

Growing a Compassionate Community



Corfe Mullen is a village on the edge of Wimborne in rural East Dorset. It has a population of 10,500, of whom a good percentage is older retired people.

A core principal of what we do is providing a form of radical hospitality to marginalised groups of people. These activities provide a doorway for carers as well people with some form of dementia to re-integrate and connect with people and services at a very challenging time in their journey. Dementia is sometimes referred to as a living bereavement; as such it's seems important to provide a safe and sensitive pastoral base at this crucial time. This work is part of a wider more inclusive vision of growing compassionate communities.

So, what is a compassionate community?

Growing compassionate communities is primarily about a community working towards inclusiveness of all diverse groups and peoples. This concept seeks to grow communities that are compassionate and that seek to include groups on the margins of the community by becoming sensitive to their needs and journey. A compassionate community may be described as a community that identifies and seeks to be inclusive through engaging and reintegrating vulnerable and marginalized groups that reside in the local community.

We have identified 3 key aims for growing a dementia-friendly community:

- To raise awareness and understanding of dementia in Corfe Mullen
- To create a safe and non-stigmatising community in which older people with dementia can live well
- To create an environment where the carer and or person with dementia can seek appropriate help and support

So how are we growing this dementia-friendly community? We have a number of groups and activities that take place one a month at various locations in Corfe Mullen. These include:

- A reminiscence group: a very informal group which meets at the library and is open to all older people and those with memory loss.
- A carer's support group: also hosted by the library, this group is an opportunity to meet other carers to share experiences and offer mutual support.
- Down Memory Lane: a memory café hosted at St Nicholas Church.
- A drop-in at the village hall: for anyone looking for information, support and signposting or just want to pop in for a chat. This drop-in is often busy with carers seeking help in navigating the paperwork around a family member's new dementia diagnosis.

Recently we have launched a carpet bowls group and a programme of 'dementia walks' at the suggestion of some of our local carers.

We have some tender shoots of hope appearing in our community of Corfe Mullen. It is this hope that is at the very core of our journey to becoming a dementia-friendly community; hope that you can live well with dementia and memory loss.

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