

August 2018



University Secures Major Lottery Grant for Dementia Meeting Centre Programme

The University of Worcester has been awarded a major grant from the National Lottery to support people and families living with dementia across the UK.

The University's Association for Dementia Studies has been awarded a £587,000 grant from the Big Lottery Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK towards its Meeting Centres Support Programme.

Over the next three years, the funding will support communities across the UK to establish Meeting Centres for people and families affected by dementia.

Professor Dawn Brooker, Director of the Association for Dementia Studies at the University of Worcester who is leading the project, said: "This National Lottery funding will have a significant impact on many people's lives. The numbers of people affected by dementia continues to rise with little hope of an early cure. The aim is to help communities across the UK to establish Meeting Centres by providing people with a ready means of learning about the model, getting practical advice on how to establish a Meeting Centre, training staff and supporters, finding funding and sustaining help and support for the longer term."

Meeting Centres originated in the Netherlands. They are a local resource, operating out of ordinary community buildings, offering warm and friendly expert support to people living at home with dementia. At the heart of the Meeting Centre is a social club where people can meet to have fun, talk to others, and get great help that focusses on what they need.

For further information, please contact:
The Press Office on 01905 857517 or 07919 293757 or by email at press@worc.ac.uk

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The University of Worcester, in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, completed research to learn about Meeting Centres from the Netherlands and evaluate pilot projects in the UK, Italy and Poland.

Two pilot projects were set up in the UK, one in Droitwich Spa in Worcestershire and another in Leominster in Herefordshire. This has inspired others to establish Meeting Centres in a number of locations across the UK, with other communities keen to get started.

A proposal was submitted to the Big Lottery Fund to help more communities across the UK to establish Meeting Centres for people and families affected by dementia.

The grant will help to establish a National Reference Group, with representatives from across the four nations, which will have the voice of people affected by dementia at its heart. This will be linked closely to a new Community of Learning and Practice, comprising representatives from the existing sites and other interested parties. Existing resources and training approaches will be developed and workshops will be held for those interested in starting Meeting Centres in their communities. A help-desk will be in place early on for existing, new and pre start-up centres. Organisations will be encouraged and facilitated to link up and share practice.

“Thanks to National Lottery players, this funding will help to build real capacity across the UK so that Meeting Centres can form a backbone of community-based active support to people and families living with dementia across the UK,” said Professor Brooker. “Our ultimate goal is a Meeting Centre in every community.”

Jeremy Hughes, CEO of the Alzheimer's Society, added: “Working on the Meeting Centres Support Programmes in partnership with the University of Worcester, we have been able to really put the programme through its paces and hone in on the most effective practices, establishing this innovative approach and ensuring it best contributes to improved quality of life for people with dementia and their carers. It is a really exciting prospect for this to be rolled out in more communities, becoming available to more people affected. This is why Alzheimer's Society, alongside our services to support people today, will continue to invest in researching new approaches like Meeting Centres.”

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Joe Ferns, UK Funding Director at the Big Lottery Fund, said: “We’re proud to be using National Lottery funding to help increase support for people living with dementia, their families and their friends. It will be great to see communities coming together to set up more and more meeting centres across the UK, helping people to access the support they need.”

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

Information about the Meeting Dem research and films from the Meeting Centres are available at [Dementia Project \(MEETINGDEM - JPND\) - University of Worcester](#)

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