

**Prof Fiona Poland, Professor of Social Research Methodology**  
**Dr Linda Birt, Senior Research Associate, School of Health Sciences, UEA**

**“Drawing on social connection in ageing and dementia:  
understanding what helps people maintain social inclusion”.**

### **Seminar Presentation 1 – 2pm**

Social networks may help protect and maintain cognitive function in older age; yet the oldest old may experience their opportunities for positive social connections as diminishing. The NIHR-funded PRIDE (Promoting Independence in Dementia) programme is developing understanding of and interventions to maintain the social participation of people with dementia. Drawing on PRIDE data from 124 older people, of whom over 50 are living with dementia, we explore specific ways in which social connections are interactively made and maintained in older age. Conversely, we will also identify social factors which can cause disconnections to social networks, such as relocation, illness, and transport, considering the potential risk to social health from isolation and exclusion. We will use case study examples to highlight the ways in which people with dementia and their carers can actively draw on strong social networks and can work collaboratively to maintain positive social connections.

### **Workshop 2 – 3pm**

The seminar will be followed by an interactive workshop in which we will explore ways of purposefully applying the concept of sustaining positive social connections to collaborative working with people living with dementia in research data collection, analysis and dissemination processes.

### **Brief Biographies:**

#### **Professor Fiona Poland**

Fiona Poland is a sociologist and Professor of Social Research Methodology at the University of East Anglia (UEA). Her career concern has been to use and develop qualitative research methods to recognise health and wellbeing concerns of individuals and communities particularly older people and carers and to support the agency of disadvantaged and commonly-excluded groups. She seeks to promote collaborations and respectful working across voluntary, statutory, academic and policy boundaries. She is journal editor of *Quality in Ageing and Older Adults*.

#### **Dr Linda Birt**

Linda Birt is a researcher in the School of Health Sciences. Her research interests include understanding the ways that living with a chronic condition can impact on a person's opportunities for inclusion in communities. Using predominantly qualitative methods, she seeks to understand how personal and societal expectations shape opportunities for inclusion or conversely lead to people being excluded. She is interested in the 'work' people do as they negotiate new roles and responsibilities within their social networks. Her work has illustrated the liminal nature of chronic illness whether experienced as a patient or carer, and the importance of supportive others when people try to negotiate a changing health status. She is currently undertaking research with older people and people living with dementia exploring the mechanisms which potentially create the risk of exclusion for these people.

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**<https://www.uea.ac.uk/health-sciences/school-seminars>**

**Free. All welcome. No need to book. If you are attending from outside the University, please check the seminar is taking place. If in the event of a fire you need assistance please contact us to arrange a Personalised Emergency Evacuation Plan. Please note: The venue is on the main university campus.**