

# Palmerston Residential Home marks Dementia Awareness Week

**Palmerston Residential Home in East Belfast is marking Dementia Awareness Week (Monday 18 - Sunday 24 May) with the official opening of a coffee shop, library and shop, which have all been especially designed for their dementia residents and families.**



Mrs Geraldine Gilpin, Chief Executive of Abbeyfield & Wesley Housing Association, which owns and manages Palmerston Residential Home, explains the importance of these facilities:

“By focusing on the person first, and then the dementia, our care team provides dementia residents with daily living activities which keep the mind and body stimulated and active. With specialist support and care residents often regain lost skills, are empowered and regain a sense of purpose and identity.

“The coffee shop, library and shop have been integrated into Palmerston Residential Home for a number of reasons. The coffee shop provides somewhere for residents and their family and friends to go during a visit and is a wonderful relaxed opportunity for an everyday activity to be undertaken.

“The library is not only somewhere for residents but also visitors to enjoy looking at books and also often provides a much needed stimulus for conversation. The computer and Skype facility help to ensure that regular contact can be maintained with friends and relatives who do not live locally. Google and Google Earth generate discussion on various topics and yet again can help prompt conversation.”



Mrs Gilpin continues:

“Similarly, the shop not only provides residents with access to essential items, but also aids in alleviating anxiety. For example, if a resident with dementia becomes distressed because they have “rolled back in time” and they think they have to make the dinner for their children, they can go to the shop and get items such as tins of soup.

“It also provides a channel for visitors to create meaningful memories while undertaking relatively routine activities, for example; children can go to the shop with their granny or great granny to buy sweets, in a safe environment.”

Marsha Tuffin, Manager of Care Home & Dementia Services at Palmerston Residential Home, and winner of Dementia Personality of the Year at the UK Dementia Awards last year, discussed some of the other important initiatives which are being developed to assist dementia residents:

“We are currently in the process of exploring a ‘Men in Sheds’ initiative. The majority of residents in care homes have tended to be women and as a result activities are often geared towards more traditionally female pursuits.

“‘Men in Sheds’ aims to encourage male residents and relatives to come together to enjoy a range of activities such as carpentry, model building or to discuss football etc. A “shed” is being created within Palmerston’s grounds where the men will be able to go and socialise. The long-term plan is that this could be opened to men in the local community who have dementia.

“We are also keen to develop a themed “spa “bathroom. Rather than the bathroom being a place where personal care is undertaken, the spa bathroom will have soft lighting, gentle music, fragrant aromas and a tranquil atmosphere – quite different from a stark, clinical area.

“Getting bathed becomes an activity, a pleasurable experience, rather than a “task”. It can make it easier for someone with dementia who cannot understand why someone is trying to help them get washed if they think they are going to a spa.

“In addition, we are committed to raising the profile of dementia issues and are working closely with the local community to dispel myths about dementia. This involves delivering workshops to local businesses to increase staff understanding and awareness of dementia.”

Commenting on the benefits that residents receive from such a person-centred approach to care, Beatrice McConkey, whose mother Annie Dawson is a resident in Palmerston Residential Home, said:

“The coffee shop is great, we can come here and have a chat and enjoy being by ourselves. Everyone is happy here and that makes such a difference to family. If I don’t get to see my mother for a few days at least I know that she is well cared for and happy. Residents aren’t just existing here, but actually living, and living a good full life.”

“Supporting a family member with dementia can be very challenging and Palmerston provides an environment that eases this pressure.

“By providing care and support, residents’ needs are continually assessed and

reviewed using a multi-disciplinary approach involving all relevant health and social care professionals as well as the resident and family.

“The atmosphere is friendly, homely and strives to be a centre of excellence, continually improving and achieving standards that residents require and deserve.”

## **Ends**

Note to editors:

Palmerston Residential Home is a purpose built care provision located on the Palmerston Road in East Belfast. The 38 bed facility incorporates 20 dementia beds and 18 residential beds. Palmerston Residential Home caters for people who may be; frail elderly; require dementia care; have a physical disability; have a sensory impairment and are unable to live independently. There are two separate wings within Palmerston Residential Home, one for those with advanced dementia (the Lewis wing) and the other for frail elderly people who may have less advanced dementia. For further information log onto [www.abbeyfieldandwesley.org.uk](http://www.abbeyfieldandwesley.org.uk) or telephone Abbeyfield & Wesley Society on 028 93363558.

Pic 1: Palmerston Residential Home residents Leon Farr and Fred Wilson.

Pic 2:Marsha Tuffin, Manager of Care Home & Dementia Services at Palmerston Residential Home, and winner of Dementia Personality of the Year at the UK Dementia Awards last year, is pictured with Palmerston resident Peggy Martin

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Demography of Dementia in Northern Ireland:

There are around 19,000 people with dementia in Northern Ireland. A steady growth in these numbers is expected over the next 25 years (expected to rise to 61,000 by 2051). Two thirds of those with late onset dementia are women.

Although dementia occurs in working age people it is comparatively rare. Dementia is generally a condition of older or extremely old people. Fewer than 1,000 of the people with dementia in Northern Ireland are below age 65. This brings problems for them in accessing services that generally are geared up for older people. People with learning disabilities and in particular, people with Down's syndrome have an increased genetic risk of developing dementia at an early age.

Source: Dementia Services Development Centre Northern Ireland's "Demography of Dementia in Northern Ireland" (June Andrews, May 2012):

About Abbeyfield & Wesley Housing Association:

Abbeyfield & Wesley ([www.abbeyfieldandwesley.org.uk](http://www.abbeyfieldandwesley.org.uk)) provides a range of high quality accommodation and services to older people throughout Northern Ireland from purpose built apartments, right through to sheltered bungalows and flats, supported sheltered houses and residential care

Abbeyfield & Wesley Housing Association has a range of housing options for older people - independent living for older people in sheltered housing with scheme supervisors; supported sheltered housing which has higher staffing levels and provision of meals; and residential care which is staffed 24 hours a day.

The Abbeyfield & Wesley society have three guiding principles:

- Older people have an important role to play amongst their families and friends in their community.
- Overcoming loneliness and insecurity can make all the difference to an older person's well being and quality of life.
- Local people have an essential part to play in helping older people in their community.