FOOTBALL, FRIENDS & MEMORIES

From one idea to national recognition



A day of football, friendship, reminiscence and connection at Chesterfield FC.

FINALIST | National County FA Recognition Awards 2026 | Special Recognition

From an initial idea to Wembley: Football, Friends & Memories earns national recognition

A partnership project created to bring people affected by dementia together through football has been shortlisted for a national Special Recognition Award.

What began as an idea to use the power of football to create connection, conversation and shared memories became Football, Friends & Memories, a large-scale dementia-friendly event hosted at Chesterfield FC on 20 May during Dementia Action Week 2026.

The project was developed collaboratively by Derbyshire County FA, Alzheimer's Society, Chesterfield FC Community Trust, Derby County Community Trust, Erewash Voluntary Action, Active Derbyshire and Sing Along with Ellie. Together, the partners created a welcoming community experience that combined the familiarity of football with opportunities for reminiscence, social connection and access to local support.

More than 300 people attended. Guests received bespoke football tickets and event programmes, entered through the turnstiles, explored the stadium and experienced the unforgettable moment of walking through the players' tunnel and onto the pitch. Music, football memories, activities and conversations brought people together throughout the afternoon.

The event was designed for people living with dementia, their families and carers, recognising that football can provide a powerful sense of identity, belonging and connection. The joy, excitement and emotion seen on the day exceeded every expectation and created memories that will stay with attendees, volunteers and partners for a long time.

That impact has now received national recognition. Football, Friends & Memories has been shortlisted for the Special Recognition Award at the National County FA Recognition Awards 2026, taking place at Wembley on 4 November.

Susan O'Malley, Local Services Manager at Alzheimer's Society, said: "I am incredibly proud to see this project recognised nationally. Being named as a finalist already feels like a win. It reflects the strength of the partnership, the care that went into creating the day and, most importantly, the difference it made to people affected by dementia. I am honoured to represent Derbyshire and Alzheimer's Society at Wembley in November."

The partnership is already exploring future opportunities to build on the project and create more inclusive experiences that help people affected by dementia remain connected to their communities and to the game they love.



Partner acknowledgement

With thanks to Derbyshire County FA, Alzheimer's Society, Chesterfield FC Community Trust, Derby County Community Trust, Erewash Voluntary Action, Active Derbyshire and Sing Along with Ellie.