

An estimated 850,000 people in the UK have been diagnosed as living with dementia, according to the Alzheimer's Society, with this number



Churches and dioceses in the Church of England have stepped up support
 dementia-friendly cafes to singing groups and services.

Ellesmere Deanery, made up of 14 churches in Shropshire, has become the first in the country to have a full house of dementia-friendly churches. It's in the Diocese of Lichfield which is recognised by the Alzheimer's Society as a dementia-friendly community. This allows the diocese to award the nationally-recognised 'Working to become dementia friendly' logo to churches who commit to taking three actions in the year ahead.

In Ellesmere – a rural area surrounding a market town – discussions at a Deanery Chapter meeting in 2017 began the dementia-friendly journey. Since then, the churches have worked in a range of areas including improving signs, making service booklets accessible, hosting monthly coffee mornings for those living with dementia and their carers, holding Dementia Friends Sunday services and displaying information on noticeboards.

The Revd Maureen Read, Vicar of the Benefice of the Meres & Meadows, explains: "Two of my churches held Community Carols with an aim to reach those living with dementia and their carers, whether regular church attenders or not. Both went very well with positive comments particularly from carers who said how lovely it was to see their relation smile, laugh and join in. They will become annual events."

The initiatives have spilt out into the wider community. In Baschurch, All Saints Church is working with the local library to create a Strength For The Journey memory bag which includes a holding cross, hymn book and rosary to help stir memories.

"Many of us today know people living with dementia, either in our own families or in our communities or congregations," Rural Dean the Revd Linda Cox said. "It is so important to be able to continue to live and enjoy the things that connect us. Our churches need to be accessible to all, so any changes we can make to help this are indeed good news."

The Revd Dr David Primrose, the Diocese's Director of Transforming Communities, added: "Deaneries work as groups of local churches supporting each other. It's so good that the churches in Ellesmere Deanery have a common commitment to be dementia-friendly churches. This will ensure that the wellbeing of those affected by dementia remains at the heart of the life of their communities."

More information

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