

## Help your community become dementia friendly

KCC is calling on people to get involved in Dementia Friendly Communities as a charity reveals a third of people with the condition rarely leave their homes.

The new survey by the Alzheimer's Society, says some people living with dementia are 'virtual prisoners' in their homes, with one in three leaving the house just once a week and 10% only going out once a month. More than four in ten felt they were a 'burden on society'.

These figures illustrate the importance of the county-wide project which aims to raise awareness of dementia, help people with the condition and their carers seek help and support, and make their experience while out and about in the community better.

Graham Gibbens, KCC cabinet member for adult social care and public health, said: "These figures from the Alzheimer's Society are a stark reminder about how important it is that Kent, and the rest of the country, wakes up to the experiences of people living with dementia. Loneliness and isolation can lead to depression, ill-health and poor quality of life.

"People in Kent with dementia have told us that they want to still be able to live the life they have had before their diagnosis. Our Dementia Friendly Communities project aims to make Kent more inclusive of people with dementia, increase awareness and understanding of the condition, reduce stigma, and help people with dementia lead more happy and fulfilled lives in the community.

"We and our partners in the NHS and Medway Council, are setting up 12 dementia friendly communities and we are calling on as many people as possible to get involved."

The first 'whole' communities are being set up in Northfleet, Westgate, West Malling, Swanley, Eastry, and Canterbury. Everyone is invited to take part whether an individual, school, business, carer, charity or other community group, to help shape the dementia friendly community in each area. More

areas are being considered for other dementia friendly communities.

A number of other areas - Hythe, Herne Bay, Margate, Snodland - are running intergenerational projects which challenge preconceptions of what is possible when living with dementia, including art installations, dance, film, ipad and community radio projects.

Another initiative by KCC to tackle isolation felt by older people is befriending – volunteers who visit vulnerable adults and bring them back into the community. The scheme recently received a £380K funding boost to help people live more fulfilled lives, reduce social exclusion, increase access to community resources, information and advice, improve health and wellbeing, and to help people become more independent.

To find out more about what is going on to help people with dementia in your area, visit [www.kent.gov.uk/dementia](http://www.kent.gov.uk/dementia) and to find out how to get involved with your local dementia friendly community, email [silk.team@kent.gov.uk](mailto:silk.team@kent.gov.uk) or call Margaret Turner on 01622 694639.