

Positive Approach in Wales

Making Connections, Building Relationships, and Looking Towards the Future – An interview with Two PAC Certified Independent Trainers in Wales by Courtney Chorba, MPH, PAC International Events Coordinator and Education Specialist

At the beginning of July, Teepa and a handful of the PAC team ventured across the Atlantic to conduct two Certification Courses, four workshops, a Teepa Talk, and even some filming. The tour kicked off in England, with stops in London and Derbyshire, before moving onward to Wales for the second week of the visit. Swansea, Baglan, and Bridgend were on the schedule for several Skills Days and one Teepa Talk, wherein nearly 400 people attended over the span of four days. This was all made possible thanks to a very driven, passionate team of Welsh Trainers, who are dedicated to bringing awareness, knowledge, and skills to their local care teams and communities with the goal of changing and improving the culture of dementia care.



Some of our Welsh Independent Trainers with the PAC team, after dinner on July 12th, 2018. **Left to right:** Courtney Chorba, Andrea DeJesus, Liliana DeJesus, Alejandro DeJesus, Sue Coleman, Teepa Snow, Amanda Bulgarelli **Front:** Alison Turner, Beth Nolan, Dan Bulgarelli **Back Row:** Nick Johnson, Dick Snow, Abby Snow, Seb Snow **Hiding between Amanda and Beth:** Benji Bulgarelli **Not pictured:** Welsh Trainers Paula Wilfort and Sian Lewis

Alison Turner and Nick Johnson completed their PAC Trainer Certifications in 2017 and are now working towards completion of their Coach Certifications. In their current roles with the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMUHB), they are charged with providing education and trainings to their local network of some 16,500 employees, all the while incorporating their PAC skills into their own trainings as well as their

practice. Ali and Nick have been instrumental in bringing dementia awareness, knowledge, and skills to their local health network, and they made the PAC week in Wales possible through their hard work, organization, and promotion.

Following the 2018 U.K. events, I had the opportunity to interview Ali and Nick about their experiences in care, training, and their visions for the future.

CC: How did you discover Teepa Snow?

NJ: I was searching around in YouTube, and Teepa popped up. It was just so different and interactive, and it hooked me right in. I thought, “well, let’s try some of these approaches and see what happens.” Then I showed it to the team.

AT: Her methods fit right in and made sense with what we were doing already, actually. In fact, it fit in much nicer. I’ve been on the training team since it began, and we’ve been trying to get it to be more practical- to link it in with what they’re doing in practice, but, in the end, it was still just a lot of knowledge. With PAC, it’s like, “we’ve got some practical

skills to give you” ...and that helps! It’s giving them the reason of *why* that will work... there *is* a reason *why* we’re doing it this way.

NJ: Sue [PAC Trainer in Wales] and I went to see her in Glasgow in 2015. We thought, “Ok, we’ve *got* to make this happen. First, we’ve got to develop our own skills, and then we’ll take it from there.” It’s been 3 years now, throughout which we’ve gradually become more and more involved.

CC: What about her methods attracted you to her trainings?

NJ: The role play, and appeal to different learning styles. I liked the fact that it wasn’t really profession-specific as well... it wasn’t exclusive to OT, or nursing, or physio (PT), or whatever it may be. It’s practical skills that anyone can go and apply right away.

AT: Yeah, and also it certainly helps me to have these. Teepa’s trainings cover everybody.

NJ: I like the fact that she’s incredibly knowledgeable as well... you can either skim the surface of it or dig a bit deeper, and the answers are there. And the fact that it’s so open and genuine in a space where we need to be authentic.

AT: I think the whole team is attractive in that way- nobody’s pretending to be better than anybody else, and you’re all honest with each other.

There’s quite a lot of other dementia trainers who say, “This is the only way to do it.” Or, “This is how we’ve always done it” or “I’m so important.” But this is more, “how can we get it out there and make a difference for people?” I do feel that the focus of the PAC team is more the people living with dementia and their family care partners, and how we can make things work for them.

This time spent with the team has made me think about the GEMS® side of things, and about how we all enter into GEMS states sometimes. That kind of takes away the “them and us.” You can recognize when you’re in a certain GEM state yourself. It makes everyone equal. It makes it less about dementia and more about “how are you functioning in this moment, how do I help you in this moment to function at your best?”

NJ: Yeah, it’s a mindset change. And also, again, it’s non-profession-specific. So, it breaks those barriers down as well. The mixture of attendees tells you this is something that appeals to a lot of different people.

CC: How are her trainings different from other related trainings you’ve participated in or conducted yourself?

NJ: It’s the interaction... that just makes it really special. There’s this emotion and realness brought into it.

AT: And it’s the practical, experiential stuff that sets it apart.

NJ: There’s lots of problem solving going on. Usually you turn up, sit and look at a PowerPoint... and that could go on for a whole day. You walk out and think, “Yeah that’s

interesting, but what am I going to do with that?” With this, you can immediately go from the training straight into the setting and apply it.

AT: What was really nice was to have some of the people who have been on our training recently... we asked, “has this set you up to gain something more from those skills days,” and people are saying, “Yes, oh my goodness, I should have been doing this long before now.”

NJ: Yeah, that’s an interesting point there, we hear that a lot from people – “yeah, we’ve been doing it wrong. I’ve pulled out chairs and all that sort of stuff.” Also, it really does make you feel differently about the pressure you put on yourself as well.

CC: What are some of your greatest challenges in implementing these trainings?

NJ: The greatest challenges we face in implementing PAC within our training sessions consist mainly around ‘cultural buy-in’ from senior staff coupled with a wider acceptance of the need for change. Securing funding for individuals is also difficult due to limitations on public spending. This limits attendees to those who can afford to participate. Lastly, but by no means least, securing staff release from the workplace is a major challenge as a result of staff recruitment shortages.

CC: What is your vision for PAC in Wales moving forward?

NJ: Expanding. Building that Coach/Trainer network. I would even go so far as to say, you want at least one Coach and four to five Trainers within a health board. I mean here, we’re talking... we have 16.5 thousand people at our health board. Also, to start looking at North Wales. North Wales often gets left out on a lot of stuff, but this will change. There is loads of potential.

AT: There was only one health board that was not represented during the week of events... so out of the seven Welsh Health Boards, six were represented at the events during PAC’s visit.

NJ: And we’ve already had calls from three of them wanting to know what we are doing with PAC, and how we are implementing it into our own training program. It’s going to be an interesting few months, but the potential is huge.

AT: Going to look into doing a Trainer Certificate next year. And building more Coaches. Thinking about doing a Coach Course and an Advanced Trainer, as well as continuing to build that network of Trainers. Keep the team coming in and doing skills days, maybe some more focused training for different professions/fields. For example, a session with OTs and ‘how-tos’ geared towards them – and then they can in turn introduce those techniques to family care partners.

I’d like to spend a day on moving, handling, end of life, bathing... really focusing in on those specific skills. Yeah, if you could just lend us Teepa and team for about a month, that’d be great!

NJ: Yeah, working with family carers alongside the professional side of things. When we're doing these Trainer Courses, we can be sort of insular sometimes. I would love to include family carers within the Trainer network, and in the room during the trainings. This would help with those who are in denial –“you wouldn't want this happening if it was your own family member.”

CC: How do you think the Teepa Talk and Skills Days were received locally?

NJ: The feedback is superb... it's exactly what you would expect and more really. We had well over 100 some feedback forms from the Teepa Talk, and usually you don't get that many at a big event like that.

It does make a difference in people's lives, doesn't it? Just to feel like you are doing the best you can, and that's ok. And you're not alone.

It was great, the Skills Days. It's really about taking it back and making sure you use it. The skills disappear if you don't keep it up.

AT: The next thing to do is to do some Skills days for carers, I've got several places that said they would lend us a venue and we've got regularly-contacted carers.

NJ: We do want people to feel like we're coming there for them, and we're in it with them.

Nick Johnson (Band 7 - Team Lead) – Nick is originally from Swansea and was living in York when he decided to retrain as a Chartered Physiotherapist. He has worked within Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMUHB), since qualifying in 2005 (Then Swansea NHS Trust).

In his role as a Rotational Physiotherapist, Nick has worked in a wide range of clinical settings across hospital sites. He has experience in Medical, Surgical, Neurological Inpatients & Outpatients, Orthopaedics, Burns & Plastics, Community, and Mental Health settings and has a wide range of experience with dementia in the acute clinical setting.

He was an ABMUHB Dementia Champion and has had a clinical interest in dementia care for the last eight years. He has been the Dementia Care Advisory Team Lead for the last three years. The main role of the team is to educate and train the 16,500-strong workforce of ABMUHB, providing support via an advisory role to all staff on all aspects of dementia care.

His greatest hope for the future of dementia care is that we will work in a system that has equality, compassion, and consideration for all.

Alison Turner (Band 7 - Occupational Therapist) - Alison is a highly specialized Occupational Therapist.

She has worked as an Occupational Therapist for about 17 years with experience mainly in Learning Disabilities and Dementia Care.

In the middle of this, she took 13 years out to be full time mother for her three children. Her return to the work place began as a casual day care assistant in a day center for adults with learning disabilities. She has been in her present two posts in the Older People's Mental Health Services, as an Occupational Therapist in Drugs for Dementia Team, and a member of the Dementia Care Training Team for 12 years.

Her greatest desire is that when we are caring for someone with or without dementia that we would see the person first then our care will be at its best.

Courtney began working with Positive Approach in the fall of 2017 as a coordinator for International Events and Certifications. Her role on the PAC team also involves working with learners to help navigate the ever-changing continuing education processes. Prior to working for PAC, Courtney worked as an English teacher in Madrid, Spain, while attempting to learn Spanish herself. In former years, she studied Psychology and Behavioral and Community Health Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh and worked for several years there as a Project Coordinator in the Evaluation Institute at the Graduate School of Public Health. It was here that she first crossed paths with the world of dementia while working on a research study at a local long-term care home, with fellow PAC team member Beth Nolan. The study investigated the uptake and effects of Hand-under-Hand among the staff working in the home. Little did she know that six years later she would be working directly with the woman who invented the technique she was studying!

Courtney loves the challenges and rewards of understanding how different people tick, and how their backgrounds and current circumstances shape their perspectives, feelings, and behaviors. She is drawn especially to the PAC philosophy of using the information that we know about a person to help them function at their best in any given moment.

Her passion is traveling, culture, music, and people. Courtney currently dwells in her hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In her spare time, you can find her practicing yoga, attending a music festival, or buried in a book. [Click here](#) to contact Courtney via email.