



CDI Scotland Student
Conference, 2026

“Living is a Career, You Know What I Mean?”

Young-Onset Dementia and Women’s Career Development

Dr. Rachel Allen

Dementia & Career

2026



Young-Onset Dementia

- Dementia is an umbrella term and includes different conditions that affect cognition
- ‘Young-onset’ means it develops before the age of 65 years.



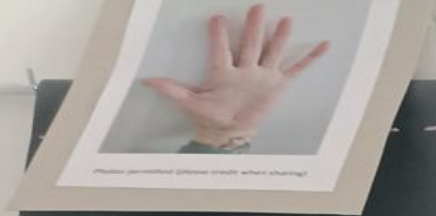
Career

- Defined as “life and work” in this study
- Paid work an important part of career, but not the only part

What happened?

- I interviewed 12 women living with young-onset dementia about their careers
- Interviews used object elicitation
- I used Reflexive Thematic Analysis to analyse the interview data





Tag



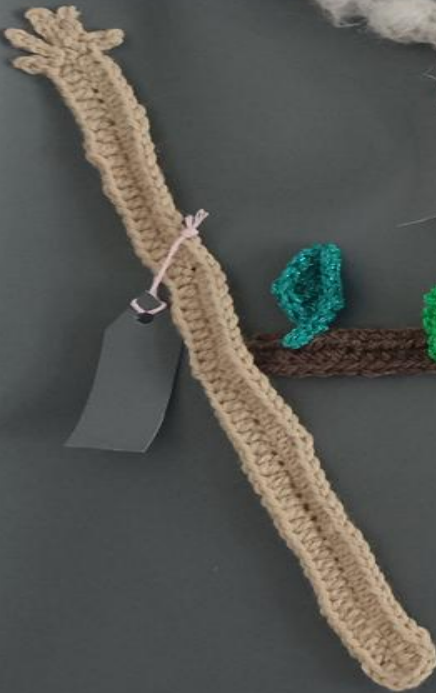
Tag



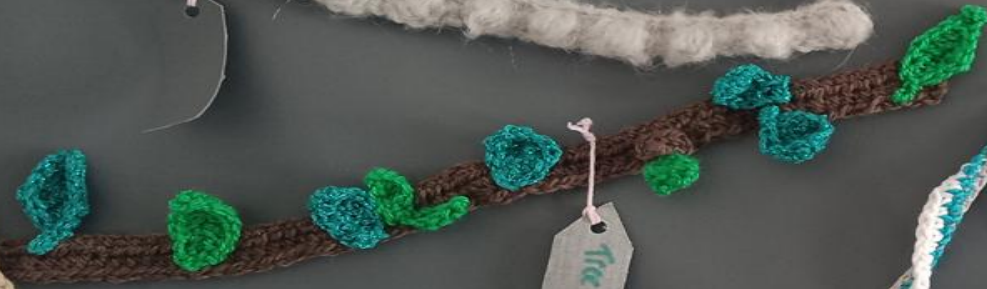
Tag



Tag



Tag



Tree of life



Tag



Tag



Tag



Noice



Tag



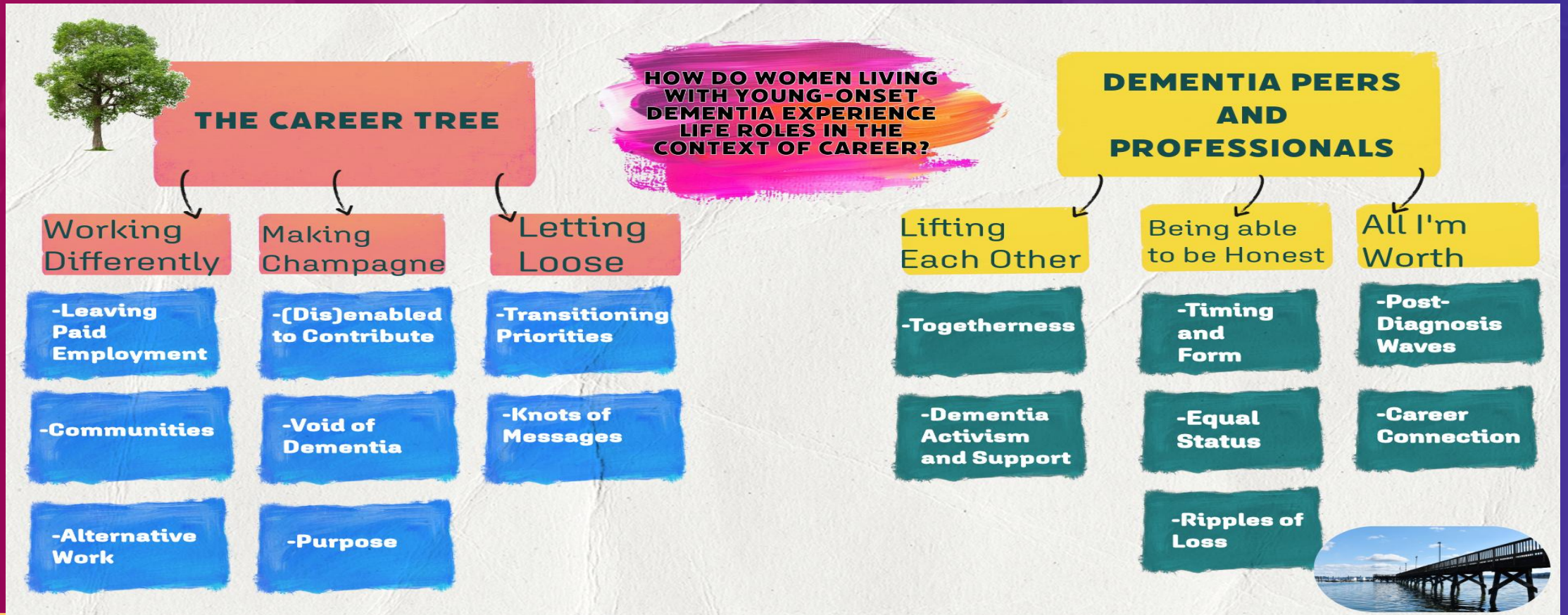
Chocolate

Rachel Allen, PhD Candidate (Alzheimer Scotland Centre for Policy and Practice)



These crochets reflect
when living with you
reflective notes were
analyse the data, the
bodying what I had
using Reflexive Th
methodology for r
researcher's r
strength. You are
real lives of t
As data col
unstitched f
arranged a
was ind
This reir
the ar
chal
m

What did I find out?



The Career Tree

- Participants needed to work differently, for example several had left paid employment and found this very difficult
- The period after diagnosis could be experienced as a 'void of dementia'
- Purpose helped participants to continue their careers in ways that mattered to them
- Dementia necessitated a transition in career priorities

Dementia Peers and Professionals

- Peer support was highly valued by participants.
- Peers were those sharing equal status and honesty with participants
- Career experiences are relevant to the provision of dementia-related support.

Four Key Findings:

2026

1. Women with young-onset dementia continue their careers in different ways after they are diagnosed. However, diagnosis is a significant disruption to career, so whilst careers continue they are not continuous.

Four Key Findings:

2. Dementia can change career-related feelings and needs, and these feelings and needs continue to evolve after diagnosis.

Four Key Findings:

2026

3. Women living with young-onset dementia gain benefit from support that incorporates career-related needs and experiences.

Four Key Findings:

2026

4. Connecting with peers who enable career aspirations and continuance after diagnosis is important.

Recommendations (for career guidance)

- Ensure inclusion of non-paid activities is part of communication about career guidance
- Positive and person-centred support needs to be flexible at different career stages
- Career professionals should be considered part of 'dementia workforce'



Northumbria
University
NEWCASTLE

Lancaster
University



Working With Dementia Network Plus

Conference, 25th March 2026. Join us!



Economic and Social
Research Council



Alzheimer's
Society

NIHR

National Institute for
Health and Care Research

Thank you

2026



References

- Super, D. (1980) 'A Life-Span, Life-Space Approach to Career Development', *Journal of Vocational Development*, 16, pp. 282–298.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2022a) *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.
- Link to thesis: <https://zenodo.org/records/18468922>
- Link to PhD summary video: <https://youtu.be/ZYt8gjaaCjk?si=cXpFtKN-wcPeBUsk>
- Link to PhD summary booklet: <https://zenodo.org/records/17306468>
- Working with Dementia Network Plus: <https://workingwithdementia.org/>



Contact

- rachel.allen@uws.ac.uk
- www.linkedin.com/in/rachel-allen-344012223