

Dear Carer,

We are writing to all those carers who are registered with us who are looking after someone with dementia to give some background to progress around changes to the dementia services in Hertfordshire.

The great news is that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) is investing an extra £260,000 into the services, which are designed with people living with dementia, low level memory loss or mild cognitive impairment and their families and carers at its heart. The services will build on the work of many organisations already providing valuable services for local people.

Following a recent commissioning exercise HCC has decided the service will be provided in three parts - **Activities, peer support and single point of access; one to one support; and specialist dementia carer support**. More details are outlined below.

The new service model for peer support and activities will be delivered through a partnership led by Age UK Hertfordshire and is aimed at offering a wider choice both in terms of what activity is undertaken as well as location and timing. The extra funding from HCC will go towards this work.

There are 57 activity groups currently run by the Alzheimer's Society. During February people involved in delivering the new services will be attending each group to explain the changes – we will be covering the 14 carer groups.

You may have heard about activities such as Singing for the Brain and Dementia Cafes provided by Alzheimer's Society stopping at the end of February. I wanted to reassure you that HCC has asked Age UK Herts to ensure existing groups continue operating throughout March, April and May 2017. Age UK Herts is working hard to continue the room bookings and activities wherever possible to provide a continuity of service. If different arrangements need to be made you will be informed.

As well as being partners with Age UK Herts, we were also successful with our bid to host specialist Dementia Nurses (Admiral Nurses) within Carers in Hertfordshire. These nurses will work with carers of people with dementia who are at risk of crisis. They will use their clinical expertise to advise and support them to enable them to maintain their own health and wellbeing and carry on caring if they wish. This service is currently being provided by Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (HPFT) and we are working with them to enable a smooth transition of the nursing service to us from April 2017. HPFT should continue to accept referrals and support carers until then.

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The following key principles regarding the dementia service have been agreed:

1. There will be a gradual, phased change to dementia services. That change will mean **more** opportunities to meet other carers and attend groups, not less.
2. All existing groups and attendees of groups will be consulted about what services are available going forward. Where possible this will mean gradual change and your existing groups will continue to receive support. A timeline will be provided detailing what changes happen when.
3. Existing staff will have the opportunity to apply for roles that are advertised. Every person who has support now will continue to be supported.
4. Alzheimer's Society continues to be important partners and are recognised as experts. It is for this reason that they will work with others to continue to support newly diagnosed people with Dementia, and offer support for anybody after diagnosis that needs it.
5. Age UK Hertfordshire, Carers in Hertfordshire, Herts Independent Living, Herts Mind Network and their partners bring a range of expertise both in running activity services and in supporting people with dementia, their carers and families.

The three different parts of service are as follows:

Activities, peer support and single point of access - Led by Age UK Hertfordshire with a range of partners, including Carers in Hertfordshire. Key features of this new service are:

- A single telephone number to access all services (0300 123 4044)
- Accessible, flexible support: Local groups and individual support as well as support in the evening and at weekends so that more people can access the service(s).
- For everyone: Support will be available for people with, waiting for or without a diagnosis, and for their carers.
- Designed by you: Groups will be set-up in response to needs rather than being pre-defined in relation to location or activity. Groups will be supported to self-run, or could receive longer-term support according to individual needs.
- Information and advice: Available from an Advice Quality Standard accredited service, for example; help with benefits or creating a Lasting Power of Attorney.

One to one support - Provided by Alzheimer's Society.

- Available to any newly diagnosed person with dementia and their carer for six months as well as people after diagnosis if needed
- Support can include home visits, information, training and guidance, care through bereavement or creating support plans
- Monthly phone calls for some service users with lower levels of need.

Specialist dementia carer support - Provided by Carers in Hertfordshire and Dementia UK. This will be intensive support for carers in crisis, or near crisis. This support may include therapy, tailored training, relationship management, specific mental health support and liaison with other health and social care professionals.

If you have any questions or concerns a helpline will be running from 23rd January 2017 via HertsHelp on 0300 123 4044. Don't forget we also have a Dementia Involvement Worker and our Dementia Carers' Forums – the next meeting is on Thursday 23rd March in Watford and further details will be sent to you. To get in touch with us please call 01992 58 69 69 or email contact@carersinherts.org.uk

Yours sincerely,
Michèle Stokes, Chief Executive