

Working together to enhance health in care homes

NHS project aims to break new ground in taking forward dementia care

THE growing number of people living with dementia nationally are to benefit from a new initiative poised for launch in care homes across Yorkshire and East Lancashire.

The pilot project aims to break new ground in the way existing home-grown skills and support across these communities can be harnessed to drive forward improvements to dementia care.

It forms an extra dimension to the work being carried out by the Airedale and Partners vanguard. The area was selected by NHS England last summer to research new ways of working to transform the care, and end-of-life care, for more than 7,600 residents in 248 residential and nursing homes.

The Airedale and Partners vanguard - which pools the expertise of the NHS, local authorities, care homes, technology experts, the voluntary sector and academia - will carry out the trial in partnership with Alzheimer's Society and experts from the School of Dementia Studies at the University of Bradford.

They will join forces to mobilise businesses, organisations, voluntary groups and individuals to pledge they will improve the lives of those affected by dementia living in local care homes.

They will work closely to develop, test and spread effective ways of mobilising people in social movements that improve health and care outcomes, and show a positive return on investment.

The three will reach out into every corner of society – they will be encouraging schools to get involved – as its plans to create a “Dementia Friend Community” gather pace.

They will also link up with a small cohort of care homes from Bradford, Airedale, Craven, Wharfedale and East Lancashire, who are part of the wider vanguard, to measure the venture's success.

The project is being backed by more than £100,000 from a brand new three-year support programme launched by NHS England, “*Health As A Social Movement*”.

Airedale and Partners is one of six vanguards nationally - and the only one in the Enhanced Health in Care Homes group – to be included in this initial wave of innovators.

“This is another great opportunity for our vanguard to shape the blueprint for the NHS and contribute to its future success,” said Helen Bourner, Programme Director of Airedale and

Partners. *“It is also testimony of the esteem in which the work that everyone involved in the health and care sector here is held.*

“Pooling our skills with the unrivalled local expertise of both Alzheimer’s Society and the University of Bradford creates the strongest partnership for taking this research work forward and testing out our new ideas.

“Social movements form a unique window into NHS improvement and while this is a project with strong local roots, it is one that ultimately could have huge potential for transforming dementia care nationally.”

George McNamara, Head of Integrated Care for Alzheimer’s Society said: *“With the right care and support we know that people with dementia can live well. Here in Bradford, Airedale, Craven, Wharfedale and East Lancashire, we have a unique opportunity to enhance the pioneering work already in place in the community to massively improve the quality of life for people with dementia.*

“There is a huge commitment to supporting the community and working together so we can help respond to the biggest health challenge our community faces. This innovative programme will build on existing local initiatives to improve the health of older people and pioneer new ways of delivering health and social care locally and at a national stage.”

Professor Murna Downs, Head of the School of Dementia Studies at the University of Bradford, said: *“We are delighted to be part of this pioneering initiative to improve the quality of life of people living with dementia, especially those living in care homes - arguably some of the most vulnerable members of society.”*

The project also has the advantage of being able to draw upon the expertise and insight offered by the programme’s three national partners - the New Economics Foundation; Nesta and Royal Society of Arts - to provide the overarching learning, development, support and evaluation. ■