

Working Towards a Dementia Friendly Norfolk and Suffolk

In March, the Prime Minister announced his “**Challenge on Dementia**” with the goal of delivering major improvements in care and research by 2015. He acknowledged that the health and care system has a vital role to play in improving support for people with dementia. Lack of awareness among the public and poor understanding in communities has a major impact on the experience of people with dementia so his challenge extends across the whole of society. People living with dementia should be able to say that their community is aware of and understands dementia and is working to help them to live well with dementia – “**A Dementia Friendly Community**”.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dementia describes different brain disorders that trigger a loss of brain function. These conditions are all usually progressive and eventually severe. Symptoms of dementia can include memory loss, confusion, personality changes and problems with speech and understanding. Dementia is a terminal condition – it is **not a normal part of aging**.

People are living longer. That presents challenges as well as opportunities because **1 in 3 people over 65 will develop dementia**.

850,000 people in UK have dementia – that’s equivalent to the total population of Norfolk. With a rapidly aging population, this number is predicted to **double in the next 30 years**.

Among the over-55s, **dementia is feared more than any other illness**. More than 60% of all care home residents, aged over 65, have a form of dementia and at an estimated **£23 billion a year**, the cost to the UK economy is huge.

NORFOLK CONTEXT

- There are estimated to be around **13,000** people in Norfolk with dementia - although it is believed only 34% have received a formal diagnosis.
- Norfolk’s population continues to age.
- Around 21% of Norfolk’s population are aged 65 and over (16.5% in England overall).
- There are more 63-year-olds in Norfolk than any other age.
- The 65-74s in Norfolk are projected to increase in number by around 48,800 and 75+ over by 82,200. **This is a staggering increase of 54% and 95% respectively.**
- **The number of people over 65 is projected to rise to almost 40% in North Norfolk and over 32% in King’s Lynn and West Norfolk.**

THE DEMENTIA CHALLENGE

People living with dementia want to remain independent for as long as possible. They want to have choice and control over their lives through all stages of their dementia. With an early diagnosis and the right integrated support they can achieve this.

But this is not the current experience of the vast majority. Not only do they frequently have to battle for diagnosis and support, but everyday things we all take for granted – getting to the shops, spending time with friends and family, getting money from the bank, and going on holiday – are made difficult because of the **limited understanding of dementia in their communities**.