Santander employees reach £1 million mark in aid of Alzheimer's Society

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Santander UK employees have raised more than £1 million for the company's national charity partners Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer Scotland by taking part in fundraising events such as Memory Walk, Cupcake Day, It's a Knockout and Elf Day since the partnership began in 2019.

This summer alone, around 460 employees have raised over £120,000 by completing their own Memory Walks including a generous £50,000 matched funded by the Santander Foundation. Memory Walk is also sponsored by Santander UK and saw company Ambassador Dame Jessica Ennis-Hill get involved by making a warm-up video for participants to mark World Alzheimer's Day (21 September).

When Baksinder Chima, a Governance and Control Manager for Santander UK heard the call-out for walkers, she decided to step up to the mark with her brothers and raised over £3,700 for Alzheimer's Society.

Baksinder Chima said: "We lost our dad, Sukhdev Singh, in March aged 86, to dementia. As a family we have seen first-hand the pain that dementia can bring. We saw dad deteriorate rapidly from the strong independent man we had known. Although we were able to bid him farewell at his funeral, lockdown meant that me, my siblings and my mum - who also has dementia - were unable to meet up to grieve together. For these reasons raising money for Alzheimer's Society has felt very rewarding."

Santander UK's support has never come at a more crucial time. People affected by dementia are in desperate need of support, after being the worst hit by coronavirus in terms of deaths, and due to the knock-on impact of lockdown. Thousands have seen their symptoms increase and mental health deteriorate due to a lack of social contact, loss of routine and interruptions to essential care and support and many families have struggled to cope as a result of care home visitor bans and a lack of respite.

In addition to Santander employee's fundraising efforts, at the peak of the pandemic, the Santander Foundation pledged an additional £3 million donation, split equally (£1,500,000 each) between Alzheimer's Society and Age UK to support some of the most vulnerable people in the community. In addition, over 300 Santander employees volunteered to become companion callers to people affected by dementia and so far over 3,500 calls have been made to those in desperate need of support. This support was further promoted through a TV advert and social media engagement.

Funds will go towards helping Alzheimer's Society provide vital support, through services such as Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Connect support line. Alzheimer's Society is facing a blow up to half its income while its services have been a lifeline for thousands of people during the coronavirus pandemic, used over 2.7 million times since lockdown began.

The focus of the partnership with Santander goes far beyond fundraising and financial supporting as the bank has the ambition to become a more dementia friendly bank. For the 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK, managing money and interacting with financial services can become extremely difficult.

Since 2019, Santander UK has put in place practices and guidance to protect vulnerable customers from financial exclusion and loss of independence by delivering training and awareness sessions for its employees to improve their knowledge and ability to support people affected by dementia.

The bank has also committed to have at least 50% of staff become Dementia Friends, by launching a bespoke Dementia Friends e-learning for staff. Dementia Friends remains the largest ever social movement around dementia, changing the way we think, act and talk about dementia and is now at over three million members.

Together with Alzheimer's Society, Santander UK also created a steering group — made up of people living with or affected by dementia — to offer advice to the bank on how to be a dementia-friendly bank, including reviewing products, services, and digital access.

Elisa Moscolin, Head of Sustainability at Santander said: "At Santander we are committed to helping people and businesses prosper by being a responsible bank. We asked Alzheimer's Society to be our critical friend and work closely with us to help people affected by dementia to stay financially included

and empowered. We are really proud of the work we're doing together and the incredible commitment that colleagues have shown to this cause, particularly during these challenging times."

Alex Hyde-Smith, Director of Fundraising at Alzheimer's Society said: "The stark reality is that people with dementia have been worst hit by coronavirus, with thousands of deaths leaving behind grief-stricken families. We're also hearing harrowing accounts of the devastating long-term effects of lockdown on people with dementia and their families and carers, all in desperate need of help during this very uncertain time. We are incredibly grateful for the continued dedication of Santander UK, especially raising over £1 million via dedicated employee fundraising and the bank's drive to become the leading dementia-friendly bank in the UK. Support from Santander has never been more crucial, as we continue to make sure no one is left to face dementia alone and without adequate support."

Visit www.alzheimers.org.uk for more information

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