



An Interview with an Admiral Nurse: Sarah Farmer-Wright

Sarah Farmer-Wright is a community Admiral Nurse based in Norfolk.

I qualified as a Registered General Nurse (RGN) in 1987. My passion for dementia care was ignited when I started working in a care home, on a 10 bedded Elderly & Mentally Infirm Unit (EMI). I'd never nursed anybody with dementia before and I really felt like something clicked – I absolutely loved it, and I worked there for eight years before redundancy brought that chapter to a close.

Following this I became a GP Practice Nurse for 9 years where, alongside my other roles, I was able to continue to use and develop my experience and practice in dementia care by carrying out all the dementia reviews of the patients on the practice register. I thoroughly enjoyed my Practice Nurse role but still felt that I wanted to develop my knowledge, skills and practice in dementia care to a more specialist level.



“An opportunity to do something unique and very special”

So when the Norfolk Admiral Nurse Service was set up last year I leapt at the chance to apply for a post and was absolutely over the moon when I got it. I felt it was an incredible opportunity to do something unique and very special.

There is so much that I value in my role as an Admiral Nurse: not being time-restricted; being autonomous and managing my own case load and diary so that I don't feel rushed and that I can give carers the time that they need to feel heard and validated – being able to spend that valuable time with carers gives

me a sense of freedom to support them in a really meaningful way. There are transferable skills from my time as an RGN: having a good understanding of physical health problems and how they can impact on someone's mental health; being able to advise carers on physical health promotion; having robust understanding of how primary care works; the benefit of being able to assess someone quite quickly; having the skill to unpick things affecting that family and to get a sense of any other undercurrents going on.

"Incredibly empowering"

For me, one of the most rewarding things about being an Admiral Nurse is helping carers to understand the behavioural changes that can happen when someone has dementia – helping them to understand the meaning behind those behaviours and helping them to understand the "language of dementia" so that they can continue to get glimpses of the person they love for as long as possible. Seeing carers building their resilience and strength in order to sustain their caring role is incredibly empowering.

There are challenging parts of the role too: in Norfolk, we all have very large and rural areas to cover which can seem quite isolating at times, but we have a very cohesive and supportive team and we check in with each other all the time, because we all know what it's like working alone in the community in this way. We have regular team days so we can all have that social contact with each other as well as the opportunity to discuss and explore things relating to our caseloads and experiences.

"A real sense of family within Dementia UK"

The support provided by Dementia UK is second to none – I've been completely bowled over by it. There is such a detailed and thorough induction programme to give us a good understanding of the role. Also, we are continuously supported and encouraged with Professional Development once a month and with specialist clinical supervision on top of that. There is also the annual Admiral Nurse Forum when we can link up with Admiral Nurses from all over the UK. There's a real sense of family within Dementia UK and I have been made to feel incredibly welcome from the very start.

Admiral Nursing is a challenging and demanding role but, without doubt, I think it is the best job in the world. Supporting people with dementia and their families in a really meaningful way, working creatively and dynamically alongside other Admiral Nurses, and with that high level of support from Dementia UK, as well as from within our own team, is just brilliant!

As Admiral Nurses, we deliver family and relationship-centred care to our carers but actually, I feel that's what I get back in return from the local team I work with and from Dementia UK.

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