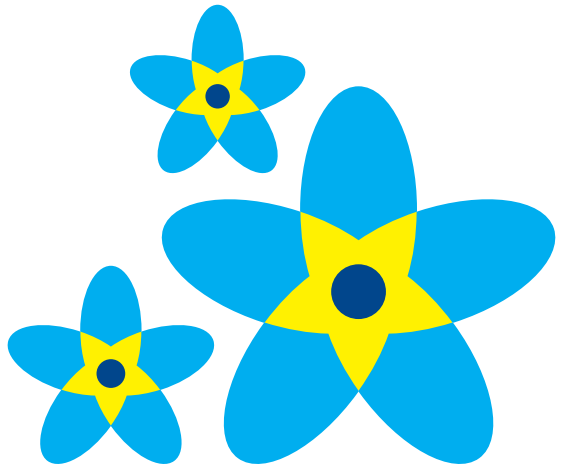


# Dementia Support and Information

Information for patients, family,  
carers and friends

Long Term  
Conditions Team



## Diagnosed with dementia?

If you or a family member, or friend has just been diagnosed with dementia, you may be feeling numb, scared and unable to take everything in. It's totally normal to feel these feelings, give yourself a little time to adjust.

If you can, talk to family and friends about your feelings around a dementia diagnosis.

Once the initial feelings have passed, it's time to try to move on and create an action plan for the future, making sure an action plan is in place for the future.

## Services and support

Find out what's available locally so that you're prepared and able to call on this support as and when you need it.

Services arranged by local authorities vary between areas but may include home care services, equipment and adaptations for your home. Some services, such as community nursing, are arranged through the NHS.

Even if you have suspected for a while that you or someone you love might have dementia, the diagnosis may come as a shock. People with dementia shouldn't simply stop doing what they enjoy in life; instead, they should try to remain as independent as possible and continue to enjoy their usual activities.

## Supporting someone with memory loss

People with memory problems will find it hard to store, and then remember recent conversations and events. The part of the brain (the hippocampus) that allows new information to be processed may be damaged. This makes it harder for the person to form new memories and learn new information. The person may forget a conversation they've had, something they've recently done, or an appointment or plan. It is important to remember that the person isn't being difficult or ignoring you. Their brain hasn't kept the information, and so it may feel like the first time they've heard it. The following tips may help.

- Avoid telling the person they have heard the information before.
- Ask yourself whether it really matters if the person remembers a recent conversation or event. Forcing the matter can make things worse.
- Set up a regular routine. This can make it easier for the person to remember what is going to happen during the day.
- Encourage them to use a diary or journal to record things that have happened. Pictures and words are useful tools. They can be used to remind the person what they have done, as a conversation starter.
- Include cues and prompts, and try to give context instead of asking vague questions. For example, "It must be a while since breakfast. Are you hungry?" rather than "Have you had breakfast?"

- Consider using reminders such as sticky notes or a wall calendar for one-off tasks, and more permanent reminders for tasks the person does more often (such as keeping a note by the door to remember keys and wallet).
- Consider assisted technology devices, such as an automatic calendar clock to help the person remember important things.
- Focus on one thing at a time: giving the person too much information may be overwhelming.
- Keep information simple, and repeat it often (if necessary).

## Approaches for coping with memory loss

There are a number of different approaches that can help people with dementia to cope with memory loss and the feelings it can cause, such as frustration and loss of self-esteem. Some of these techniques may require professional input, for example from a nurse, counsellor or a therapist, but they can also be useful for family carers.

## Life story and reminiscence work

Life story work involves the person with dementia making a personal record of important experiences, people and places in their life. They work with someone (such as a family member or professional) to do this. Their personal record can take the form of a book, photo album or something they create digitally (for example on a tablet computer). Many people find life story work enjoyable and it may help with memory problems. It can also be used as a prompt or to help professional carers understand more about the person.

Reminiscence involves encouraging a person with dementia to talk about a period, event or subject from their past. It can be done in groups or on a one-to-one basis, and the person can do it with a professional or a friend or family member. Reminiscence is often done using prompts such as music, objects and photos, which can be general or specific to the person. It can help to maintain people's self-esteem, confidence and sense of self, as well as improve social interactions with others.

Sometimes life story and reminiscence work may bring back difficult memories and the person may become upset. If this happens, the person should be supported to express their feelings and to address the memory (if they feel comfortable doing so).

## **Cognitive stimulation including stimulation therapy (CST)**

Cognitive stimulation involves activities and exercises that stimulate thinking, concentration, communication and memory in the person with dementia. It is usually done in a social setting such as a small group (although it is possible to have one-to-one sessions). It involves talking about day-to-day interests, reminiscence and information relating to the current time and place.

Cognitive stimulation therapy (CST) is structured treatment that takes place in groups. It lasts several weeks and can help with memory and other mental abilities. Group cognitive stimulation is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) for people with mild to moderate dementia.

## Cognitive rehabilitation

Cognitive rehabilitation is where the person with dementia works together with a therapist on specific difficulties they would address. For example, remembering names of people they have met and how to achieve this. This approach focuses on what is important to the person and those closest to them. It can also help with memory and attention.

Cognitive stimulation and cognitive rehabilitation can help to improve quality of life for people with dementia.

## Encourage independence

- Support the person to do as much for themselves as possible by breaking tasks down into smaller, similar steps.
- Try to find ways to make tasks easier by putting out things the person will need to complete an activity, for example tea bags, a mug and sugar.
- Keep work spaces clutter free and leave regularly used items in the line of sight.
- Use reminder signs to prompt the person, such as simple instructions for using the microwave.
- Make adjustments to the environment that make things easier for the person, such as labelling cupboards with pictures or what is inside and making sure areas are well lit.
- Consider asking for help from an occupational therapist. They will be able to advise on coping with strategies and suitable devices for helping with day-to-day tasks.

- As dementia progresses the person may get lost within their own home, or not recall that where they are now is their current home. They may revert to a memory of a former home (such as a childhood home). The help, you could do the following:
  - Make sure there are familiar items that clearly belong in the person's home, such as ornaments or familiar objects.
  - Have a reminder of the home address, for example: "This is 23 the Avenue, Windsor" somewhere it can be seen, for example by the front door or on a whiteboard in the kitchen.
  - Talk to the person about the home they used to live in, and what it means to them. It can help to place it in the past.

## Local support

### Community Care Day Centre

Stokesley Community Care Association runs a day centre, which provides a friendly environment where people with dementia can socialise with others and take part in stimulating activities that are based on people's individual needs and interests. A hot two course lunch is provided on the premises and transport can be arranged if required.

#### **Contacts:**

Telephone: 01642 710085

Email: [manager@stokesleycca.org.uk](mailto:manager@stokesleycca.org.uk)

Website: [www.stokesleycca.org.uk](http://www.stokesleycca.org.uk)

## **Stokesley Community care and transport scheme**

A local transport service, organised by Stokesley Community Care Association, which enabled older people to attend social activities and day-to-day appointments by offering them door-to-door transport by care or minibus. The scheme covers all the villages within a 15 miles radius of Stokesley. Minibuses run a series of regular local services, allowing people to go shopping. From March to December there is also an Excursion Club.

### **Contacts:**

Telephone: 01642 710190

Email: [enquiries@stokesleycca.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@stokesleycca.org.uk)

Website: [www.stokesleycca.org.uk](http://www.stokesleycca.org.uk)

## **Specialist Dementia Advocacy**

Dementia Voices Stockton is an advocacy project for people living with dementia and their carers. The main aim is to listen, support and empower them. To help influence new service provision and initiate improvements they offer advocacy on an individual basis. Also running a bimonthly advisory group, a monthly coffee morning, advocacy drop-ins, educational sessions and volunteer groups.

### **Contacts:**

Telephone: 01642 611110

Email: [imccormack@clevearc.com](mailto:imccormack@clevearc.com)



## Silver Linings Dementia Café

Dementia cafes provide useful information in a structured and relaxed setting that gives the opportunity for people with dementia, families and carers to ask questions to health professionals and learn from experiences of people in similar situations. Come and chat to people who have been affected by dementia in a friendly and relaxed, social environment at Silver Linings Dementia Café. You can chat and share your experiences about your diagnosis of dementia and what that means to you with other health professionals.

### **Contacts:**

Telephone: 01642 591918

Email: [hemlington\\_library@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:hemlington_library@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

Website: <https://libraries.middlesbrough.gov.uk/web/arena/health-wellbeing>

## Sing for the brain

Come along to our singing group where you can meet new people in a friendly, fun and social environment. These groups are based around the principles of music therapy, which include vocal warm-ups and singing a huge range of familiar old and new songs for everyone's tastes.

### **Contacts:**

Telephone: 0191 3890 0400

Email: [darlington@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:darlington@alzheimers.org.uk)

## Dementia Advisor

Dementia advisor service offers information about all aspects of living with dementia and supports you to access services. People with dementia, their carers or people who are worried about their memory can contact our dementia advisers whenever they need further information or support to find other services.

### Contacts:

Telephone: 0191 389 0400

Email: [darlington@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:darlington@alzheimers.org.uk)

## Notes

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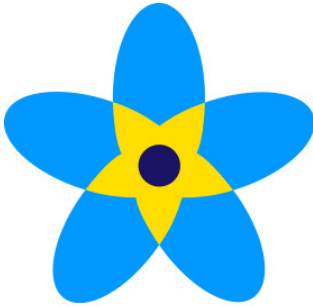
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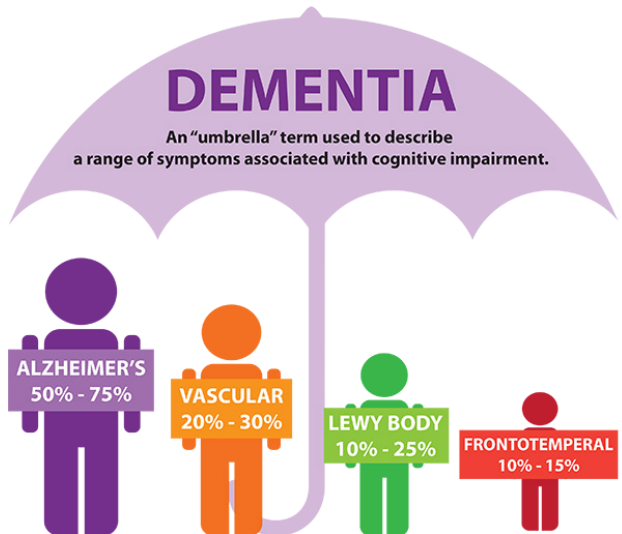


# Dementia Friends

An Alzheimer's Society initiative

A Dementia Friend learns a little bit more about what it's like to live with dementia and then turns that understanding into action – anyone can be a Dementia Friend.

Whether you attend a face-to-face Dementia Friends Information Session or watch the online video, Dementia Friends is about learning more about dementia and the small ways you can help. From telling friends about Dementia Friends to visiting someone you know living with dementia, every action counts.



Visit: [www.dementiafriends.org.uk](http://www.dementiafriends.org.uk) to sign up to be a Dementia Friend!

## Comments, compliments, concerns or complaints

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is concerned about the quality of care you receive and strives to maintain high standards of health care.

However we do appreciate that there may be an occasion where you, or your family, feel dissatisfied with the standard of service you receive. Please do not hesitate to tell us about your concerns as this helps us to learn from your experience and to improve services for future patients.

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

This service aims to advise and support patients, families and carers and help sort out problems quickly on your behalf.

This service is available, and based, at The James Cook University Hospital but also covers the Friarage Hospital in Northallerton, our community hospitals and community health services. Please ask a member of staff for further information.

If you require this information in a different format please contact Freephone 0800 0282451

Author: Long Term Conditions Team

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Version 1, Issue Date: October 2018, Revision Date: October 2020