

Powys County Council – a dementia supportive Council

Having been appointed Dementia Champion earlier this year in March, I have been steadily working to achieve a number of outcomes.

Primarily my role is to focus the council's attention on becoming a dementia friendly organisation. In a council as large as Powys delivering the wide range of services we do, this is not an easy task and will take time. There is a need to research, collect inspirational solutions and highlight best practice.

Tackling the issues around dementia cuts across all service areas. It is not only physical changes such as ensuring public spaces within our buildings take into consideration appropriate easy to read signage but also ensuring those in key public facing positions are able to recognise and assist someone who needs extra help and support.

How can Powys County Council become a dementia supportive organisation?

A dementia friendly council must be sensitive to the needs of those living with dementia together with those of their carer's and families.

It is our aspiration for dementia awareness training to be available to all staff and Members, delivered via the most appropriate manner specific to individual needs and to introduce this training as a mandatory part of Member and staff induction. An excellent e-learning dementia programme is available on the council's Learning & Development intranet site.

During National Alzheimer's Society Awareness Week in May, I arranged various activities promoting the Alzheimer's Dementia Friends initiative and a training session was held for Members. A Dementia Friend learns a little bit about what it is like to live with dementia and turns that understanding into action.

I have spent time researching how other local authorities have approached this task, not just across Wales but beyond our borders into England, not surprisingly there is quite a varying approach.

Following my research, I have completed a draft PCC Dementia Mission Statement together with an internal action plan which sets out our aims and objectives and will in due course be for approval by Council.

Powys Dementia Forum

In England most local authority areas now have a Dementia Action Alliance which comprises of health and social care together with others from the public service sector, the private sector, local businesses and communities all working together to support

those living with dementia. Here in Wales that approach has not yet been adopted however Swansea City and County Council have adopted a similar approach and 'The Swansea Dementia Supportive Community Forum' was launched in 2013. This model is an exemplar of good practice and is supported by Alzheimer's Wales and one that I wish to see here in Powys.

With the Swansea project in mind I approached Carl Cooper CEO of Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO) a few months ago with a proposal that Powys should follow the lead not only of Swansea but also the Dementia Action Alliances set up across England to allow an opportunity for all interested stakeholders to meet together to share ideas, best practice and establish networks. Currently there are a number of very successful community 'grass roots' initiatives working across the county, Brecon is a fine example. It is our ambition to share this 'grass roots' approach with other communities interested in becoming dementia supportive.

In conjunction with PAVO, a discussion paper for a Powys Dementia Forum was approved by the Health and Adult Social Care Integrated Leadership Board (HASCILB) in October and this project led by PAVO will be taken forward during 2016.

What is a dementia friendly community?

- Where people with dementia and their carer's feel safe and respected and have a feeling of belonging in the community.
- Supportive and inclusive in all areas of community life whether that be perhaps going to the shops, visiting the library, leisure centre, local pub or using public transport.
- Improves the quality of life for people living with dementia allowing them to remain independent and have choice, control and voice over their lives.
- Encourages early diagnosis in order for help and support to be available.

Prime Ministers Rural Dementia Task & Finish Group

In 2012, David Cameron PM pledged to tackle the growing issues relating to dementia, his pledge was instrumental in bringing about the Alzheimer's Society Dementia Friends initiative.

I have been very fortunate in that the Chairman of Council whose chosen fundraising charity for this year is the Alzheimer's Society, held a Dementia reception at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show (RWAS) in July at which speakers from the Care Council for Wales, Powys teaching Health Board and Mid & West Wales Fire Authority together with myself gave an overview of the work and projects each of our individual organisations are pursuing. This event together with dementia related talks and presentations at the National Eisteddfod has given me ample opportunities to network with so many people and a number of valuable working relationships have been established.

Quite co-incidental at the RWAS, accompanying the Chief Officer of Alzheimer's Wales was a member of the UK Alzheimer's Society Board, Mr Ian Sherriff, academic lead for Dementia at Plymouth University. Ian also Chair's the Prime Ministers Rural Dementia Task & Finish Group. This committee was set up to understand the issues of living with dementia in rural communities in order to report back to Westminster. I have been asked to join this committee as a representative from a Welsh rural authority and I will be attending my first meeting at Westminster on 14th December 2015 in order to meet with the Minister for Dementia and a cross-party group of MP's. I will be able to report back on this meeting to People Scrutiny committee at its meeting on 16th December.

Action for People with Dementia in Powys

The former Powys Dementia Steering Group has recently been re-established with a new name 'Action for People with Dementia in Powys'. This Group has responsibility for driving forward integrated dementia services. It is led by Powys tHB and Rhiannon Jones, Director of Nursing chairs the meetings. The committee has only met once whereupon it was quickly realised its membership ought to split into two - those responsible for operational issues and those with a higher level strategic overview. New terms of reference are currently being drafted and I will be a member of the strategic committee.

Alzheimer's Wales to launch a Rural Dementia Network

I have also been asked by Sue Phelps, the Chief Officer of Alzheimer's Wales to become a member of Alzheimer's Wales Rural Dementia Network when it is formally launched in February 2016.

Health & Adult Social Care Integrated Leadership Board (HASCILB)

When appropriate, I now attend meetings of this Board in my role as Dementia Champion for PCC.

Councillor Dawn Bailey
Dementia Champion, Powys County Council