

Lifecare offer hairdressing at home for clients and carers

The COVID restrictions taught us all how much we value a visit to our local hairdresser to help us feel like ourselves, boost our self-esteem and to simply enjoy a chat and a catch-up with a friendly face.

Sadly, for people living with dementia this lockdown experience can be a permanent feature in life as visiting an everyday salon can be inaccessible, overwhelming, and without the right training, difficult for a hairdresser to deliver well.

However, things are changing in the capital as local charity LifeCare has launched the city's first dedicated dementia-friendly hairdressing service providing essential haircare services for people living with dementia and their unpaid carers. LifeCare's new 'Forget-Me-Not' hair service involves an experienced, caring and dementia-trained mobile hairdresser visiting people in their homes so that they can continue to experience the joy of a haircut.

The benefits of a hairdressing experience for a person living with dementia can be significant. Haircare helps people to maintain their appearance but also impacts on how they feel, their personal identity, and their overall self-esteem. For a

person living with dementia, hairdressing can be a unique multi-sensory experience providing a valuable opportunity for touch and physical contact which is often missing outside of practical interactions. Regular visits and time for conversation can reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. Feelings of self-worth and positive self-image are boosted and this increased confidence can mean people are more likely to be motivated to attend other activities and stay engaged with their community. Evidence shows haircare services support reminiscence activities as scents and experiences involved can be incredibly evocative and personal appearance can relate to people's life stories and relationships.



James Wells, Chief Executive of LifeCare said “It’s sad and unfair that people living with dementia struggle to access ordinary haircare services that many of us take for granted.

The typical busy, hot and noisy hair salon environment can just be too overwhelming for some and a lack of understanding amongst hairdressers can make the experience really difficult for everyone. Mobility issues and transport concerns also create problems.

“At Lifecare, we have a proud 80-year history of providing essential care services for local older people, ensuring no-one is left alone or isolated and that everyone can continue to enjoy the joy in their lives. So, we’re absolutely delighted that we are now able to launch this dedicated service which will make an immediate positive and life-changing difference to our older clients and their carers. We are already hearing from clients how they “feel like themselves again” and “can’t wait for their next appointment”. *I’m looking forward to hearing more of these stories as the service continues to grow.*”

Audrey McDonald, LifeCare’s dementia-friendly hairdresser said “It is an absolute pleasure to be helping to deliver this fantastic service. From my own personal experience, I understand how frustrating it can be for a person to be shut-out of these important pleasurable activities. Even a small trim can cheer a person up for the day. In just a few short weeks, I have already seen how much joy the service is bringing for local people. Together we are enjoying a giggle, a chat about old times and everyone is left feeling a million dollars.”

The charity relies on support from its funders to deliver all of its essential services. The Forget-Me-Not Salon has been made possible thanks to financial support from Age Scotland’s About Dementia project in partnership with the Scottish Government.

Head of Dementia at Age Scotland, Dr Kainde Manji said “We are excited to support LifeCare in their delivery of a dedicated haircare service for people with lived experience of dementia,

and we recognise the importance of this type of community-based support in enabling ordinary activities that make a big difference to individual wellbeing. We know that increasing wellbeing and tackling social isolation can empower people with lived experience of dementia to take a more active role in their communities.”

The “Forget-Me-Not” hair service has been initially set up as pilot project offering the service to clients for free to ensure that it is accessible to all. If you know of someone living in the north of Edinburgh who could benefit from the service contact 0131 343 0940 or visit www.lifecare-edinburgh.org.uk/services/home-salon. To donate or find out other ways to help visit <https://www.lifecare-edinburgh.org.uk/>



