



Press Release

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Alzheimer's Society and Sport England launch first dementia-friendly sport and physical activity guide

Alzheimer's Society and Sport England have joined forces to call on the sport and physical activity sector to commit to becoming dementia friendly and reduce the barriers that prevent many people affected by dementia from taking part in sport and physical activity.

The appeal was issued as Alzheimer's Society and Sport England today (Tuesday 12 February) launched the first dementia-friendly sport and physical activity guide at the Kia Oval cricket ground in London.

The guide has been developed in partnership with input from across the sports sector and people living with dementia, with National Lottery funding from Sport England. It is designed to help the sport and physical activity sector to support - and empower - people who are living with dementia to lead active lives and remain independent for as long as possible.

Dementia is one of the greatest challenges facing society today - there are 850,000 people living with the condition in the UK.

Yet many people with dementia say they experience barriers to taking part in activity. These could include difficulty in navigating around a sports facility or remembering how to use equipment in a leisure centre. Others say they worry about people's reactions, for example, staff not understanding their difficulties, or a lack of confidence in finding the right activities.

The practical guide aims to inform and educate individuals and organisations so they have a better knowledge of dementia and how it affects people. It also provides tools and guidance so that the

sector can help more people affected by dementia enjoy the benefits of staying active in a caring and understanding environment.

And by becoming dementia-friendly, leisure centres, sports clubs and gyms can reap the benefits of improved customer experiences and increased revenue.

Organisations delivering physical activity can use the guide to commit to becoming more dementia friendly in three areas:

1. **people** – raising awareness of dementia amongst employees and how it might affect people, along with training and support
2. **programme** – planning, adapting and designing sport and physical activity opportunities activities so that they are dementia friendly
3. **place** – auditing the physical environment through the lens of the needs of people living with dementia and adapting it accordingly - for example signage, lighting, floor patterns and marking.

With 225,000 people developing dementia each year - that's one person every three minutes – being dementia friendly will help organisations retain and build on existing custom, both from people living with the condition and from carers, families and friends.

As well as leisure centres, sports clubs and gyms, the guide can also be used by any individual or group looking to deliver physical activity such as sports coaches, personal trainers, physiotherapist and occupational therapists or community leaders.

It also highlights a selection of activities and ideas suitable for delivery in a variety of settings such as community halls, care homes and other non-traditional physical activity venues.

The launch is backed by people with dementia and pioneering figures from across the sport and the physical activity sector.

Tracey Shorthouse, 48, a former community staff nurse who lives near Folkestone, Kent, was diagnosed with young onset Alzheimer's and Posterior Cortical Atrophy in 2015, regularly visits her local gym. She said:

"I have a little exercise routine that's really important to me because I know what's good for the heart is good for the head and it probably keeps the dementia at bay.

"My memory's not bad at all - my dementia affects balance and vision and although I always put on a brave face it's not all sweetness and light and can be scary but the gym has a feel-good factor.

"I feel lucky that the people at the gym are so supportive and I hope gyms and sports centres follow their lead because the benefits of everything from walking football to work-outs are socially and physically vital to people with dementia."

Worcester Warriors won a 2018 Alzheimer's Society Dementia Friendly Award for their work, led by the Premiership rugby club's disability lead Simon Northcott who said:

"We're really proud of the pioneering work we've done to make our club dementia-friendly and remove any barriers to leading active lives facing people living with the condition.

"We set up our Tackling Dementia Sports Café which gives people with dementia a chance to take part in sporting activities and we've provided a safe place on matchdays at our Sixways home for people with dementia to watch top-class sport.

"I'd like to think we've proved you don't have to stop doing the things you love because of a dementia diagnosis and, indeed, we've seen people use it as a spur to have a go at rugby for the first time which is truly inspirational."

LiveWire, the largest provider of leisure facilities in the Warrington area, is blazing a trail with a community hub designed to ensure a safe, welcoming environment for people affected by dementia. Managing Director Emma Hutchinson said:

"We want our community hub to be regarded as one of the UK's most dementia-friendly community facilities, so, from the first stages of the design process; we considered all aspects of the customer experience from lighting and layout to signage and colour scheme.

“But the dementia-friendly tone is set from the start - a friendly welcome from staff who are all Dementia Friends and now have a better understanding of the condition and how they can support people affected by dementia.”

Jeremy Hughes, Chief Executive Officer at Alzheimer’s Society, said:

“Dementia can devastate lives and it is vital that people with dementia are enabled and empowered to live the life they want in their community.

“Visiting a gym, sports centre or favourite leisure facility to take part in physical activity can be daunting for people with dementia, loved ones and friends – but with support and adjustments from sport and physical activity providers, they will remain active.

“We need the whole sector to unite against dementia by committing to the actions outlined in the guide and make employees Dementia Friends, so no one has to face dementia alone.”

The guide is part of a £1.7 million National Lottery-funded partnership with the Richmond Group of charities, bringing together 10 of the biggest charities in health to deliver projects to help people with long term health conditions to get active.

Commenting on the guide, Chief Executive Officer at Sport England Tim Hollingsworth, said:

“We want to transform the way the sport and physical activity sector thinks, acts and talks about dementia – with every leisure centre, community hall and sports club equipped with the resources to meet the needs of those living with the condition.

“Whether it’s a leisure facility management team, reception desk staff, an exercise professional leading a class, community coaches, or volunteers, we need them to make the small changes needed to support people affected by dementia to get active and keep active.

“Defeating dementia won’t happen overnight, but until that day, we must all pull together to create a dementia-friendly society and that is why I’m proud to support this guide and commend the sport and physical activity sector for uniting against dementia.”

- To find out more about the guide and how to get involved, please visit:
alzheimers.org.uk/sport

- Ends -

PDF of guide, images of launch event and case study/spokesperson interviews available on request

For more information please contact: Rob Stewart (077668 57100)

Notes to editors:

- According to 2013 Alzheimer's Society survey, leisure pursuits are among the top activities people with dementia want to do after a diagnosis and they should be supported to continue to do that.
- Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity. We provide information and support, fund research, campaign to improve care and create lasting change for people affected by dementia in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Dementia devastates lives. Alzheimer's Society research shows that 850,000 people in the UK have a form of dementia. By 2021, 1 million people will be living with the condition. This will soar to two million by 2051.
- Dementia deaths are rising year on year and 225,000 will develop dementia this year - that's one every three minutes.
- Dementia costs the UK economy over £26 billion per year. This is the equivalent of more than £30,000 per person with dementia.
- The guide is part of a £1.7 million National Lottery funded partnership with the Richmond Group of Charities, bringing together 10 of the biggest charities in health to deliver projects to help people with long term health conditions to get active.
- Alzheimer's Society funds research into the cause, care, cure and prevention of all types of dementia and has committed to spend at least £150 million on research over the next decade. This includes a £50 million investment in the UK's first dedicated Dementia Research Institute.

- Until the day we find a cure, Alzheimer's Society will be here for anyone affected by dementia - wherever they are, whatever they're going through. Everything we do is informed and inspired by them.
- Let's take on dementia together. Volunteer. Donate. Campaign for change. Whatever you do, unite with us against dementia.
- Alzheimer's Society relies on voluntary donations to continue our vital work. You can donate now by calling 0330 333 0804 or visiting alzheimers.org.uk.
- Follow us on Twitter and Instagram @Alzheimerssoc
- Like us on Facebook
- Alzheimer's Society YouTube channel www.youtube.com/AlzheimersSociety
- Alzheimer's Society Press Office: 0207 423 3595 **Email:** press@alzheimers.org.uk

About Sport England

Sport England is a public body and invests up to £300 million National Lottery and government money each year in projects and programmes that help people get active and play sport.

It wants everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or level of ability, to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. That's why a lot of its work is specifically focused on helping people who do no, or very little, physical activity and groups who are typically less active - like women, disabled people and people on lower incomes.