

Memory group's future secured



A support group for people living with dementia in Salisbury has received a new lease of life after securing partial funding from Wiltshire charity Alzheimer's Support and a local benefactor.

The 14 members of the Laverstock Memory Support group meet weekly to discuss their experiences of living with dementia. In the informal, supportive group atmosphere, memories and jokes are shared, frustrations aired and any lapses in concentration or recall cheerily accepted. As one member explained: "we are all in the same boat here. This group is a highlight of the week for me – I wouldn't miss it."

A parallel support group for family carers meets in a separate room to share their own experiences and gain mutual support.

The groups, run by dementia trainer and consultant, Elizabeth Bartlett, and her husband, John, in their own home, lost funding from Wiltshire Council in recent contract changes. But Alzheimer's Support, which now runs dementia services across Wiltshire, stepped in to support the group. It was delighted to receive a donation from the Mackie family in memory of the renowned surgeon, Bonar Mackie and his wife, Jennifer, has made this possible.

Richard Mackie said: "Elizabeth was a tremendous support to my family when my father was affected by dementia and we wanted to repay that support. We are so impressed with the work of the Laverstock Memory Group and of Alzheimer's Support across Wiltshire. So we are delighted to be able to make this donation and make a difference to help other families into the future."

Alzheimer's Support CEO, Babs Harris, said: "We know how valuable this group is to both the members living with dementia and their husbands and wives who attend the carers group. Being able to talk openly about what it is like to live with dementia with other people is incredibly helpful to people affected. The relationships and informal support that come out of both groups is amazing to see."

Elizabeth Bartlett said: "People who are affected by dementia can often feel very isolated and afraid and, of course, this has an impact on their families. Fortunately through the Memory Support Group we can provide a safe and reassuring environment for people to face the enormous challenges created by this condition."

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