

Report to the Northampton Borough Council Panel: St. Peter's Memory Cafe, Weston Favell.

#### Introduction:

My name is Eileen Fox and I am a Lay Pastoral Minister at St Peter's Church. I have been a volunteer for the Alzheimer's Society since 2011 and helped at three of their Dementia Cafes. My husband had suffered from dementia which was what had motivated me to want to support those who were struggling with this disease and their carers. Last January we heard that the funding had been withdrawn, which was devastating news to all who had attended, so after speaking to the Ops Manager & Services Manager at the Alzheimer's Society, as a church we decided to set up a Memory Cafe in our church hall. Two volunteers who had worked with me at the Dementia Cafes were prepared to assist and we also had six more people volunteer from the congregation who had cared for their own family members with dementia. The Diocese of Peterborough has run two courses on Dementia-Friendly Churches, which I have attended.

#### What the Cafe provides:

We meet monthly on the third Thursday of each month from 2 – 4 pm (apart from December when we meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday). We set out the tables and chairs in the hall and we provide tea or coffee as the people arrive. Later at about 3 pm we refresh their drinks and bring round cakes and biscuits. They are given name stickers so we can soon learn their names and they ours. The cakes are provided mainly by the congregation and volunteers on a rota system, which works well. There is no charge to those attending although we welcome occasional donations. We invite speakers from a variety of helping organisations to come along for a brief talk (about 15 min) and display the whole range of information provided by them and by the Alzheimer's Society to be available. We put table games on each of the tables and have some floor games for those interested. (These were donated by the Alzheimer's Society who also notified all the previous attendees of their Cafe of our new cafe opening) which was much appreciated..

#### Attendances & Activities:

The first meeting last May had 15 people come and the attendance has risen to 24 (so far) and last month we had six new people (3 with dementia & 3 carers) This is a mixture of people with dementia and their carers and occasionally by some who suspect they have a memory problem. The main activity is of fellowship and informal support in a relaxed atmosphere and the support they get from one another is immense. The volunteers all mingle and encourage friendly chatter and pick up any particular distress, so there is always the opportunity for them to speak to someone quietly about their particular concerns. The Dementia Support Worker from the Alzheimer's Society calls in each session so can initiate further help to anyone needing it. Many of the people attend the Society's Singing for the Brain activity weekly too so they particularly enjoyed the carol singing at the Christmas meeting when one of our choir members came to play the keyboard. During the summer we went on a canal trip, which was donated by one of our volunteers and we were taken to the canal in an old Red Northampton bus, driven by an enthusiast who was also a carer.

The St Peter's Memory Cafe is an open one so anyone who has concerns about dementia can come along. We can provide encouragement to access the Memory Assessment Team regarding a diagnosis if not already obtained, so they then can benefit from the services provided to assist them

and their families. Several of our members are now attending the new Memory Matters group which is being run by the Alzheimer's Society, but funded by Northamptonshire Carers, which enables the carers to go into a support group whilst their relatives with dementia are encouraged to do activities which will stimulate their brains and lead to feelings of well-being. We received some training from an Occupational Therapist on the types of activities which are used by the Memory Assessment Team in their Cognitive Stimulation Therapy groups, which can be offered to those newly diagnosed. I am involved in the Northampton Memory Matters group with another of the volunteers of the Cafe and the response so far, after two monthly meetings, has been encouraging.

At the recent Dementia-Friendly churches training session I learnt that the Diocese hopes to establish a network of at least two or three people who are knowledgeable in dementia to each of the deaneries. We also learned of ways to communicate with dementia sufferers at the various stages of the disease, which I believe would be useful to share with the carers. We are considering holding some Dementia Friends training which we will be discussing with the Management committee. I have already delivered a session for Lay Pastoral Ministers at their training course.

I hope this information is of use and I am happy for anyone from the Panel to visit us at St Peter's Memory Cafe, should it be thought beneficial. I can be contacted on 01604 469998.