

Dementia Oxfordshire Providing a Sense of Meaning and Purpose

Back in December 2020, Wantage-based Glenn Fletcher and his wife Christine, received the devastating news that Glenn had been diagnosed with dementia. Whilst they had supported each other throughout their married life, nothing could have prepared them for this news. Glenn had undergone various scans which made it clear there was damage to his brain but receiving the news from the doctor that he had dementia, and that his wife would become his carer was shattering.

Receiving the news that their roles would be redefined was both upsetting and frightening as neither of them had any experience of supporting someone with dementia. However, the diagnosis led Glenn and Christine to start a journey of discovery to really understand what the impact of Glenn having dementia would be on their lives and their relationship. Thanks to the support they received from Dementia Oxfordshire, a service provided by Age UK Oxfordshire with funding support from Oxfordshire County Council, Glenn is now an ambassador for Dementia Oxfordshire. From his own personal experience, Glenn offers his time to help others who have been diagnosed with dementia as well as their families.

Age UK Oxfordshire's dementia support service, Dementia Oxfordshire, provides valuable support to all people diagnosed with dementia together with their relatives/carers. Support is provided to people living with dementia and their families from the point of diagnosis until either end of life or a move to a specialist care home, and thanks to the ongoing support of Oxfordshire County Council there is no charge for the service. By supporting people for as long as possible in the community and helping to retain a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, everyone living with dementia can continue to live as normal a life as possible for as long as possible. Glenn and Christine have found a way of continuing their relationship, taking simple steps like



marking key events on a calendar and speaking honestly about any worries and frustrations they have. Glenn has retained meaning in his life and his wife has been able to reconcile the challenges of being both a wife and carer.

A research project undertaken by Warwick University and supported by Dementia Oxfordshire has been working with

people like Glenn, to understand the support networks of people living with dementia and how they interact with their local care services. Work has already identified common difficulties experienced not only by people living with dementia, but also by their families and carers. The aim now is to put together a more comprehensive study with the overall goal of improving access to support and strengthening the connection between dementia care services. It is felt that this will greatly benefit people living with dementia across Oxfordshire and more widely.

Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Minister for Adult Social Care, Cllr Tim Bearder said: "It must be an extremely unsettling time to be told your loved one has dementia but there is help out there. I hope that this new research will lead to more positive experiences for people, strengthening our Oxfordshire Way vision to enable people to live happy, independent lives, within their own communities, for as long as possible."

Dementia Oxfordshire has a team of Dementia Advisers who work with people diagnosed with dementia providing information to help them live a normal life for as long as possible; this includes:

- Information about the condition
- How to access 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.

For people in Oxfordshire there is a support line available from 9am until 5pm Monday to Friday on 01865 410 210 and Oxfordshire based Dementia Advisers can offer advice and guidance, not only to relatives and carers but health professionals too. The information given is both evidence-based and person-centred. For out of area and out of hours support, Dementia UK's support line where you can speak to an Admiral Nurse can be contacted on 0800 888 6678.

To find out more about the services you can access to help you cope with dementia visit dementiaoxfordshire.org.uk

Dementia Oxfordshire is a service provided by Age UK Oxfordshire

