

Living Together with Dementia

A mental health training package that helps couples when one partner has dementia, promoting self-treatment and slowing the disease progression.



ENTREPRENEUR:

Andrew Balfour

BASED:

London

What does it do?

Living Together with Dementia is a mental health intervention, which develops new tools to help people with dementia, their partners and families.

Need

There are currently 700,000 people with dementia in the UK. It is predicted that as a result of an ageing population that figure is predicted to increase rapidly to over a million. A lack of support for carers and people with dementia means that many are prematurely placed in a residential home or psychiatric hospital. As a result, both the emotional and financial cost of care is significant.



Solution

Living Together with Dementia seeks to develop innovative ways of supporting couples when one partner has dementia. It involves therapeutic sessions that encourage the person with dementia to engage in tasks they can still manage, whilst having the close support of their partner. This will radically improve every day life in practical ways; maintain the understanding and communication of the carer and thus reduce stress and maintain emotional and mental wellbeing for longer. Care in the home is most often preferred by those who are given a diagnosis of dementia. It also results in considerable savings for health and social care services. The aim of the Living Together with Dementia pilot is to design a training package that can be rolled out nationally and delivered by frontline mental health and social care staff to couples facing the challenge of a dementia diagnosis.

Health Launchpad has provided seed funding plus professional support to assist Andrew Balfour in the development of the pilot and to produce a user friendly step by step guide. The Health Launchpad team is also exploring the commissioning potential of the intervention and potential business models. The final goal is to establish a financially sustainable social enterprise around a service and customised training package plus ongoing support to ensure maximum efficacy and social impact. The research programme designing the intervention and training materials is due to be completed in December 2010.

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