A Worcestershire town has been selected as the UK location to pilot a new project, implemented and evaluated by the University of Worcester in partnership with the Alzheimer’s Society, to help people living with dementia.

The three year project, known as MEETINGDEM, is supported through the EU Joint Programme - Neurodegenerative Disease Research (JPND), and will aim to implement and evaluate the Meeting Centres Support Programme which has achieved great success in the Netherlands.

The Programme provides an innovative way of supporting people with mild to moderate dementia and their families through an evidence-based, person-centred approach. It will be trialled in the UK, Italy, and Poland, with the University of Worcester’s Association for Dementia Studies (ADS) leading the UK programme.

A meeting centre will be opened in Droitwich Spa in 2016. An initial informative meeting, held in the town last month was well attended and the project was well received. The next step will involve those who have expressed an interest in being part of an initiative group to help take this project forward.

Professor Dawn Brooker (pictured), Director of ADS, said: “There are over 100 Meeting Centres in the Netherlands that have demonstrated benefits for people living with dementia, reducing behavioural and psychological problems and delayed admission to residential care.

“The aim of the project is to adapt and to evaluate the Dutch Meeting Centres’ model for people with dementia and their families in the UK, Italy and Poland. Knowing that a service works in one country may not necessarily mean that it will work in another. We will spend 18 months establishing a pilot service and 12 months running a prototype and evaluating it.”

“This is a very exciting project and one which has the potential to improve and support the wellbeing of people with dementia and their families living in Worcestershire and beyond,” said Professor Brooker. “The MSCP is a promising, innovative example of good practice as to how health and social care organisations and volunteers can collaborate to provide comprehensive, integrated, cost-effective, easy access support to people with dementia and their families enabling them to live longer independently with a better quality of life.”

Kumbi Mandinyenya, Operations Manager for Alzheimer’s Society in Herefordshire, Worcestershire and the Black Country, added: “Alzheimer’s Society is very excited to be involved in this pilot that offers an integrated approach to support people with dementia and their carers. By attending the meeting centre, people with dementia will have access to therapies and creative and recreational activities. Carers will also be able to attend informative meetings, support groups and learn about coordinating care. With the right support people with dementia can live well with their condition. That is why it is so important we continue to look at and test innovative approaches to support people with dementia, and their families.”
The total grant for the project is for €1,119,819. This year, JPND has provided funding for five projects under the banner of ‘European research projects for the evaluation of health care policies, strategies and interventions for Neurodegenerative Diseases.

More information on JPND-supported projects can be found at [www.jpnd.eu](http://www.jpnd.eu)

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