

## **‘Small Changes Make a Big Difference’: Empowering families living with dementia to self-manage their lives**

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 Summary report April 2016



### **Background:**

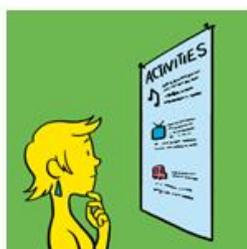
Talking Mats is a social enterprise whose vision is to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties by increasing their capacity to communicate effectively about things that matter to them. Dementia is a long term condition where deterioration in communication will eventually affect everyone. This makes it hard to ensure the person with dementia continues to be involved in decisions about their lives.

### **What we did:**

Talking Mats delivered training in the use of Talking Mats to families living with dementia and staff who worked with these families. The project was funded by Health and Social Care ALLIANCE Scotland and was carried out across the country. The report highlights how Talking Mats training can support people with dementia to be more involved in managing their lives.

We gave the Social Care set of symbols to families and staff to help them find out people’s views about **activities**, **where they lived**, and how they felt they were **managing day to day**.

### **Social Care Symbol Set**



**Activities**



**Where you live**



**You**

**What we found out:**

By using Talking Mats, families living with dementia identified issues relating to self-management they had not been aware of before and saw how even small changes helped them to manage their lives better. Here is one person's view of where they lived.



**Comments from families:**

*It helps us keep connected*

*It gives us things to talk about*

*It allows us to share differences of opinion*

*It helps D. say what he really feels*

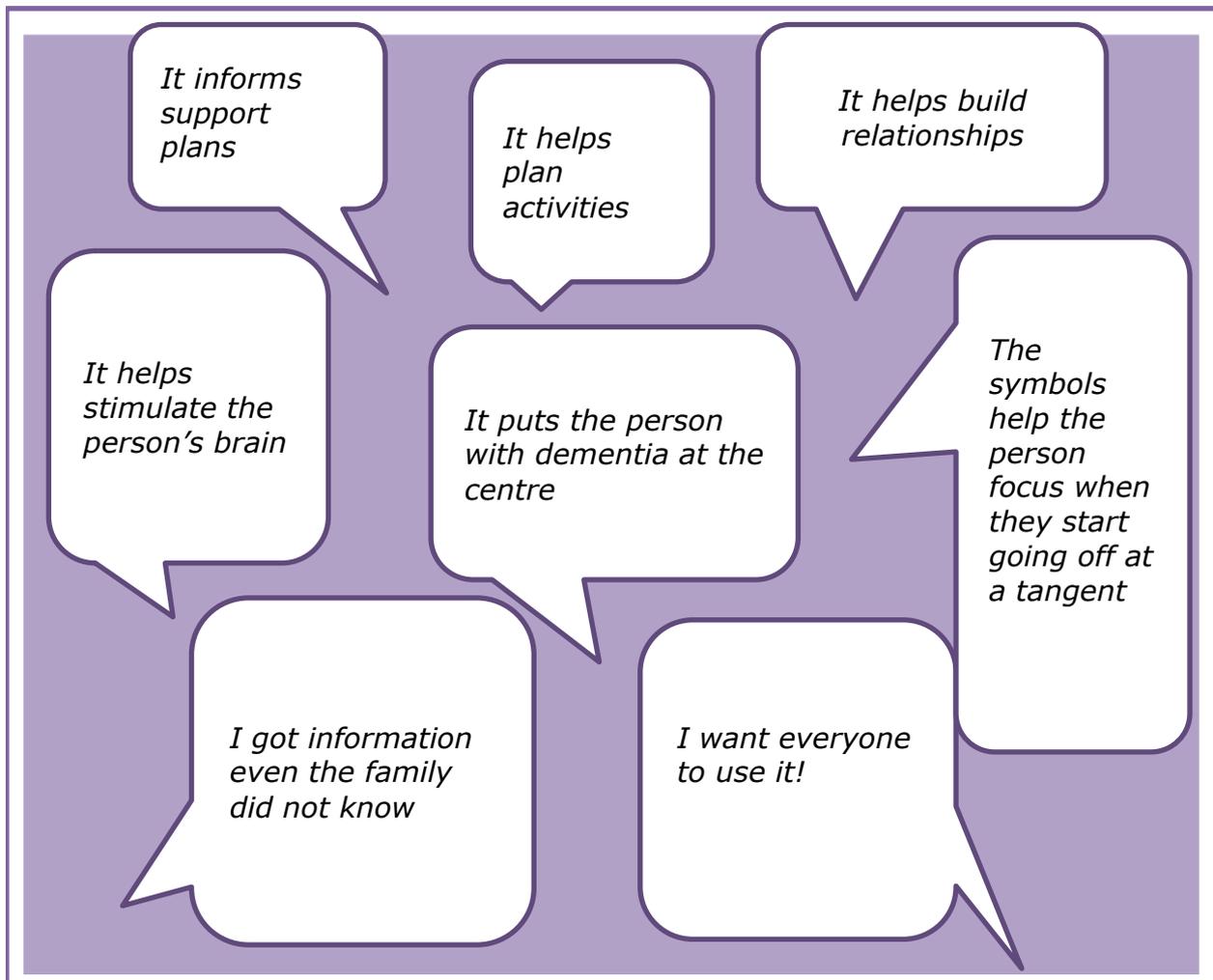
*It lets me see what activities S. would really like to do ... and what he doesn't want to do*

*I want to let our grandchildren see it as it will help them stay involved as the dementia progresses*

*It feels like I've done something good today (woman with dementia)*

*I realised things in the house were not quite right (woman with dementia)*

## Comments from staff:



## Acknowledgements:

Thanks to all the families living with dementia who volunteered to take part in this project. We are very privileged to have worked with them and to have heard their stories. We are also grateful to Alzheimer Scotland and the staff in the dementia and advocacy resource centres. We are encouraged that many of them want to extend their use of Talking Mats and we are producing additional symbol sets for use with staff and families.

If you are interested in Talking Mats training and symbols resources for your organisation contact [info@talkingmats.com](mailto:info@talkingmats.com)

## Full report:

<http://www.talkingmats.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Alliance-Family-Training-final-report.pdf>