



Experts collaborate to improve dementia signage

An award winning design agency based in Leith has been working with the Universities of Edinburgh and Stirling on a joint project to develop a new and innovative set of signage for people with dementia.

StudioLR met **Interface – The knowledge connection for business** at an industry event in December 2013. Dissatisfied with existing 'way-finding' products for dementia, and sensing an opportunity for a fresh and novel approach, the company wanted to access Scotland's academic expertise to use the latest research to inform their design, ensuring an effective, as well as an attractive, finished product.

Interface identified extensive research expertise in the care of people with dementia at Edinburgh and Stirling, and proposed both universities to StudioLR. After discussions with both universities it was agreed that a collaborative approach to the project would be the best solution to provide the company with access to the most wide ranging expertise. A Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Innovation Voucher was also awarded by Interface to support this project.

The project was led by Professor Heather Wilkinson, a leading researcher in the care of people with dementia, in Edinburgh's School of Health in Social Science. Dr Sarah Keyes, a researcher

in dementia, undertook an extensive literature review of all the studies that have been published around the world on dementia and living environments.

The review highlighted key factors, such as placement of signage for maximum impact, colours, and other elements, relating to how people with dementia can become disorientated and how to best help them to find their way. Their findings would be used to inform the company's design process.

The University of Stirling provided research input through Dr Fiona Kelly, an academic with valuable first-hand experience of a care home environment, who was able to give practical feedback on the new StudioLR concepts.

As a result of this successful business-academic collaboration, StudioLR has developed a set of design guidelines for creating consistent signage to increase independence and wellbeing for older people and dementia patients in care homes, hospitals or other related environments.

The group is looking to capitalise on this work to date and it is likely that

there will be other opportunities to work together to further develop this and other products.

Lucy Richards, Creative Director at StudioLR, said:

"The collaborative process we have experienced working together with the Universities of Edinburgh and Stirling on the Innovation Voucher has been both stimulating and fruitful, with exciting new thinking emerging throughout the process. As the project builds in momentum our purpose has become clearer and more worthwhile."

Images: 01 Existing dementia signage 02 Professor Heather Wilkinson