Dementia Friends in Japan

Dementia Awareness Week Conference

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Overview

• Beginnings
• Developments
• The picture now...
• Next steps
• Learning opportunities
Beginnings

- Stigma and ignorance
- Name change
- Raise public awareness
- Dementia friendly communities
- Dementia Friends – key to achievement
Developments (1)

• Dementia Friends started in 2005 – government funded

• ‘pyramid selling’ model – but with nicer people!

• 2 pathways: co-partnership with local councils or ‘in-house’ within businesses

• Both pathways develop Dementia Champions who create Dementia Friends
Developments (2)

• Who can become Dementia Friends?
  – all comers welcome

• Dementia awareness-raising sessions
  – mandatory gateway

• Understanding into action
  – what Dementia Friends can do next

• Quality improvement of sessions & dissemination of best practice
  – vital for sustainability
The picture now... (1)

• 2008  1m  Dementia Friends target reached
• Now   6m  Dementia Friends
  – 105,000 are Dementia Champions
• 2018  8m  Dementia Friends target
• 6m DFs = 4.6% of Japan’s 127m population
• Now   5m with dementia
• 2025  7m with dementia (1 in 5 over-65s)
Who are Dementia Friends in Japan?

- 95% – community  5% – businesses
- 2/3 are women
- 60% are aged 50+
- 1.4m are aged 70+
- Teens make up 15 %
- Regional variables – 1% to 60% of the population are DFs
Next steps (1)

What Dementia Friends actually do?

• Remove stigma & strengthen positive attitudes
• Wish to do more ... practical help
• Dementia Champions and local councils provide opportunities – mainly collective
• Build on existing networks & generic services and skill-up for Dementia Friends
Next steps (2)

Hybrid model = local councils + private company

• Read meters, connect utilities and take payments
• All workforce are Dementia Friends
• 1,200 workforce make face-to-face contact with customers: especially people with dementia
• Workers – communicate sensitively
  – follow a check-list
  – look out for tell-tale signs
  – report their concerns
Next steps (3)

Multi-purpose task force

• After skill-up sessions Dementia Friends join:
  – befriending ‘buddy bank’ networks
  – ‘reassurance visits’ networks
  – volunteering for community & carers’ groups

• Some Dementia Friends form their own groups:
  – exercise club or informal meeting spaces

• Skill-up sessions = confidence, competence & friendship
Next steps (4)

SOS Wanderers Network

• SOS Wanderers Network = neighbourhood watch *style*
• Purpose: care for neighbours with dementia who wander
• Action: Dementia Friends support coordinated search
• SOS covers 60% of Japan, using low-cost community resources
• In 2014, 10,322 wanderers missing with 388 found dead
• SOS slogan: ‘It’s OK to wander...go and wander...it’s natural for people with dementia to do so... we’ll come and find you...and get you home safely...’
Learning opportunities?

• Dementia sessions – quality & interaction
• Support for Dementia Friends to take ‘actions’
• Keys for developing concerted actions
  – leadership from Dementia Champions & local councils
  – Co-partnership with existing networks & groups
• SOS approach: low-cost community resources & high yield

Thank you

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