

Professional Background and Experience
Dr Tessa Perrin PhD, MSc, DipCOT

Tessa qualified as an occupational therapist in 1974 from the St Loyes School of Occupational Therapy in Exeter. She worked initially in the area of functional mental health, in hospital and residential care settings. In 1986 she took up a post with Essex Social Services, which set the course for the remainder of her career. This post required service provision to 14 care homes for older people, which is where she began to develop a concern for and commitment to the needs of people with dementia.

In 1991 Tessa gained her MSc from the Polytechnic of East London, and in 1997 her PhD whilst on a three-year research secondment to the Bradford Dementia Group at Bradford University. These research projects evaluated the therapeutic potential of occupation in the care of older people and people with dementia. She worked extensively with Tom Kitwood whilst at Bradford, in the development of Dementia Care Mapping.

Tessa has worked for many years as a trainer, for Essex Social Services, for the Essex School of Occupational Therapy, in the early years development of the National Association for Providers of Activities for Older People (NAPA) and latterly in independent practice. She has written and edited many books and articles on the therapeutic use of occupation with older people and people with dementia, one of which was awarded a first prize in the 2005 British Medical Association Medical Book Competition.

Complementing her professional experience, Tessa also has personal experience of dementia through caring for her mother, gaining an insight into the needs of family carers which could have been obtained in no other way. Subsequently, she has set up the charity Essex Dementia Care, which provides a community support service to families living with dementia. The work of Essex Dementia Care provides direct care to the person with dementia, information, guidance and respite to the family carer, training to professionals, and can be viewed at www.essexdementiacare.org.uk.