

Special Feature

Dementia Return Service

The Dementia Return Service Scheme uses local volunteers to help carers of people with memory problems, such as dementia. Volunteers go out and search if someone in their local town or village with dementia goes missing. We know carers hold off ringing the police as they do not want to bother them and by the time they are desperate enough to do so, often the person can have gone a long way or come to harm. The idea of this scheme is to get volunteer neighbours out as quickly as possible after the person has gone missing so we can retrieve them quickly and safely.

The scheme requires a minimum commitment from volunteers, all they need is a mobile phone and a willingness to respond when there is a need, ONLY if they are in the area and free. This is a world-first scheme being funded by the national lottery silver dreams fund for older people, and being piloted in Oxfordshire and Northants. It encourages us especially to use fit older people to support other less able older people, but anyone over the age of 18 can sign up as a volunteer.

We pre-register people with dementia on our database so we have all their details to hand and a photograph as well, and then we can get these straight over to volunteers who have said they are available, via their mobile. Our call centre tells the volunteers where to search so it is



a co-ordinated effort; we also liaise with the police on behalf of the carer. The scheme does what it says on the tin, it is very much a 'Neighbourhood' scheme.

Both carers and volunteers can register on our website www.ourturn.org.uk or by ringing: 0116 229 3118

(Neighbourhood Watch head office). There are more details and leaflets available on our

website, I also have hard copies of leaflets and some posters due early next week, if this would help. I know local communities can respond well to this as I have a village in Northants (where the project has just gone live this week) where around 40% of people in the village have signed up!

I live in West Oxfordshire (North Leigh), and across the county, West Oxon has the highest number of people with memory problems registered and more carers registering people every day. But there are the lowest number of volunteers, which is not a good sign considering it is my home district! If you have friends or colleagues anywhere in West Oxon or more widely across the county who might be prepared to volunteer, please do spread the word.

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