

Respect

Recognise that you are a person, NOT an illness and it is important that you are treated with respect and worth. Acknowledge your abilities, interests and preferences. These may change as dementia progresses. It's not always easy, but people should try to respond flexibly and sensitively.

Express yourself - when you find out that your health is declining, you may feel vulnerable and in need of reassurance and support. The people closest to you need to do everything they can to help you to keep your sense of identity and feelings of self-worth. Talk to each other about how you are feeling and coping.

Supporting - dementia affects people's thinking, reasoning and memory but your feelings will remain intact. You may be sad or upset at times and the people who are supporting you should not assume you need cheering up or brush off your concerns and should make time for you and listen to you properly.

Privacy - everyone has the right to privacy and your privacy should always be respected by the people who are supporting you. This includes knocking on your door before they enter and locking the door if they are attending to your personal hygiene.

Engaging and involving you whenever possible. You should be given the opportunity to make your own choices. Ask professionals who they are, where they are from, what they are doing and why. Take someone with you to appointments. Ask people to break things down for you one step at a time, do not be afraid to take your time and don't let people rush you.

Communicate - it's important that you are addressed in the way you prefer. You need to feel respected and valued for who you are now, as well as for who you were in the past. There are many things people around you can do to help:

- Be flexible and tolerant with you.
- Make time to listen to you and your opinions, have regular chats and enjoy being with you.
- Show affection in a way you both feel comfortable with.
- Do things together, like creating a life story book or a memory box.

Talk - when people talk to you they should be kind and reassuring, they should not talk down to you or over your head. They should help you to feel good about yourself. See our factsheet on **advocacy** for more information.



Relationships and dementia

The diagnosis of any long term illness can have a big impact on a relationship, however strong it is. The support of a loved one can have a huge impact on you. Talking about feelings is important and will help everyone involved. Sexual relations can be affected by dementia as sex drive may decrease or disappear, sexual performance may be affected and levels of inhibitions may change. It is important to bear in mind that by law, it must be clear that both parties are consenting to the sexual contact and that the person with dementia has the capacity to make that decision. This can be confusing and sometimes difficult to judge. Talking to a professional may help deal with difficult, sensitive situations like this. Further information can be found in the following factsheets and booklets: **communicating, understanding and supporting a person with dementia** and **sex and dementia**.

The Alzheimer's Society has a useful booklet to download which talks about coping strategies and **living alone**

You and your family are going through a time of change and uncertainty so it is important to speak to each other about your dementia. Be open and honest with each other and tell the children in your family so that they understand what is happening to you. You might find the Alzheimer's Society booklet useful:

Talking to children about your illness

Abuse of people with dementia

Abuse comes in many shapes and forms and it is important that you can recognise the different types. Abuse is when someone does or says something that makes you feel upset, threatened or frightened. It is when someone has power over you and you don't agree with what is happening to you, or someone is making your decisions for you and not involving or listening to you. Abuse may be deliberate or it may be done by someone who does not realise they are doing it.

Watch out for the signs of abuse

As dementia develops, it can make you more and more vulnerable and reliant on the good care and respect of those around you. Abuse is rare, however, you and your family and carers should be vigilant and ensure you are receiving the best care at all times and if you have suspicions then they should be reported. If you think that yourself, or another person are being abused you must take action. If you think a crime has been committed, ring the police on 101. To report abuse, contact Gateway to care, telephone **01484 414933**. Do not destroy, clean or wipe away any evidence that might be used in an investigation.

Take a look at factsheet:

Keeping Safe - how to report adult abuse

Activities and support

Art, music and culture

The feelings of relaxation that following these interests promote cannot be underestimated. They encourage social interaction and good well-being. There are many local groups to join to enjoy these pastimes. See our factsheets for a list of dementia support groups available in your community.

Counselling and support groups

Talking to an expert or someone else who is going through the same experiences as you can be of huge benefit. Talking to someone who is objective can be easier than talking to friends and family. There are many types of support groups available – for example groups for carers, young carers, young people with dementia – and can vary from coffee mornings and informal discussion groups to social activities. New members are always made to feel welcome. For more information, contact Gateway to care, telephone **01484 414933** or contact Making Space (the Kirklees Dementia Information Service) telephone **01484 483083**.

Dialogue groups

The South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust is a specialist NHS foundation trust that provides mental health and learning disability services. Every year the Trust helps local people with dementia to live life to the full. It gives them access to various treatments and therapies to help them do this. The Trust is well known for its portrait of a life work and dance therapy. To find out more about a dialogue group running in your area call the Trust's freephone number **0800 5872108** or email **inclusion@swyt.nhs.uk**.

Leisure and Social Activities

Please take a look at our Community Dementia Support group factsheets which provide a range of groups such as dancing/games/lunch clubs in your local area and will help to prevent you and your carers from feeling lonely and isolated. They are a good way of meeting new people in the same position as yourself, even if it's just for a chat over a cup of tea.

Kirklees Community Dementia Support



Life history

Knowing your life history could make caring and supporting you much easier. It's not just knowledge of events in your life, it's about your beliefs, values, likes and dislikes. It's also about what you've achieved, your family, relationships, favourite places, talents, hobbies, education, habits...it's all about what makes you an individual and has helped develop your personality over the years. Having detailed knowledge about you can help your carer and family understand your behaviour, actions and reactions. Sharing your life history with someone will make them familiar with your use of language, body language and mannerisms. This will help your communication later on. You and your carer or family member can collect this information together over a period of time, using photographs, old films and other props to jog your memory. It may take some time but the benefits in the long term can be great. There are a number of ways you can record your life history.

My Life Software

My Life Software™ has developed Digital Reminiscence Therapy Software™, an innovative software solution that provides communication support and interactivity for the elderly and people with dementia. For more information about this product visit: **My Life Software**

Portrait of a life

Portrait of a life is a multimedia toolkit for life story work. The toolkit is an educational and training resource to support staff working in a wide range of care settings but has also been widely used by people living with dementia and carers to help them understand life story work. Ask a member of staff involved in your care if there is one available to borrow or email **portraitolife@swyt.nhs.uk**.

Dementia UK have also put together a life story template for you to create your own and can be found here:

Dementia UK Life Story Template

The Alzheimer's Society have produced a guide to making a life history book here:

Remembering together: Making a life history book



Sporting Memories Network

Participating in meaningful, interesting and stimulating activities can lead to many benefits for the mind and body. There is a wealth of evidence to supporting the benefits of reminiscence for older people, not just those experiencing dementia. Sports reminiscence provides a great opportunity to document a person's own favourite sports events, teams and moments. It's an activity that predominantly uses images to first stimulate memories and conversation, often leading way beyond talk about the sports themselves. Sessions can simply involve looking through images or may involve finding suitable images to use in a personal sporting memories book which can then be used by the person, their family & friends. This should bring back more memories and stimulate conversation. The books can also be created as a family heirloom to be passed on along the generations. There are many different options to suit each person or environment. You can find out more at [**Sporting Memories**](#)

Healthy eating

Healthy eating is important to everyone, but if you are unable to get to a shop or find it difficult to cook for yourself, you might want to consider using a home delivery service for frozen meals or everyday shopping. For further information take a look at NHS Choices [**healthy eating**](#). Many supermarkets have an on-line internet service where you can order your shopping and have it delivered to your door for a small cost or ask a local shop to deliver it for you. See our useful contacts section for home delivery services.

Dementia Reading Champions

Dementia reading champions is a new project where groups of people or individuals living with dementia are supported to enjoy reading, listening, chatting and sharing memories. It will encourage participants to interact with others, share stories and experiences, by using literature and poetry and will be open and accessible to people of all backgrounds and levels of literacy. The project will use poetry, literature and reminiscence to improve the lives of people living with dementia and their carers. Kirklees Council have funded several local based organisations to deliver the project in care homes and community settings. These organisations will recruit and train volunteers and sessional workers who will read and chat to individuals and small groups of people with dementia. For more information, contact our Community Partnerships team, telephone **01484 225142** or email: [**community.partnerships@kirklees.gov.uk**](mailto:community.partnerships@kirklees.gov.uk)



Dietetics

Dieticians use the science of food to help people make good choices about diet and lifestyle. A dietitian can provide advice on suitable foods to ensure that the diet is balanced and nutritionally adequate. This is particularly important for those with dementia who may develop swallowing problems or small appetites. The dietitian can also give advice on special diets for medical conditions eg diabetes or constipation. Your health care professional can refer you to the dietitian.

Herbal treatments

Herbal treatments are non-pharmaceutical medicines and can be purchased from specialist shops and health shops. You should let your doctor know if you use herbal treatments as they can have an effect on other medicines.

Keeping active

Building regular exercise and activities into your routine will have huge benefits to your overall well-being, both physically and mentally. Take a look at our factsheet on physical activity opportunities which also explains 'Steps for Life' – an exercise referral programme for people with dementia or telephone **01484 234092** for more information. Take a look at Alzheimer's Society booklet: **keeping involved and active**. There are lots of groups you could get involved in, for example Singing for the Brain, HOOT creative arts and Shall We Dance. See our community factsheets for information.

Physiotherapy

Everyone's symptoms will vary but dementia can sometimes affect mobility, and can cause falls. A physiotherapist can help with improving movement and healing existing injuries. They can also offer you good advice on general health and well-being. Your doctor can make a referral.

Occupational therapist

An occupational therapist can provide help and support to make changes to your home to overcome practical problems. They can give advice, make recommendations and help you with work related issues. Where they cannot help, they can refer you on to someone who can.

Speech and language therapy

The local speech and language therapy unit can offer some useful support – not only with speech and language difficulties but also with memory and information processing and eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties. Ask your doctor to make a referral if you are experiencing problems.

Dementia day opportunities

The council offers day services for people with dementia living in Kirklees at The Homestead in Almondbury and Knowl Park House in Mirfield. Day services can give carers/family a break or help people after they have been ill or discharged from hospital. They offer a safe, friendly place for people to meet others and take part in activities that will help maintain their life skills. They offer services for up to 28 people with dementia at each centre every day. They give carers and their family the chance to have a rest, safe in the knowledge that their loved one is being looked after. Everyone who uses the centre has their own key worker and their own individual support plan. The activities they provide include exercise, reminiscence work, arts and crafts, pampering, music and dance, coffee afternoons for people who have memory problems and much more. There is often a charge for this service and you will need to meet the eligibility criteria, for more information contact Gateway to care telephone **01484 414933**.

You might find it useful to have a look at the following factsheets:

Homestead Dementia Day Opportunities

Knowl Park House Dementia Day Opportunities