

Mr Chancellor,

Our honorary graduand today, Angela Rippon, is a trusted broadcaster, journalist and presenter. Angela has worked in news and current affairs for over 40 years. She was a BBC newsreader for five years, and has been awarded the OBE for her services to broadcasting, charity and the arts. She is a dedicated supporter of the Alzheimer's Society, and became their ambassador in 2009. It is for her services to the wellbeing of an ageing population that we are honouring her today in association with Newcastle University's Institute for Ageing.

In addressing some of the most pressing societal challenge themes of our time, our University has made research into Health and Ageing a research priority. And the statistics, Mr Chancellor, are alarming. By 2015 there will be 850,000 people with dementia in the UK, rising to 1 million people by 2025. Today, there are already 40,000 younger people living with dementia. Two thirds of people with dementia are women. One in six people aged 80 and over has dementia. 60,000 deaths a year are directly attributable to this disease. The financial cost of dementia to the UK is £26 billion per annum. There are 670,000 carers of people with dementia in this country alone. Family carers of people with dementia save the UK £11 billion a year. 80% of people living in care homes have a form of dementia or severe memory problems. Two thirds of people with dementia live in the community while one third live in a care home. Currently, only 44% of people with dementia in England, Wales and Northern Ireland receive a diagnosis.

Renowned for her professionalism and super-effective communication skills, Angela Rippon finds a voice for wide audiences when she says: 'Dementia

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is the curse of the 21st century. We are an ageing population and this is going to touch us all. Alzheimer's Society's campaigning and support makes a huge difference to those affected by this cruel condition. Those who suffer from dementia need a voice. By becoming an Alzheimer's Society Ambassador, I hope I can help them be heard'. Angela has spoken movingly of her experiences caring for her mother, Edna, who was diagnosed with dementia in 2004 and sadly died in 2009. Motivated by her personal experience, she now co-chairs the Dementia Friendly Communities Champions Group alongside the Alzheimer's Society Chief Executive, Jeremy Hughes. Established under the auspices of the Prime Minister in 2012, the Group focuses on improving inclusion and quality of life for people living with dementia. Their Dementia Friendly Communities campaign, for example, has a vision to create a world where people with dementia are made to feel welcome in their local neighbourhoods, where their human rights and dignity are respected, and their needs understood. In three years, one million friends have signed up to the campaign, which is achieving remarkable results in communities across the UK. To take just one example, Angela Rippon and her fellow campaigners challenge banks to revise their policies to make them user-friendly to people with dementia. If many of us have trouble remembering PIN numbers, imagine the difficulties of someone living with this disease. She has also been instrumental in building networks of people working in care homes, day centres, housing associations and memory clinics to raise awareness of issues surrounding dementia – for sufferers, and those who care for them. Remarkably, she has pioneered dementia awareness training in schools, starting with 21 schools in 17 regions, a programme which is now being rolled out to 500 schools across the UK. These young people, she believes, are the key to establishing a 'dementia friendly generation' who can identify the symptoms when they meet someone living with the condition, but also encourage family members

to seek medical help if they spot early symptoms. Indeed, a correlation has been observed between areas where training in dementia awareness has been undertaken in schools, and the number of medical diagnoses subsequently in that area. The objective of Angela Rippon's dedicated campaigning is to see people with dementia living well in the community.

Championing the rights of people with dementia and their carers, Angela attends events in support of the Alzheimer's Society. As a fellow-native of Plymouth myself, I was especially gratified to note that this recently involved attending a Plymouth Argyle versus Blackpool football match in aid of our local branch of the Alzheimer's Society. I caution against shouting 'Up the Pilgrims!' in this neck of the woods, however, particularly on a Saturday afternoon in Newcastle when the Magpies are playing at home.

At an age when many are considering retirement, Angela Rippon's career shows no sign of abating. As the journalist Christina Odone reported earlier this year, Angela, like Spring, is everywhere. On BBC1 she co-presents *Holiday Hit Squad* and *Rip Off Britain*, and on ITV a programme called *Amazing Greys*, which pits younger contestants against older ones. A generous mentor to young and aspiring media students hoping for a career in journalism, she is also a jolly good sport. Now, for the benefit of our Vice-Chancellor and others who may not be familiar with British television history, Angela is a very fine dancer and contributed to one of the legendary *Morecambe and Wise* programmes that will surely be repeated for as long as there is a demand for good high-kicking family entertainment, on a show which in 1976 attracted a phenomenal audience of 26 million viewers. In recent years, Angela has continued to take part in charity fundraisers such as *Dancing on Ice* and *Children in Need*. She holds little truck with the idea

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that the BBC is rampant with ageism and sexism, stating her firm belief that ‘talent will out’ regardless of gender, and reminding her viewers that ‘I was the first presenter of ‘Top Gear’. I don’t think Mr Clarkson ever admits to his show having started out with a woman – but it did.’

And so we give the final word to our honorary graduand. ‘Seven years ago’, she says, ‘a journalist asked me if I wasn’t embarrassed to speak about dementia. After all, it’s a mental illness. Well, I think today very few people think mental illness is embarrassing. I think we’ve helped bring about that change’.

Mr Chancellor, as a tireless champion for the wellbeing of older people, I present to you Angela Rippon as a candidate for the award of a Doctor of Civil Law, *honoris causa*.

Citation by Professor Helen Berry, 3 December 2014