



Mental
health &
wellbeing



Coping with Dementia

Dementia is described as a group of symptoms which cause a disorder of the brain. Symptoms may include memory loss, personality changes and difficulties with reasoning or language. By 2025 there will be 1 million people with dementia in the UK. Of those living with dementia, 62% are diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease¹.

Caring for someone with dementia can be challenging; not only are you providing care and support, you are also faced with seeing someone you care about fundamentally changing. This can mean someone who was previously happy and calm becoming confused, angry and possibly aggressive. For a carer this can be very tough.

Practical Matters

Dementia doesn't just affect someone's memory; it can also affect the individual's ability to look after their personal hygiene, eat and drink and manage previously unhindered daily activity. As a carer you may be faced with having to wash, feed and dress the person you are caring for. This may be very hard to face and can also be physically challenging. There are aids and equipment available to make caring tasks easier. Information is available about aids and equipment from an occupational therapist, who can be contacted through social services, your GP or district nurse.

¹ Alzheimer's Society - Facts for the media - www.alzheimers.org.uk

Financial & Legal

People living with dementia are vulnerable, so it's important to get information and advice about Power of Attorney (Financial and Health) as soon as possible.

Power of Attorney

Contact the Office of the Public Guardian for help:

Customerservices@publicguardian.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 456 0300

Both the individual living with dementia and their carer may be entitled to benefits, so you may want to investigate eligibility and ways to claim. For more information see further sources of help on the next page.

Understanding Dementia

To understand the disease and its impact try and learn as much about it as possible. It will help you to be prepared for the challenges ahead. Everyone with dementia will be affected differently, so expect the unexpected. Some days will be better than others, when this is the case, you can take some time to rest and look after your own needs.



Coping

Caring for someone with dementia can be very challenging so it's incredibly important to look after yourself. If you are a full-time carer, you need to look after your nutrition, health and sleep. Try as much as you are able to make time for yourself. There may be local respite care available. Ask your GP or social worker for more information.

Talking to people going through a similar experience may also help. There are caregiver peer groups in almost all areas of the UK. Your GP may be able to refer you to a local service, otherwise check out some of the links in Further Sources Of Help (below).

Care

As the disease progresses you may need to get help with caring and support.

The person you are caring for may refuse help, even though this may be in their best interests.

Quality care organisations will understand this situation and will work with you to find ways of making any transitions into a care home or having care at home as easy as possible.

When looking for a care provider, make sure they are registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and that they train their staff in dementia care.



Further sources of help

There is a lot of information available to help you cope with caring for someone with a mental health problem. Please have a look at these organisations and charities for further tips.

- Unforgettable
www.unforgettable.org
- NHS Choices – benefits for carers
www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/pages/benefits-for-carers.aspx
- DementiaUK – helping families face dementia
www.dementiauk.org
- Alzheimer's Society
www.alzheimers.org.uk
- Care Quality Commission
www.cqc.org.uk
- Power of Attorney information
www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney/overview

Paying for Care Fact Sheet

Caring for yourself Fact Sheet

Benefits for disabled and seriously ill Fact Sheet

www.ben.org.uk

f /BenSupport4Auto

t @BenSupport4Auto

Free, confidential helpline:
08081 311 333

Ben - Motor and Allied Trades Benevolent Fund. Lynwood Court, Lynwood Village, Rise Road, Ascot SL5 0FG. A charity registered in England and Wales (no.297877) and Scotland (no.SC039842). Registered with the Homes and Communities Agency (no. LH3766).

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