

Community Safety Select Committee

9th January 2025

Dementia friendly Plus project

Summary

This report outlines the projects aims and its successes since the outset. It explains how the project has diversified yet remained within the initial brief.

The report highlights how the education program has benefitted pan disability as much as Dementia and how it supports and promotes good communication with all businesses.

I will give some examples of what the businesses have given back to the community and how our people have their say in what evolves.

This report does show how in the current economic climate, all agencies must work together and recognise the changing needs of the disease process for its people who are affected by it, the carers, and the cared for.

Finally, it will say how inclusion and communication has started to support our town centres making people living with dementia and their loved ones feel safer and supported whilst enjoying a meaningful environment for as long as they can. Feedback is they feel welcomed greatly in all our 6 towns and it is generally recognised, by them, that although we still have some work to do, we are moving forward. This is reinforced to me by visitors to the town, that they too feel welcomed and happy to work with Stockton Borough.

Detail

This is a Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council initiative, originally Stockton BID and SBC. I am the only worker in the team, which was initially a part, and in the last 2 years, a full-time role.

1. There are over 200 businesses that are accredited as dementia friendly with SBC. The businesses include small retailers, larger stores, theatres cinemas, schools, hospitals, undertakers, licenced drivers, libraries, churches, community policing, town markets, community centres, sports and leisure facilities, virtual businesses, voluntary groups and organisations, SBC internal departments, local councillors, hospitals, care homes and care at home businesses. Some are simply owner / self-employed businesses such as home help services.

Each business undergoes an annual / bi-annual review to show their sustainability. The initial application form is reviewed by various groups of people with lived experience and we have just started a mystery shopping process with a simple form for our people with lived experience to complete. The feedback is delivered verbally by me at the review or before, if possible, to the business.

2. Some of the support or pledges given back to the community by the businesses are as follows:
 - One hotel in Stockton hosts a monthly drop in whereby people living with dementia and their loved ones, people who's loved ones have gone into care or died, and some people who are simply lonely come to have a chat and drink as much coffee, tea and have cakes. This is supplied throughout the afternoon and the £1.00 cost is donated to a dementia charity. It is staffed by the hotel staff although I attend as it is a good networking event for me to listen to feedback and be informed of any needs personally or in the community which I can take back to the best people to deal with the concern / issue. This drop in often has the local community police in attendance and occasionally new businesses, a service lead or a department from the Council will attend to chat if they need feedback or views on a topic. This is where I remind people of local and national initiatives that provide safety and security such as Johns campaign, The Herbert Protocol, our carers support education program, and let people know what is going on in the community.
 - We do have similar drop ins ran by other businesses / groups on a formal and informal basis such as local cafes and community centres, public houses and sports facilities.
 - Music and dance events are in every one of our 6 towns. Business do charge but this is nominal, and the carer usually attends free. One of our larger venues has a monthly singalong songbook which is well attended. Again, I attend this as a good networking venue because of the wide range of abilities and areas of need it supports. This same venue supports entertainment for events requested by the Livewell hub and our transformation teams regarding their work with care homes. We also host a Hippy Happy Shake 2x yearly and try to use a venue in each of our towns for each tea dance. Things like this showcase the venue for their accessibility, and welcoming approach through their awareness training which is simply a person centred approach to dementia care.
 - Each of our main sporting facilities and some smaller ones are dementia friendly and all support health to a level for everyone's ability with staff who understand their individuality. Several of our people with dementia still attend swimming both independently and in supported groups. Feedback from these people is that they feel confident with the staff or organisation around them. They feel safe and confident enough to still use their community doing things they want to do. The sport also supports physical as well as mental health. Another business is a Yorkshire based football facility who supports our Stockton communities in various venues for chair based and walking football. Bowling clubs and parks are also DF accredited, and walks and bowls play a large part in our people's lives. This is indoor and outdoor.
 - Care Homes and care at home providers are accredited. 60% of our care homes have embarked on the care home accreditation. It is now actually on our assessment form that they are working with us and asks how many staff have undertaken the awareness as there is a minimum ask of 50%. Care homes however do strive to achieve 100% once they see its value. Some of our people's families in our care homes feed back positive and some negative comments and this means they comfortably know an issue will be addressed and they are given peace of mind.

- We now have care at home embarking on this using Skills for Care guidelines.
 - With our internal services, accreditation of the education hub led to me addressing all care academy workers and this meant they had all undertaken a person-centred approach to Dementia care awareness before embarking on jobs in our community and care homes.
 - Our director of H&SC requested all our staff in adult H&SC become a dementia friend and to this I have worked with the training department to start to create three tiers of training to current standards on dementia. Tier 1 is completed and commenced, Tier 2 is almost completed, and Tier 3 is planned this year.
 - Feedback from level one and its predecessor is very good and is bespoke to the departments. Staff say how they have implemented this in their work.
 - The businesses awareness has also had very positive feedback and often reinforces their good practice but explains why an issue may have arisen. It is allowing them to maintain their customer base for longer and for people to remain shopping or being entertained / dined with them for longer too. I do not have facts to footfall or if this has increased since we began however, feedback is very evident from our people living with this disease that we are creating those welcoming spaces in our communities and a variety of activities, accessible shops and a good customer service with their increased understanding of dementia and customer needs.
3. Our town centre improvement has started and is well underway. The plans for the Stockton urban park were shared publicly and amongst our groups and it created a lot of conversation as there were some people in my particular client group, who saw this as destroying their memories. Lots of discussion and a critique of the park has slowly helped them through this period of change. They now view this as an area where they can meet their families and friends, watch their grandchildren having fun and dine out any time of the day. It is an opportunity for a day out, not just a shopping centre. I have attached the work I did for our town centres improvement manager for regeneration and growth (see **Appendix 1**) which is a helpful piece of work to support all our towns as we invest in them to increase their public appeal and thus footfall.
 4. Transport has always been voiced as a problem. Working with our licensing team, we now have a mandatory requirement for our licensed drivers to be a dementia friend which has had good results. A few drivers have even rung to ask what they should do if they have encountered a problem. One driver was fully supported by our safeguarding team too for his own and the customers protection.
 5. The dementia friendly Stockton sticker is seen a safe place too. When seen on shop windows, on license driver's cabs and police cars, there is a degree of comfort there. I do work with our warm space's projects etc to try to make all our spaces dementia friendly.

Summary

From the point of view of our people living with dementia, their carers and the local businesses I deal with, our borough is certainly welcoming although some places are better than others. People are aware of the levelling up projects underway such as Billingham and Thornaby town centres.

There are areas that need to be more consistent such as litter left in shop doorways from homeless people using them during the night. Aggressive begging is still there but our people say this has reduced visibly.

The biggest bonus is in the staff awareness sessions for the businesses as it talks about how people with dementia see things and why people need more time in our busy world. It makes us look at what people can do and not what they cannot. Businesses soon realise that change does not always carry a cost, and small changes are often the most beneficial. A good example of this is one of our centre managers responded to a Facebook message saying they loved their new toilet facility for visually impaired and how it could benefit any disability however, she had a colostomy and needed a shelf to prepare her products. Within 24 hours and with minimal cost the shelf was in place with a very positive comment and thanks being made.

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