

Dementia Big Society project catches the eye of Mauritian government

✉ **By Helen Wright, Reporter**

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Gareth Rowland, whose Big Society project has gone international

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A CAMPAIGNER from Brookmans Park is helping to battle dementia in Mauritius after a Big Society project he started attracted international attention.

Gareth Rowland, of Pine Grove, is assisting the government on the island – which is approximately 1,200 miles off the coast of south east Africa – with how it can take better care of dementia patients.

In 2011, the 58-year-old set up Battle Dementia as a Big Society initiative.

The project aims to support people who are caring for loved ones suffering from the degenerative illness.

On a holiday to Mauritius in January, Mr Rowland visited several residential homes and day centres for Alzheimer's and dementia patients.

Improving healthcare on the island means people are living longer, but cases of dementia are on the rise.

The officials Mr Rowland spoke to were very interested in his project as a way to tackle their own country's problems.

He is now donating two booklets he has written, *Activities and the Battle against Dementia* and *Activities for Today*, 3rd edition, to be used by carers and is training new carers of the elderly in Mauritius.

Mr Rowland said: "I really do believe the best way for people to stay healthy is to keep active.

"The books will give patients the opportunity to devise their own activities suitable for the elderly and frail in their own communities throughout Mauritius."

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Mr Rowland started working with dementia patients when his wife was running a residential home and she asked him to create activities for residents to do.

He is now also hoping to help other nations treat their dementia patients.

He said: "My main job is writing maths textbooks, and I have just finished some which will be sent to Pakistan.

"I am now planning to get people interested [in Battle Dementia] in Karachi (the third largest city in Pakistan).

"This is a problem that is happening all over the world and one of the ways people can help effectively is by getting people active and not letting them sit down and do nothing.

"I hope my books can change that."

Battle Dementia still has a strong presence in Times Territory where Mr Rowland organises sessions at a drop-in centre in Potters Bar and he gives talks at the Parkfield Medical Centre.

To find out more visit www.battledementia.co.uk