

Study shows therapeutic impact of neighbourliness on dementia

November 7 2017, by Mike Addelman

New research is showing how being connected with their local community has reaped enormous benefits for people with dementia.

Research Associate Sarah Campbell, from The University of Manchester, says familiarity with people in local shops, cafes and even on the street, was crucial to the participants of the study.

Acts of kindness by neighbours like taking the bins out each week, she said had a huge effect on their wellbeing.

The researchers also found that some people with [dementia](#) still had a valuable role in their neighbourhoods by 'keeping an eye' out, collecting newspapers and caring for grandchildren.

The research is part of a five year study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and National Institute for Health Research.

It is one of the first and largest studies to investigate how people living with dementia, and their partners, experience their local neighbourhoods.

56 people -29 with dementia and 27 Family carers—from across Greater Manchester were interviewed about their experience for the study.

The research team say their findings will encourage others to think about people living with dementia currently thought to be 850,000 people Alzheimer's Research UK.

The figure worldwide is 44 million people, which is set to treble to 135 million by 2050, Alzheimer's Research UK.

She said: "These findings together indicate how the [neighbourhood](#) operates through a series of links between people and place from the dementia café, to the local newsagents, and the neighbour two doors down.

"Many people with dementia will be living independently in neighbourhoods and communities, with the support of family, friends, neighbours and formal and informal service provides.

"But understanding the nature of support available in neighbourhood settings is crucial to ensuring everyone affected by dementia is able to live life as best they can.

""Routines and habit' are also an essential part of everyday life in connecting people to their neighbourhoods and to others. Such as using the same routes to walk the dog, or visiting the same café or attending dementia peer support groups."

She added: "We would also encourage the public to come along to our drop-in event on 8 November and record their own experiences and thoughts about neighbouring, neighbourhoods and day-to-day life in relation to dementia.

"We'd like the public to also think about how they might be able to help people living with dementia in their own neighbourhoods and reflect on what it might be like to live in their own neighbourhoods with a diagnosis of dementia."

Margaret, an 81 year old widow living with dementia, told the team: "Next door...they are brilliant. I might not see them from one day to the

next, but my daughter Joanne she's got their phone number and they've got mine, and Kevin takes the bins out and brings them back for me when they need emptying."

Marjorie, an 81 year old family carer said: "Oh, yes. They chat with you and Abdhul's family - Abdhul and his wife and their little boy and his father. He's a lovely, lovely gentleman and they know us quite well, by name. Like one morning the papers arrived late and of course he arrived down to the house with it. He's very nice. He's lovely."

Lily, 82 year old woman living with dementia, said about her neighbour: "Yes, I get her newspaper every day. It is too much for her to walk up here but she does do it, yeah, she's...as old people go she's really, really brilliant, 96. She's...when I think about it I look after her like that. I think I'm one of the best on me legs and the neighbours always knock on my door I don't know why, it's just dawned on me they do! And I am unofficially Ava's carer."

And Dave, a 67 year old man living with dementia, told the team about his regular coffee meets with local friends he has got to know over the years: "And then I...there's the coffee machine in the square, and I go and meet people there every Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays. And we have a coffee and a chat. I meet...there's Laura and Tom and there's Jemima, I meet during the week when I bump in to her. She's been very good to me...I can talk to her if I have any worries and that and she'll sit and listen."

More information: People with dementia or memory problems, their carers, and anyone who is interested, can sign up to Join Dementia Research—an NIHR scheme designed to recruit participants for clinical research studies that can that can help us understand what causes the disease, develop effective treatments, improve care and hopefully one day find a cure. People can find out more and register here:

www.joindementiaresearch.nihr.ac.uk

Provided by University of Manchester

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