer people recruited locally who work in the care sector to become co-researchers for the project. The workshop was held at Lancaster & Morecambe College and featured the KETSO toolkit (Ketso means 'action' in Lesotho, Southern Africa, where it was invented), to help structure and deliver the training effectively.

The training was positively received by the co-researchers, who felt more enthusiastic and better informed at the end of the day. In particular, citing the use of collaborative learning as one of the highlights of the training. The co-researchers also felt that they are now better prepared to enable the next stage of the project to move forward.



The co-researchers will now be involved in interviewing and gathering useful information and opinions from the people who access care. This will hopefully help to provide a further invaluable source of evidence to inform the project.

Znanie's 25th Anniversary Celebration & Presentation of Helpcare

During the [Telecare project](#) conference the Bulgarian team presented the Helpcare Project. The team also had the chance to meet with a number of individuals and organizations interested in the care industry as well as co-researchers and interviewees. New perspectives and horizons will help recruit new carers in Bulgaria and help current care workers to feel more confident and inspired about their career paths.



University of Lodz's, environment, expectations and difficulties

In the Lodz region of Poland, demographic problems seriously threaten development. The population of Lodz is aging faster than in other regions of the country. Currently, 25% of the inhabitants of Lodz are over 65 years old and estimates suggest this number will be 45% by 2035. This context makes the work of Helpcare even more poignant, as demand for professional social and health care will increase proportionately.

Research is underway with nursing home carers and the team are preparing training for co-researchers. Although there is much interest in the project, there are cultural and social difficulties that further emphasise the necessity of the Helpcare project. Many carers are reluctant to be identified due to perceptions of the industry and do not believe the industry will change quickly in Poland, which can act as a barrier to exploring possible resolutions to the situation.

Ortona

Local and regional media attended Helpcare's press conference in February, the presentation resonated with the audience and several articles were published on line and in newspapers.

Following this activity, March, April and May held informative meetings with key stakeholders in both social and health care.

The Intercultural Research Centre of Ortona has also had a decisive role in promoting the project. For years, the Centre has been active as an access point to private care for families and those seeking work. The access points to private care work is similar to a "one stop shop service" that offer a variety of free services to care workers and families from all backgrounds.



Ortona has been coordinating the local Area Plan of social services for many years, which is the single tool for planning services and social interventions which has proved invaluable experience for the team in fighting social exclusion and poverty whilst collaborating with various partners.