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**PRESS RELEASE - Immediate Release**

**Health Innovation Network launches *Peer Support for People with Dementia* resource pack**

The Health Innovation Network – the Academic Health Science Network for South London - has launched a resource pack to promote and encourage more support opportunities for people with dementia.

Bringing together examples of good practice and evidence-based guidance, the pack aims to help groups and organisations better support people with dementia in our south London communities.

Health Innovation Network Dementia Project Manager, Amy Semple said, “People with dementia and their carers say that peer support groups are important as they provide opportunities to speak to other people in a similar situation and provide social interaction, which often is much needed.

Amy added: “Most people, particularly those in the early stages of dementia also want to continue taking part in generic social clubs and activity groups within their communities, but for many, dementia can lead to social isolation.”

The resource pack introduces the concept of a ‘Peer Support System’ that recognises the value of social opportunities for people with dementia to meet others in the community, whether they are informal or structured opportunities, dementia specific or available to everyone to enjoy.

The Health Innovation Network conducted a mapping exercise which found a wide variation in provision of support for people with dementia in South London – with some limited or non-existent opportunities, particularly for ethnic minority groups, younger people with dementia and lesbian and gay people. Variation in support is, unfortunately

an issue reported by people with dementia across the whole of the UK, and the Health Innovation Network is aiming to change this by launching the resource pack.

Michael Edwards, Chair of Trustees, Lambeth Healthy Living Club, based in Stockwell, where people with dementia took part in short films for the pack, said, "This is going to be a truly useful resource. We are always trying to share our experience as a dementia-centred community and to learn from others' innovations."

The pack was developed in partnership with leading dementia and older people charities, with contributions from Innovations in Dementia, The Alzheimer's Society, AGE UK and Mental Health Foundation. The Health Innovation Network worked with people with dementia across south London, to provide case studies and contribute to the films within the pack.

**The pack is designed for:**

- Statutory, community and voluntary sectors who want to offer people with dementia the opportunity to meet others in a similar situation.
- People setting up, running or involved in peer support groups or community and activity groups which include, or could include people with dementia.
- People who are commissioning or funding services for people with dementia.

**The pack contains:**

- Case studies and films of people with dementia and their relatives talking about how important peer support is for them.
- Films of group facilitators and volunteers who support people with dementia
- Information on making existing groups dementia friendly with resources on improving the group environment and group activities.
- How to set up and run groups for people with dementia, including information on staff training, fundraising sources and evaluation aids.

**Ends**

For more information on the resource pack [which can be viewed here](#) contact Health Innovation Network Dementia Project Manager, Amy Semple: [a.semple@nhs.net](mailto:a.semple@nhs.net) 020 7188 7188

### **Partner quotes:**

**Innovations in Dementia**, Nada Savitch, Director, said: “People with dementia are all different and need different types of support – the strength of this resource is that it brings together ideas and advice from many different organisations with just one goal: to make sure people with dementia are supported well.”

**Alzheimer’s Society** Business Development Manager for London, Jo Vavasour, said: “We are proud to have supported the Health Innovation Network, with the development of their resource pack. Peer support, such as the Dementia Cafes that Alzheimer’s Society run can really help improve people’s quality of life. They give people with the condition and their carers the opportunity to socialise with others in similar situations and receive vital support.”

An **Age UK** spokesperson, Rebecca Barnham said, “This is a very useful resource for any organisation working with, or planning to work with people with dementia and their carers.”

### **About the Health Innovation Network:**

The Health Innovation Network is the Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) for South London. There are 15 AHSNs across England. We are a membership organisation focused on lasting system-wide improvements in patient and population health, strengthening relationships and capitalising on teaching and research strengths across South London.

We are driving lasting health improvements for our local communities across the following clinical priorities: diabetes, dementia, musculoskeletal, alcohol, cancer, with cross-cutting themes across patient experience, patient safety, clinical information and technology, wealth creation, education and training.