**Understanding the experiences of people with dementia through storytelling.**

Storytelling, both verbal and through photography, was used to explore the experiences of people living with a dementia. The project was situated at VUK, an adult school in Denmark, where people with a dementia attend as students, taking part in cognitive training and art and music therapy classes. The creative method of storytelling was used as a way to understand the experiences of being a student and to support the person with dementia to tell their story.

Students with a dementia were given a camera to take photographs of their school and home life. The images were then used as prompts to support the student’s narratives of attending the school. Four storytelling sessions were run with two groups, each group consisting of five students. Sessions were video recorded then transcribed and analysed thematically.

The storytelling approach supported students to share their experiences and give their opinions. Key themes arising from the project included what it meant to attend the school, the importance of friendships and being challenged. The approach enabled the researcher to introduce wider discussions about what it means to live with dementia and living in Denmark. Stories were shared across the group which offered moving accounts of present day experiences and reminiscences about the past. Student’s showed an interest in hearing about other people’s stories, and supporting friendships in the group.

This study found storytelling was a valuable method to hear the experiences of people with a dementia both within a research context and as a social activity. The project has led to a consideration of what story means in a research context with people with dementia and how it can be used to enable people who often do not have a voice within research to share their insights.