



## **Interdem Academy Fellowships 2016-2017**

*Final report on research exchange – Laura O'Philbin*

My name is Laura O' Philbin. I am a final year PhD student at the Dementia Services Development Centre Wales, studying reminiscence and digital life story work for people living with dementia and their caregivers. I was supported by an INTERDEM Academy Research Fellowship to spend three months at Dublin City University under the guidance of Professor Kate Irving and her team.

As I hope to work in Ireland in the future, I felt it was really important to get a good sense of the state of dementia care and research there. Prof. Irving gave me excellent insight into the dementia landscape in Ireland and introduced me to several people working in the area who were all extremely supportive and helpful. I was also able to hear from people with dementia and caregivers themselves, when I attended three Alzheimer Cafés in North Dublin.

A large part of my research is on digital and online interventions, so I felt it was important to get a sense of how or if these services may be implemented in another cultural context. Prof. Irving and her team supported me to host a focus group and an app research session with members of the Irish Dementia Working Group through the Alzheimer's Society of Ireland. These experiences and reviews will make an excellent contribution to my PhD thesis.

I attended three conferences and several seminars while at DCU, including a writing workshop, which I found incredibly useful and helpful. I was also asked to speak at one of the North Dublin Alzheimer Cafés, which was a wonderful experience.

I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Prof Irving and her team at DCU. I felt welcomed and fully supported throughout my stay in Dublin. I have benefited greatly from their expertise, and with their assistance, I have collected data that will greatly strengthen my PhD thesis. I have had the opportunity to chat with professionals in the field of dementia research in Ireland, and to many people with dementia and their caregivers.

I am really grateful to have had this opportunity and it has certainly benefited me both professionally and personally. I wish to thank Prof Irving and her team at DCU for hosting me in Dublin. I also want to thank my supervisor Prof Bob Woods, for encouraging me to apply for this fellowship, and his continuous support throughout. Finally, I would like to thank the people with dementia and their caregivers who shared their experiences with me.