



## *A study of dignity and dementia aspects of residential, nursing and domiciliary care for the elderly in South Africa*



*Respecting the dignity of the cheetah – excellent conservation work in South Africa*

### **Gillian Moncaster 2014 Fellow**

themoncasters@hotmail.co.uk



*Visit to the Cape of Good Hope - amazing experience*

Like the UK, South Africa has an ageing population and is actively developing innovative approaches to its care. The aims of this Fellowship were to study their methods for potential use in the UK, exchange information, experience and tools, and establish contacts with a view to collaboration. Of all the factors which may influence quality of care, the ones which most differentiate South Africa from the UK are the strengths of community spirit, family culture and spirituality. Envious as these are, whilst they were once as strong in the UK, it is unlikely that the latter two could change much for one or more generations.

However, national, regional and local steps are being taken in the UK to foster community spirit and harness it to enhancing respect for the dignity of individuals, especially in care of the elderly and those living with dementia. The hope and expectation is that these measures will have substantial impact very much sooner. A key measure was the Dignity in Care Campaign, launched by the Government in 2006, now led by the National Dignity Council. Currently the Dignity Champions scheme is being invigorated and its organisation strengthened via the regional networks of Dignity Leaders.

South African practices which in would benefit the quality of care the UK:-

- Qualified occupational therapists leading activities in day centres and care homes;
- Encouraging more imaginative ways of engaging elderly people;
- Community support of the elderly whether at home or in care.
- A more relaxed attitude to risk;
- Development of comprehensive service organisations;
- Appropriate use of shared rooms in care homes;
- Allowing grandchildren to stay with their grandparents in care villages or homes;

Many contacts were established in South Africa with good prospects of collaboration on several important topics, all of which are being progressed currently at rates depending on their scale, sensitivity, extent of likely impact and so on. Thus:-

- Care managers who expressed interest in End of Life Care have been put in contact with the Gold Standard Framework team, the UK experts on this topic;
- Liaison between the UK National Dignity Council (of which I am a member) and the counterpart in South Australia and the Northern Territories has been initiated. This may become, with the already established links to the South African Care Forum, the first step towards an international or even a global alliance;
- Discussion has begun between Manchester City Council and the South African care organisation GERATEC on developing a 'Dignity in Care Homes Forum' in South Africa along the lines of our North West Network of Dignity Leads, which I chair;
- Discussion with GERATEC has also begun on developing a South African Dignity Award scheme, in conjunction with the NW Network of Dignity Leads and the National Dignity Council, to highlight care organisations and care homes which stand out in their respect for the individual.



*Residents helping to prepare lunch at a care home. Doing useful tasks is an excellent way of raising self-worth*



*A busy group at the Day Centre. They're making items to sell, raising funds for the local care home*



*Ward-style bedroom at odds with good person centred care*