An investigation to create positive moments of engagement for people living with dementia and their carers.

Jane Souyave, Senior Lecturer and MA Graphic Design course leader at the University of Central Lancashire and Judith Bower, Dementia Adviser from Alzheimer’s Society Central & West Lancashire, combined their expertise to identify creative ways of providing beneficial activities for people with dementia and their carers to enjoy.

**INTERACTIVE WALL PANEL**

**Background**
The group of symptoms that are associated with dementia include memory loss, mood changes and communication problems with a decline in the ability to talk, read and write. It is debilitating; it appears to leave individuals with a poorer quality of life than before and less positive moments throughout their day. So how could more positive moments be created?

Judith Bower, a dementia care advisor at Alzheimer’s Society Central & West Lancashire, approached myself to design an activity for their Forget Me Not Liars & Learning Centre. We received a small grant to design and produce this activity.

**What Activity?**
We wanted to create a new activity that provided the visitors with a positive experience. At the time the Forget Me Not Centre was using a range of activities for people with dementia. Many activities and games etc. were heavily referenced from children’s sources, so this study provided the opportunity for an alternative activity to be designed that would be more adult focused, whilst retaining the interactive benefits that children enjoy.

People with dementia can be at various debilitating stages of the condition but it does not mean that all activities must be very simple to process some sense of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. My area of expertise is graphic design and although this is the field of visual language, it can offer the opportunity for sensory investigations using graphic elements of touch, smell, sound and taste. The initial project work was developed using visual language which appealed to the sense of touch and it was decided to base it on a ‘fuzzy’ feel activity.

This book was designed to stimulate the senses of touch through visually communicating in a simple manner. The large images and small amount of text enabled easy reading and understanding, whilst providing an opportunity for some quality time through engagement with the pages. The theme of summer was chosen to uplift the users mood as it is representative of happiness, carefree days and the pictorial elements enabled linking of flower petals and birds songs.

**Lucky Numbers**

This book was aimed at a more masculine target audience. Each of the touch through visually communicating one area of gambling through imagery with a relevant graphic design technique that encouraged touch and interaction. The variety of techniques and processes provided different experiences and the opportunity to exercise various actions in exploring the folds, pop-ups, cut outs, pull outs, turning, enveloping etc. The mixture of interactive qualities generated, served as a relaxing activity to evoke positive feelings.

Further work focussing on the qualities of touch and interaction in books was generated as a result of the above project.

Below are just 2 of the books that were produced with MA Graphic Design students and presented to the Lady Elsie Finney resource and activity library for public use within Alzheimer’s Society in Preston.

**A TOUCH OF SUMMER**

This book was designed to stimulate the senses of touch through visually communicating in a simple manner. The large images and small amount of text enabled easy reading and understanding, whilst providing an opportunity for some quality time through engagement with the pages. The theme of summer was chosen to uplift the users mood as it is representative of happiness, carefree days and the pictorial elements enabled linking of flower petals and birds songs.

The graphics depicted simple images related to summer using appropriate printing techniques and processes. Soft touching fabric was used for the summer stripes of beach towels and cut out techniques enabled folding of flower petals and birds songs.

**LUCKY NUMBERS**

This book was aimed at a more masculine target audience. Each double page spread communicated one area of gambling through imagery with a relevant graphic design technique that encouraged touch and interaction. The variety of techniques and processes provided different experiences and the opportunity to exercise various actions in exploring the folds, pop-ups, cut outs, pull outs, turning, enveloping etc. The mixture of interactive qualities generated, served as a relaxing activity to evoke positive feelings.

**REFERENCES**