

PRESS RELEASE

January 13, 2020



L-R Councillor Drummond, Clive Hooker, Sue Butterworth, Greg Walsh (former Chair)

High res jpegs available on request

West Berkshire Dementia Action Alliance sets ambitious 2020 target

- **Nearly 1000 new Dementia Friends in 2019**

West Berkshire's Dementia Action Alliance (DAA) celebrated a successful 2019 at a recent event recognising the area's Dementia Friends Champions. The DAA works to improve the lives of people living with dementia in West Berkshire.

Hosted by the staff at the Gracewell of Newbury, the evening was attended by Councillor Clive Hooker, Vice Chairman of West Berkshire Council, Councillor Billy Drummond, Deputy Mayor of Newbury and representatives and individuals who have supported the organisation throughout the year.

Sue Butterworth, Programme Support Officer, Healthy Communities at West Berkshire Council said; "2019 was an amazing year for our DAA. The success of our annual conference really acted as a catalyst and so many individuals and organisations have become engaged with activities and endeavours to improve the lives of those living with dementia in West Berkshire.

"In the past 12 months, nearly a 1,000 people in West Berkshire have become Dementia Friends, taking the total in the area to over 3,900. However, we are committed to an ambitious target to take that total to 5,000 by the end of 2020.

"In addition to many youth organisations, businesses, churches and voluntary organisations, 16 West Berkshire schools have expressed an interest in hosting Dementia Friends Information Sessions for their pupils. This high level of interest gives us confidence that our target is achievable and we are excited by the difference that it will make to those living with dementia and their families."

Councillor Drummond, said; "The Dementia Friends do a fantastic job and I'm hoping to attend an information session and help to spread the word."

Christine McElhil, Community Banker for Nat West branches in Newbury and surrounding areas and Reading and surrounding areas, is one of West Berkshire's 27 Dementia Friends Champions. She said; "Attending last year's conference not only highlighted the issues that people living with dementia face, but also made me very aware of what we, as an organisation, could do to make things better.

"I believe our endeavours are making a real difference to our customers and Dementia Friends Information Sessions are now an integral part of the local induction programme for all new staff."

Many people affected by dementia feel that society fails to understand the condition with which they are living. Dementia Friends help by raising awareness and taking actions big and small so that people living with dementia can continue to live in the way they want.

Dementia Friends Champions are trained volunteers who encourage others to learn a little bit about dementia. Champions run Information Sessions in their community and inspire others to help those living with dementia live well.

If you would like to know more about getting involved with the West Berkshire DAA or to book a Dementia Friends Information Session for your business, group or organisation then please email: sue.butterworth@westberks.gov.uk

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