

# Annual Dementia Evaluation

**2025-2026**



# Service Overview

We are delighted to present the findings from this year's Royal Voluntary Service Annual Dementia Survey. Royal Voluntary Service host activity and support groups with people living with dementia, their carers, family and friends, in the following areas:

- **Dundee**
- **Scottish Borders**
- **Fife**
- **Northumberland**
- **Doncaster**
- **Kirklees**
- **Leeds**
- **Staffordshire**
- **Leicestershire**
- **Birmingham**
- **Wales**
- **West Sussex**

The survey provides an invaluable opportunity to hear directly from people living with dementia, and their carers / family members about their experiences of groups and the difference they make within local communities.

The feedback gathered helps us understand what is working well, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that our groups continue to provide meaningful in person support. It also enables us to demonstrate the impact of our services, celebrate achievements, and shape future developments based on the needs and aspirations of those we support.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to share their views. Your feedback is essential in helping us create welcoming, inclusive, and dementia-friendly environments where people can connect, build friendships, access support, and live well with dementia. We would also like to thank all of our funders, who support us in ensuring those affected by dementia have access to much needed group support and do not face their journey alone.

This report summarises the key findings from the survey and highlights the positive impact our dementia groups continue to have on individuals, carers, volunteers, and the wider community.



# Responses

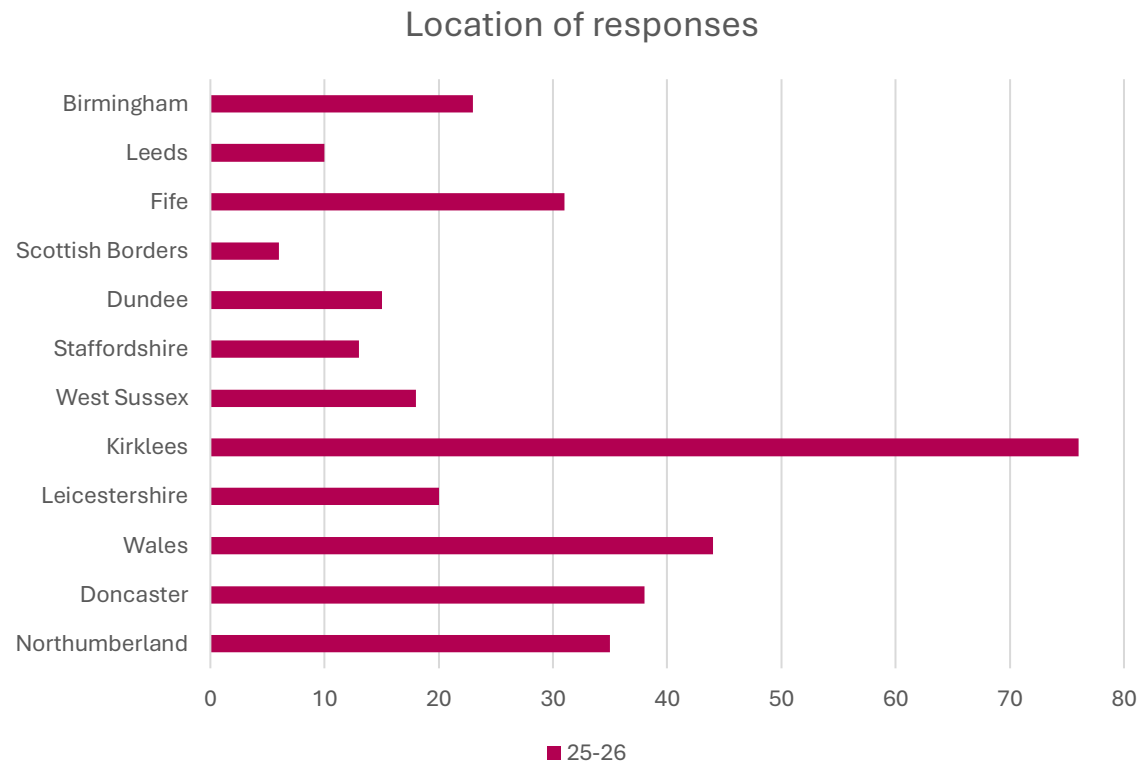
Gathering feedback from people living with dementia, as well as their carers, family members and friends, is essential in helping us shape and develop our services. Some families choose to complete the survey jointly, reflecting their shared experience of attending our groups. As not all respondents answered this question, percentages are based on the responses received.

**This year, we received 330 survey responses across all areas, of which 183 (55%) were from people living with dementia or a possible dementia**

Ongoing outcome data is collected throughout the year to help us understand the impact of our services. This includes baseline information gathered when an individual first begins attending the service, followed by a 3 to 6-month follow-up survey. There is no obligation to complete this, so responses are representative of those who have chosen to complete either both or part of the survey. Where completed, this allows us to assess changes over time and better understand the difference our services make for people living with dementia and their carers.

# Location

This year, questionnaires were distributed across all 12 areas in which our dementia groups operate. To maximise participation and accessibility, respondents were able to complete a paper copy at their local group or access an online version via a survey link. This flexible approach aimed to make it as easy as possible for people to share their feedback.



**“It brings me  
happiness”**

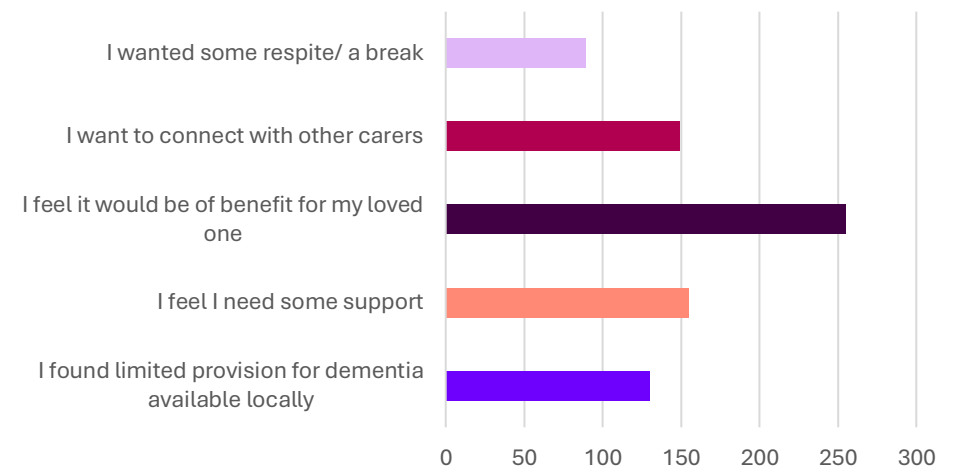
**(Member, living with  
dementia)**

# Reasons for accessing groups

As part of our baseline assessment, we ask carers about their reasons for joining a dementia group. The graph above represents a sample of 301 carers who joined us between August 2023 and the present day. The findings continue to show that the primary reason for attending is the belief that the group will benefit the person living with dementia. This reflects the commitment of carers to ensuring their loved one can access meaningful social interaction, activities and support.

However, the results also highlight the importance of recognising carers' own needs. Over **half (52%)** of carers told us they joined because they needed support themselves, while **50%** wanted the opportunity to connect with others in a similar situation. These findings reinforce the dual purpose of our dementia groups, providing valuable support and engagement for people living with dementia, while also creating a welcoming space where carers can access peer support, share experiences and reduce feelings of isolation.

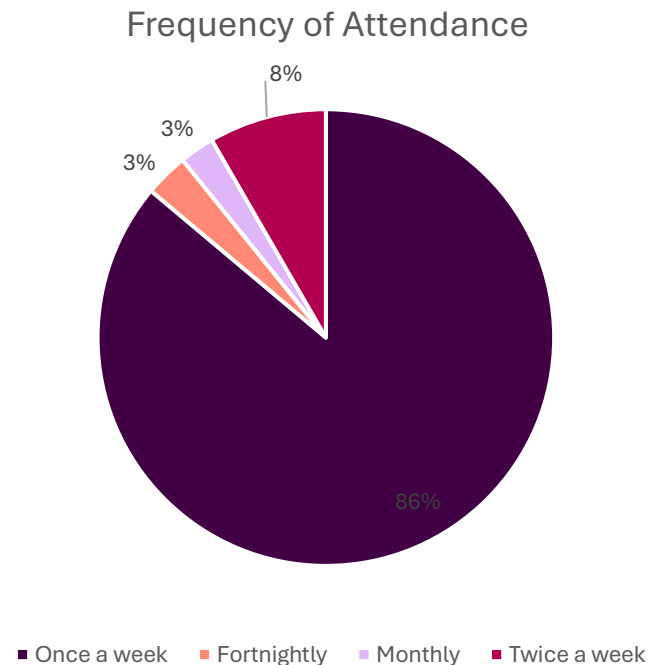
Reasons for joining group



**57 % of people who attend an RVS dementia group, do not attend any other community groups**

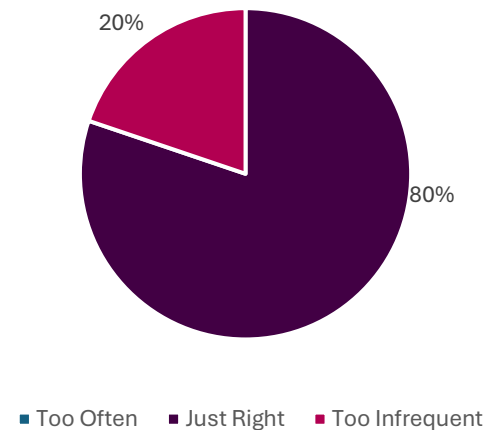
# Frequency of attendance

Most of the groups we deliver run on a **weekly** basis for two hours. There are a small number of groups that run monthly and fortnightly, whilst some run for 4 hours providing lunch and a longer session. We also offer flex to attendance, with some people choosing to attend on a fortnightly basis, or this may be how often they can make transport arrangements. Inline with our model of delivery, the majority of respondents attend group once a week, with some members joining us at a second groups to increase their regularity of attending, where additional support is identified and capacity allows.



# Frequency of attendance

Views on frequency of sessions



Whilst the majority of people feel that the current frequency of groups meets their needs, 20% of respondents told us they would like to attend more often. This was also reflected in the comments received, with 11 people specifically highlighting a desire for more frequent group sessions. Of those expressing this view, 85% already attend a group once a week, demonstrating the value they place on the support, social connections and sense of community that the groups provide.

A number of respondents also commented on the need for greater investment in dementia services to enable more opportunities for attendance. We share this aspiration and recognise the significant impact that regular group participation can have on the wellbeing of

people living with dementia and their carers. Whilst we would love to offer additional sessions, the current funding environment remains highly competitive. We continue to actively seek new funding opportunities and partnerships to sustain these groups as a priority and if the opportunity arises we would look to expand these essential services, ensuring that as many people as possible can access the support they need.

**Question: Is there anything we could do to improve our groups?**

**Answers: "Not a thing. just want more." (Group member living with dementia)**

**"To be honest No - if I didn't enjoy group I wouldn't come. Always leave with a smile on my face. Every session is different and really enjoyable. My husband has dementia and he loves attending and engages in the activities." (Carer)**

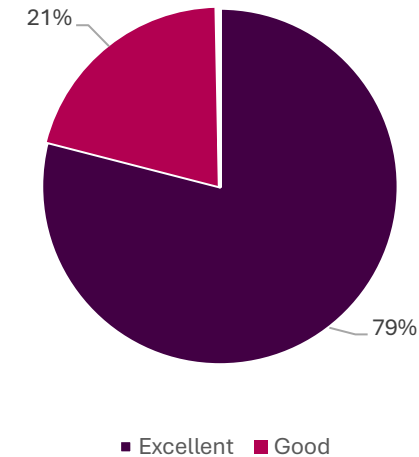
# Group Feedback

It is wonderful to see that **100%** of respondents rated the group as Excellent or Good. One person rated as Average (5 in 2025), an improvement on the 2025 responses and highlighting the success of our dementia group provision.

I've tried other groups but nothing compares to this.  
(Group member living with dementia)



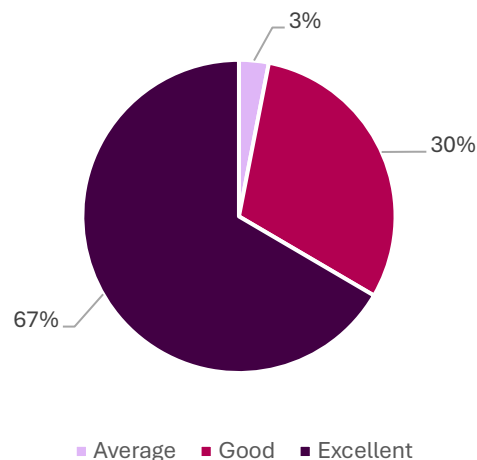
Overall, how would you rate the group?



We really look forward to the group. Great to meet with other carers and the staff are friendly, supportive and empathetic. It is a time to exercise and relax as at home I get very stressed with all the care and overwhelmed by the tasks I now have (Carer)

# Activity Choice

How would you rate the choice of activities at the group?



**97%** of people rated the activities within their dementia group as good or excellent, maintaining the same high level of satisfaction as in 2025. Providing a varied and engaging programme of activities remains a key feature of our groups, with local teams carefully designing sessions that can be enjoyed by people living with dementia and their carers alike. Activities are chosen to encourage participation, spark conversation, create shared experiences and, most importantly, ensure that group members have fun.

**I love all the activities and bingo. We have fun.**

**The team makes everyone feel welcome. Staff are friendly and helpful. Good choice of activities**

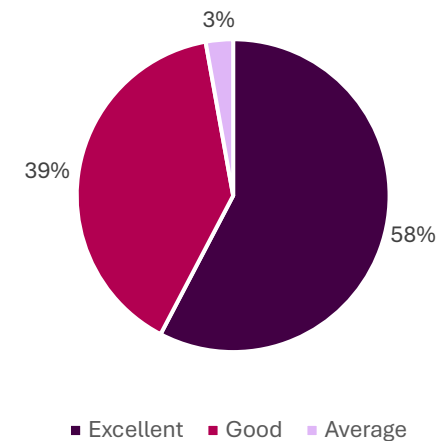
We are committed to listening to the views of those who attend our groups. Within this year's survey, several respondents suggested new activities they would like to see offered. We welcome this feedback and will work with individual groups to explore these ideas and introduce new activities where appropriate. By continuing to adapt and evolve our programmes, we can ensure our groups remain relevant, enjoyable and responsive to the interests of the people who attend them.



# Support Network

A supportive network is at the heart of any dementia group. Supportive networks enable individuals and families to access information, practical advice, and emotional support from others who understand the challenges they may face. Ultimately, these connections aim to promote wellbeing, reduce loneliness, and help people affected by dementia to live as independently and positively as possible. It is fantastic to see that 97% of those who completed this survey feel that by attending group they are provided with a supportive network.

How well does the group provide you with a supportive network?



**"The service is wonderful, team so supportive. I always know if I'm struggling there is someone to listen and help. Living with dementia can take its toll but knowing someone is there to listen is important. Thank you."**

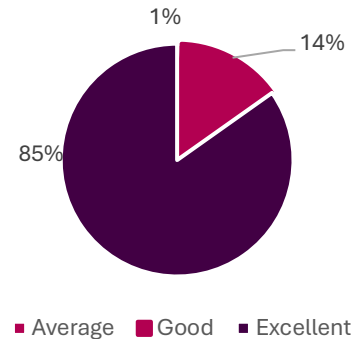
**"It is great meeting others. Being a carer is hard work. Coming here is such good fun and we laugh so much."**

**Initially I came to support my wife, but I can honestly say it has been beneficial to us both. The team are absolutely wonderful and work so hard. Nothing is too much trouble. I get support from other carers and we share issues and it is good to talk to others who are experiencing the same. We both enjoy the activities and have fun. We are blessed to be here (Carer)**

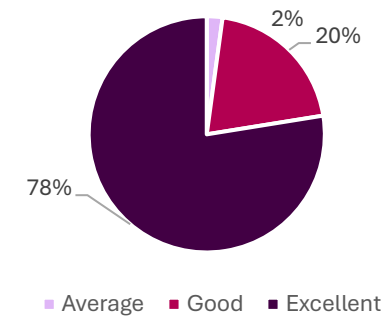
# Staff and Volunteers

Groups are facilitated by a dedicated staff member and supported by a team of wonderful volunteers. Volunteers are an essential part of RVS Dementia Groups, with around 60% bringing valuable lived experience of dementia, either as current or former carers.

How would you rate the support you receive from staff and volunteers at the group?



How would you rate the staff and volunteer knowledge and support of dementia?



The impact of this support is reflected in our survey findings, with 99% of respondents rating the support they receive from the team as Good or Excellent. We continue to receive fantastic feedback about our local teams and the help, advice and guidance provided, demonstrating the difference that both staff and volunteers make to the lives of people affected by dementia every day.

Please don't ever change - all of you don't realise what you do for us.  
Thank you

# Staff and Volunteers

**We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of our volunteers. Their generosity, commitment and compassion make a lasting difference to people living with dementia and their carers. Whether it is sharing lived experience, offering a listening ear, helping activities run smoothly, cooking lunch, or simply providing a warm welcome, our volunteers are an invaluable part of the RVS Dementia Groups and the supportive communities they help create.**

Many carers choose to remain involved as volunteers after their caring role has changed, using their experience, understanding and compassion to support others on a similar journey. Their contribution is invaluable in creating the warm, welcoming and supportive environment that makes our groups so successful.



**When I first started group I came to support my husband, but I am now a volunteer and support the team whilst at group. I really enjoy this role as I feel like I am giving something back. The team are so supportive. I wish there was more groups like this as they truly benefit us. Keep up the good work.” (Carer and Volunteer)**

**“This group is a lifeline for a lot of us. It is so friendly and informative. The volunteers do a great job and staff member is excellent at her job.” (Carer)**

# Group Impacts

In our follow-up surveys we asked people to rate the group, of the 151 who completed a follow up survey, 142 (94%) rated the group as 5 out of 5, and 9 (6%) as 4 out of 5. In both evaluations we asked people to tell us more about the types of impacts the group have for them.

**100% of people (321)  
would recommend a  
group to a friend**

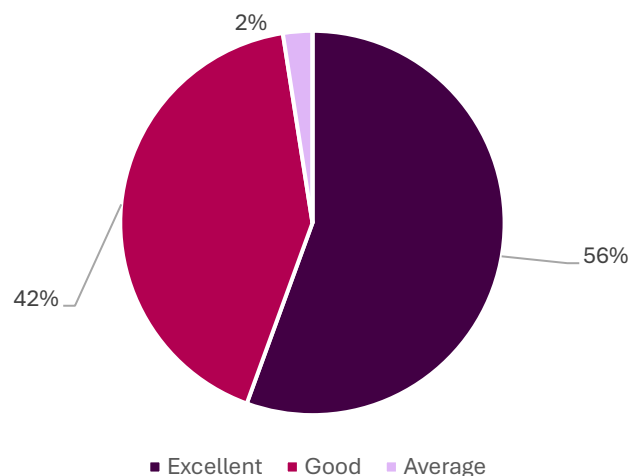
I enjoy coming to group.  
This is the group that  
does the most  
stimulating activities  
that help my husband.  
There is something new  
every week.

The group is excellent, we  
love it. A lovely group of  
people and fantastic  
activities. Very friendly  
and supportive and we  
look forward to it every  
week.



# Social Contact

To what extent does the group help increase your social contact?



Living with dementia can often lead to feelings of isolation, uncertainty, and loss of confidence for both individuals and their carers. By bringing people together in a safe, welcoming environment, we aim to create opportunities to build meaningful relationships, share experiences, and provide mutual encouragement.

96% of people told us that attending their dementia group has helped increase their social contact (95% in 2025). This reinforces the importance of providing regular, consistent opportunities for people affected by dementia to connect with others. Weekly groups continue to play a vital role in reducing isolation, building friendships, and creating a sense of belonging. Year after year, some attendees tell us that their dementia group is often the only time they leave the house and engage with others, and this year's feedback was no different:

**My husband and I both benefit from the service. We have made new friends and the members of the group support each other. If I have needed support the team have always been there.” (Carer)**

**I am made to feel very welcome. Everyone is so friendly. This is the only interaction I have with people beside my family outside of the house.**

# Support

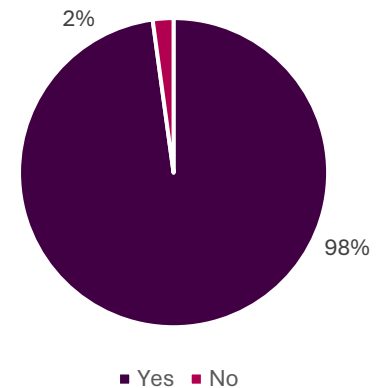
Feedback from our annual survey was overwhelmingly positive, with **98%** of respondents reporting that their dementia group provides the support they need. These results demonstrate the value of dementia groups in offering meaningful social connection, information, and support within local communities.

You can be having the worst week ever but coming here lifts our spirits. This support is amazing and both me and my husband can't wait to attend. My husband will just sit in his chair all day if I let him. Once at group he becomes more vocal. Loves to sing." (Carer)

"This service should be applauded for the work it does for families and our loved ones. Nothing is too much trouble. They arrange for other agencies to attend, which is so helpful. Sometime it's hard to know who to contact but the team make this easier by connecting us to the right people." (Carer)

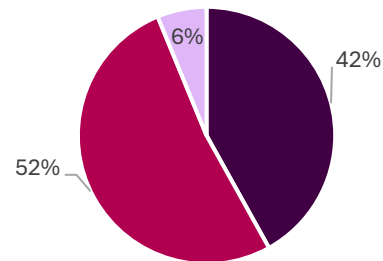
"We both really enjoy the group. The staff are all very caring and supportive. Can't ask for more!" (Group members)

Does the group, staff and volunteers provide you with the support you need?



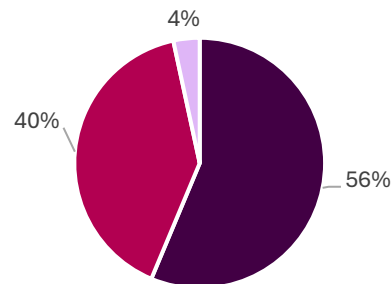
# Wellbeing

How well does the group help you feel better physically?



■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Average

How well does the group help you feel better emotionally?



■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Average

This year, we separated the question relating to physical and emotional wellbeing to gain a clearer understanding of the impact our groups have in both areas. It is encouraging to see the positive difference that attendance at groups can make, with 94% of respondents rating the impact on their physical wellbeing as good or excellent, and 96% rating the impact on their emotional wellbeing as good or excellent. These results demonstrate the important role groups play in supporting the overall wellbeing of people living with dementia and their carers.

All I want to say is THANK YOU. You make me smile and when I am at group I feel like my old self. I am never made to feel stupid and I love the sessions and exercise. I honestly never know what each week will bring but I do know it will be fun. I would recommend anyone to come to group, they won't regret it." (Group member, living with dementia)

My mum loves this group and looks forward to it every week as she is housebound otherwise. My stress and mental health issues are much better since attending and the attendees and the group leaders have supported me emotionally and help provide additional numbers or websites to further help me and my mum as I was/am struggling. I look forward to group too, it is lovely to see my mum enjoying herself and I feel supported surrounded by like minded people. I don't know what I'd do without group right now. It's so hard getting into other groups and not all are dementia friendly or allow me to attend with mum. (Carer)

# Wellbeing

In our 3-to-6-month follow-up survey, carers were asked to identify any positive changes they had observed in their loved one since joining the group. Encouragingly, 87% reported seeing improvements in at least one area of their loved one's wellbeing. The reported benefits are shown below:

- 64% saw a positive improvement in mood
- 55% an improvement in overall wellbeing
- 39% had seen improved attention
- 13% an increased appetite
- 24% an improvement in physical function
- 11% improvement in language

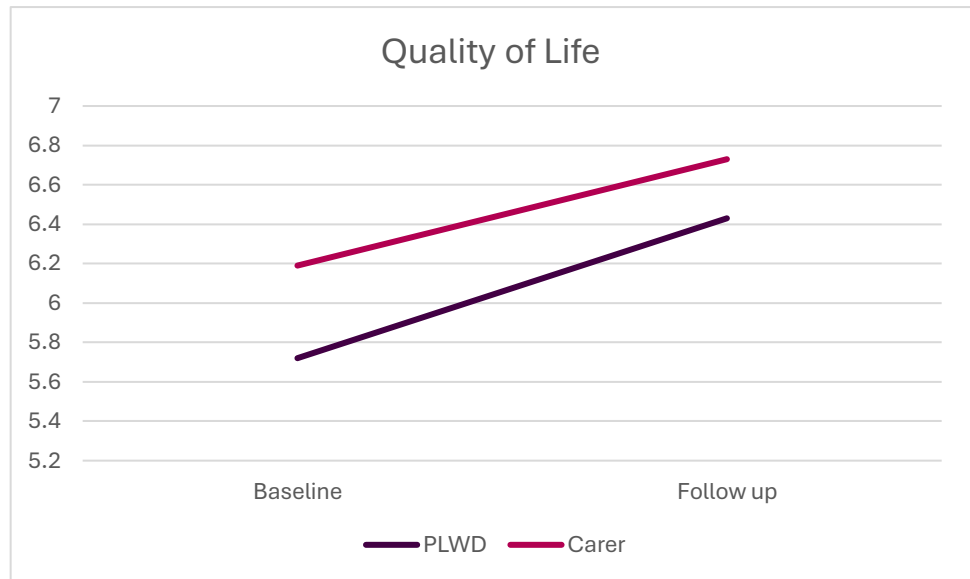
**“This is a great group for people with dementia and their carers. It provides a much needed social aspect to improve their mental health, physical fitness and social interactions. All the activities encourage participation and feeling of belonging. As a carer coming to this group has helped me and my own mental health, I am helping others and feeling more positive, which in turn benefits the person I bring.**



# Quality of Life

We asked carers to rate their own quality of life, and that of the person living with dementia, when joining the group and again after 3 to 6 months of attendance. The results show a slight increase in quality of life ratings. While this change is modest, it is encouraging and suggests that attending the group may be helping people access the support, information and social connections they need, contributing positively to their overall wellbeing and quality of life.

“Just to say you all do amazing job. I also like to meet with other carers, we share experience and offer peer support. Being here stops me from feeling alone.”



“The support I receive from differing professionals attending has been beneficial in supporting me caring for my mum, which in turn has improved her quality of life. I love seeing how happy the group makes my mum. This is the biggest smiles of the week from her which is very comforting. Thank you”

The background features abstract geometric shapes in shades of purple and pink. In the top left, there are overlapping solid shapes in a vibrant pink and a deep purple. In the top right, there are thin, light purple lines forming a series of connected, angular shapes. In the bottom left, more thin, light purple lines create a similar angular pattern. In the bottom right, there are solid shapes in deep purple and pink, partially overlapping each other.

**We would like to thank all of our funders  
and fundraising supporters for their  
generous support of our dementia  
services.**