

“Life after diagnosis isn’t hopeless” - What you should know this Dementia Action Week

(For release w/c 15th May)

There are many misconceptions about dementia, warns Dementia Oxfordshire, a service provided by Age UK Oxfordshire that offers education and support to those living with dementia, their family and carers.

“I think the biggest misconception about dementia is the assumption that life as it was will cease, and life after diagnosis is hopeless,” says Melissa Spearman, a Dementia Adviser for Age UK Oxfordshire’s dementia support service. “At Dementia Oxfordshire, our aim is to give hope for the future, and enable people to live the life they want to live.”

“This is a diagnosis that no one would want to receive, but we need to help them see that there is still a life to be lived. Too often people sink under the weight of living with dementia.”

Across the UK, someone is diagnosed with dementia every 3 minutes¹. And yet the condition is rarely understood, even by those who receive a diagnosis.

Glenn Fletcher, a Dementia Ambassador for the service, was “quite taken aback” when he was first diagnosed and worried for his future. But he says, “It’s only some things that have changed. Not everything has changed, I think people who don’t know about dementia are most frightened.”

“I think people shouldn’t be afraid that they’ve lost something. They’re just slightly different in their ability to work with the world now.”

“It’s not a little secret that we keep. My status had changed a bit. But it’s not damaged – the person I am. I am still the person I was before it’s just some things I can’t do as well.”

If there’s one message Dementia Adviser Melissa Spearman wants everyone to hear this Dementia Action Week, it’s that we need to listen more, “Listen to people with dementia, who need our understanding, encouragement, and support. Whether you mention the ‘D’ word or not, it’s important that we acknowledge their symptoms and how they feel about it.”

“Very often people with dementia want to know, ‘Do you hear me? Does how I feel and what I have to say matter to you?’”

But it’s a difficult journey for carers too. 90% of people supporting a loved one with dementia say either their physical or mental health suffer as a direct result of their role as a carer.²

¹ www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/news-and-media/facts-media

² www.alzheimers.org.uk/news/2018-06-22/carers-people-dementia-struggling-silence

“The loved ones and informal carers of people with dementia are just as important as the person they’re supporting. Having a loved one diagnosed with dementia is never part of anyone’s plan and a diagnosis is just as devastating for them too,” says Melissa Spearman.

“It’s imperative you look after yourself and continue to do the things you love to. Supporting someone with dementia is not a journey you should undertake on your own. Meeting and spending time with others in the same situation as yourself can be a huge support. Here at Dementia Oxfordshire, we can help you connect with others living locally to you.”

—ENDS—

NOTES TO EDITOR

Glenn Fletcher sharing his experience [video]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXMrVvYGKxjY>

Glenn Fletcher, Dementia Ambassador for Dementia Oxfordshire is available for interview.

Melissa Spearman, Dementia Advisor for Dementia Oxfordshire is available for interview.

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About Dementia Oxfordshire (a service provided by Age UK Oxfordshire)

Dementia Oxfordshire is a free service provided by local, independent charity Age UK Oxfordshire. The service supports people to live well for as long as possible in the community and works to ensure people have a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives.

Dementia Oxfordshire provides information, advice and support to people living with dementia and their carers from the point of diagnosis until end of life or a move to a care home.

Dementia Oxfordshire employs an evidence-based and person-centred approach to provide support across:

- Information about dementia
- How to get help locally
- Staying independent
- Adaptations for your home
- Benefits and allowances for those with dementia and their carers
- Additional support and respite breaks
- Activities and leisure opportunities
- Planning for the future
- Financial and legal issues

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Age UK Oxfordshire is a local independent charity. Registered charity no. 1091529
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About Age UK Oxfordshire

Age UK Oxfordshire is an independent local charity dedicated to enabling older people in Oxfordshire to maintain their independence and live life to the full.

We provide free local information, advice, and a wide range of support services as well as campaigning on the issues that matter to people in later life. We work with our national partner, Age UK, and other local Age UKs in England. Our work focuses on four key areas: money matters, health and wellbeing, home and care and social connections and enjoyment.

You can find further information on all our services and volunteering opportunities by telephoning 0345 450 1276 or by visiting our website: www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire

Age UK Oxfordshire is a charitable company limited by guarantee (registered charity number 1091529 and company number 4328143). Registered office: 9 Napier Court, Barton Lane, Abingdon, OX14 3YT. For general media enquiries please contact Emma Duckett on 07799 051682 or email media@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk.