The dementia friendly communities (DFC) initiative aims to improve the quality of life of people living with dementia. It challenges entire towns and cities to raise awareness of the disease and build dementia support mechanisms, as well as promoting understanding and empathy amongst local people so that those living with dementia can play a more active and inclusive role in their local community.

Led by the North East Dementia Alliance and supported by the Northern Rock Foundation, dementia friendly communities projects are being supported and funded across the region.

“There are many new schemes getting off the ground and so much work being done in the name of dementia, and I do wonder if we are starting to lead the way.”

Ken Clasper,
North East resident diagnosed with Lewy Bodies Dementia
Jack and Jill and the Red Postbox

On the 31st October 2013, Northumbria University welcomed home its critically-acclaimed play that explores the impact of dementia on everyday life.

The fictional Jack and Jill & the Red Postbox was conceived and written by Claire Webster Saaremets, Artistic Director of Skimstone Arts and inspired by research carried out in Northumberland by Drs Cathy Bailey and Catherine Gibb (Northumbria University) and Professor Charlotte Clarke (Edinburgh University). The story follows Jack and Jill and their daughter Lucy as their lives are turned upside down when Jill is diagnosed with dementia and they encounter considerable daily challenges.

This home performance was an important event for Northumbria University as it builds on its long-term ambition to achieve dementia friendly community status – which would be a first for a university in the North East of England.

Both the Alzheimer Society and the North East Dementia Action Alliance supported the event by providing information and support and taking part in post-performance discussions about how to create dementia friendly communities. The invited audience of 90+ people, including those living with dementia, carers, family members, health professionals and academics, took part in group discussions about dementia friendly communities. There were exchanges about lessons learned from the play including how to volunteer time, the lost ability to stop and take stock and the importance of letting people know – for example the GP, corner shop and post office.

Dr Cathy Bailey, Northumbria University, said: “There were lots of ideas about how to create and enable dementia friendly communities and how communities could recruit champions in shops, banks and pubs. There were also suggestions inspired by initiatives that were already in place, so lots of sharing of best practice.”

Jack and Jill & the Red Postbox provided a powerful medium from which to think through the everyday practicalities of living with dementia; what is needed to create and sustain dementia friendly communities and what is needed to give all of us the tools to support others to have optimum quality of life.

The original research and premier performance of Jack and Jill is funded by Northumbria University’s Performing Arts departmental team and was supported by Northumbria University’s Performing Arts departmental team.

To find out more about health at Northumbria University, visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/hes.

Useful DFC resources...

The Alzheimer’s Society A guide for Customer facing staff

Dementia Friends training
www.dementiafriends.org.uk

Local Government Association – Developing dementia-friendly communities: Learning and guidance for local authorities
www.local.gov.uk/ageing-well/what-makes/-/journal_content/56/10180/348965/9/ARTICLE

Innovations in Dementia – Dementia-Friendly Hampshire Toolkit and Dementia Capable Communities
www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/project_extension/hampshire/toolkit

North East Dementia Alliance – Knowing the Foundations of Dementia Friendly Communities for the North East

Joseph Rowntree Foundations – Creating a Dementia-Friendly York
www.jrf.org.uk/publications/creating-dementia-friendly-york

Housing LIN – At a Glance: A Checklist for Developing Dementia Friendly Communities
www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/Viewpoint25_AtAGlance.pdf

Dementia Friendly Communities UPDATE

Spring 2014

Stockton & Corbridge on the road to becoming Dementia Friendly Communities

Both Stockton-on-Tees and Corbridge have successfully registered with the national recognition process for dementia friendly communities. The process was launched by the Alzheimer’s Society to publicly identify communities that are working to become more dementia-friendly and to ensure communities are working towards common criteria.

As a result of registering with the national recognition process Stockton-on-Tees and Corbridge will be issuing the ‘working to become dementia friendly’ symbol to organisations and businesses in their communities that wish to be part of the dementia friendly communities’ initiative and have stated what their actions will be to towards becoming more dementia friendly.

About the DFC recognition and accreditation process:

Registering with the recognition process means that organisations and communities are working towards becoming dementia friendly. It also means that they agree to meet certain conditions, which include:

• Committing to common overarching values and working towards named dementia friendly standards.

• Self-assessing progress towards the standards on an annual basis and providing a six-monthly update.

• Providing information on progress on a local webpage or site.

You can find out more about the accreditation process at www.alzheimers.org.uk

For further information about the Dementia Friendly Stockton project please visit www.dementiafriendlystockton.co.uk

For further information about the work in Corbridge please contact amy.syron-mallenby@alzheimers.org.uk