

2.3 million under 18s know someone with dementia but lack understanding

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Show of support from today's youth signals dawn of the first dementia friendly generation

- Nearly a third of young people know someone living with dementia
- Two thirds of young people (62%) would like to help someone with dementia, but a lack of understanding could be holding them back
- 55 per cent of 8 to 17 year olds believe that if people knew more about dementia, life would be better for those with the condition
- Children's TV presenter visits school to encourage children to become Dementia Friends, as part of Alzheimer's Society and Public Health England launch bid to create a dementia friendly generation

With over two million people expected to develop dementia in the next ten years, it is likely the majority of today's under-18s will experience the condition in their lifetime. Today (Thursday 26 February) Alzheimer's Society and Public Health England release the results of the first ever poll of young people's attitudes to dementia, which reveal that around a third (31%) of young people would feel uncomfortable talking to someone with dementia. However, the majority (65%) believe that people with the condition should be supported and included in everyday life.

The YouGov* poll of those aged 8-17 years old revealed that nearly a third of young people know someone with dementia, and 62 per cent would like to help someone with dementia, however a lack of understanding is holding them back. More than half (55%) believe that if people understood more about the condition, life would improve for those affected.

Richard McCourt, one half of children's TV comedy duo *Dick and Dom*, joins Alzheimer's Society and Public Health England's call for young people, parents, teachers and youth leaders to become a Dementia Friend, to help reduce the stigma that results in many people with dementia experiencing loneliness and social exclusion. A Dementia Friend is someone who has gained a basic understanding about what it is like to have dementia and the small ways they can support someone living with the condition.

Richard, who is already a Dementia Friend, visited Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre in Gloucestershire to talk to students about his experience of Dementia and also took part in a Dementia Friends session for Year 7 (11 - 12 year old) pupils.

Richard McCourt says:

'My mum had dementia, but before she was diagnosed, I had very little understanding about the condition. By becoming a Dementia Friend now, young people are more likely to recognise dementia in family members and friends and to support them and seek help when they develop the symptoms.'

'I meet young people every day through my work and have seen them achieve some amazing things, but it was particularly moving to see these pupils engaged in a subject close to my heart in the Dementia Friends session.'

During the visit, Richard met 14 year-old Kirsty Ball whose grandfather John (aged 94), was diagnosed with dementia in 2004 and lives at home nearby.

Kirsty said:

'Since my grandfather's diagnosis, my family and I have a better understanding of his symptoms. If more people know about dementia, it would be less feared and better understood. A better understanding would mean that those with memory problems would find it easier to talk openly and feel comfortable.'

To support the ambition to create a dementia friendly generation, Alzheimer's Society has launched a new section on its website www.alzheimers.org.uk/youngpeople aimed at teachers, youth group leaders, young people and parents. The site hosts new teachers' resources for Key Stage 3, including lesson

plans to build an understanding of how dementia affects people, class activities, videos, and fundraising ideas to support the work of the charity.

For parents, the site offers advice on how to talk to children about dementia. Young people under 14 years old can ask their teachers and youth group leaders to host a Dementia Friends session and those over 14 can watch an online video at www.alzheimers.org.uk/youngpeople

Young people are also being encouraged to post a photo or write about a friendship memory on their social media accounts, tag friends and encourage them to become a Dementia Friend using the hashtag #favouritefriendmemory. This will highlight how precious memories are and encourage people to think about the importance of friendship, particularly towards those with dementia. (7)

Jeremy Hughes, Chief Executive, Alzheimer's Society said:

'Young people hold the key to what our society looks like in the future and we want it to be a dementia friendly one. The young people who learn more about dementia today are our future customer service managers, bus drivers, policemen, MPs and HR Directors who will have more patience with someone who seems confused, or can influence policies to better support people with dementia and carers. Alzheimer's Society is urging all young people to become Dementia Friends and help beat the stigma that exists in our society today.'

Dementia Friends is a joint initiative with Public Health England funded by the Cabinet Office and Department of Health and at the weekend (Saturday 21st February) celebrated creating one million Dementia Friends. Just over two years since it was launched, Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Friends programme is now transforming the way the nation thinks, talks and acts about the condition.

Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health, said:

"With the right care and support, it is possible to live well with dementia and I strongly welcome the fact that many young people want to do what they can to help.

"We all need to do more to tackle the lack of understanding that surrounds dementia. I hope that as many people as possible sign up to become Dementia Friends to help improve the lives of people with condition."

To find out more about Dementia Friends and the little things young people, parents, teachers and youth leaders can do to help visit www.alzheimers.org.uk/youngpeople

- Ends -

Notes to editors

- The 2.3 million figure of people aged between 8 and 17 based on data from the ONS 2013 mid year estimates of population by single year of age.
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables
- All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,327 children aged 8-17. Fieldwork was undertaken between 19th - 21st October 2014. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB children (aged 8-17).
- For more information, please contact Alzheimer's Society's Press Office on 0207 423 3595 or email press@alzheimers.org.uk or freuds press office on 020 3003 6502, email dementia@freuds.com
- For more information on becoming a young people and Dementia Friends, visit www.alzheimers.org.uk/youngpeople or www.dementiafriends.org.uk. Follow Dementia Friends on Twitter
- Public Health England's mission is to protect and improve the nation's health and to address inequalities through working with national and local government, the NHS, industry and the voluntary and community sector. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. Follow us on Twitter @PHE_uk
- Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading support and research charity for people with dementia, their families and carers. We provide information and support to people with any form of dementia and their carers through our publications, National Dementia Helpline, website, and more than 2,000 local services. We campaign for better quality of life for people with dementia and greater understanding of dementia. We also fund an innovative programme of medical and social research into the cause, cure and prevention of dementia and the care people receive.
- For more information about staying safe online, please visit - <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>

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