Classification: Official

Publications approval reference: 001559

Dementia wellbeing in the COVID-19 pandemic

Dementia wellbeing in the COVID-19 pandemic

Preventing Well

Keeping fit and active to prevent the mental and physical consequences of isolation

Key actions and priorities

Maintaining mental and physical wellbeing
Self-isolation and social distancing due to COVID-19 may have a significant impact on people living with dementia and their carers. As ever, it is important to take steps to support mental and physical wellbeing, but adjustments to normal activities may be required inline with government guidance on the pandemic.

Links included provide suggestions of activities and approaches that can be used to encourage individuals to stay connected, keep a sense of purpose, stay active and stay positive, in a way that is appropriate through the pandemic

In particular, social contact is likely to have reduced during the pandemic. Social prescribing can connect people to community support and resources and will be particularly important in creating connection and aiding rehabilitation.

Personalised care
During the pandemic, being aware of personal circumstances, choices and involving people in their own health is vital. The National Academy for Social Prescribing have put together Personal Wellbeing Plan Template which can be used to summarise what is most important to someone, when discussing support someone may need to stay safe at home.

Supporting family carers and people living in the community
The pandemic has placed additional burdens on carers, both in caring for their relatives and in managing their own mental health. Carers may benefit from being offered support directly and/ or through local and national voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.

Links to guidance and information

Maintaining mental and physical wellbeing

- IDEAL project
- University of Manchester keeping well at home
- NHS every mind matters
- CSP Helping older people stay active at home
- Maintaining health in dementia videos

Social Prescribing

- NHSE personalised care homepage
- NHSE&I social prescribing and community-based support
- NASP personalised wellbeing plan template

Supporting carers

- Advice for carers to help keep those they care for stay safe
- Reducing depression and anxiety in family carers
- Supporting carers to understand and respond to changes in behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Getting help and support as a carer
- Looking after someone with dementia

Diagnosing Well

Presentation of COVID-19
Presentation of COVID-19 can be atypical in older people. This can include

Treating Well

Managing psychological and behavioural symptoms

Managing symptoms of dementia in the context of COVID-19 can be challenging. People may experience difficulty in understanding complex instructions or the reasons for isolation.

Non-pharmacological approaches can be used to help manage symptoms, as part of personalised care plan. Risk assessment and judgement should be used when prescribing sedation for people who walk with purpose. The Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS) can be used as part of a holistic assessment to support shared decision making. However, be aware of the limitations of using the CFS as the sole assessment of frailty.

Preventing and managing delirium

Older people are at significant risk from COVID-19 and if infected they may present with or develop a delirium. The behavioural changes commonly seen in delirium are likely to increase the risk of cross-infection and may make management challenging. Proven strategies are set out by British Geriatrics Society (BGS) and Regional Geriatric Programme of Toronto (RGP) to support with managing and preventing delirium.

Personalised and holistic care

The direct and indirect effects of COVID-19 have had an impact on the physical and mental health of people with dementia. Personalised Care Plans should be updated to reflect changes in need and wider context, which may have impact on support that can be provided.

Supporting Well

Care homes
Care home staff may not be used to personal protective equipment (PPE) and will have challenges in managing infection if residents are walking with purpose or do not understand the need for isolation. Training and support from managers is vital. Options to support with testing of staff and family carers should be explored as part of efforts to develop safe visiting policies. Community services can provide phlebotomy services and collate relevant data to assist diagnosis and multi-disciplinary team (MDT) decision-making.

Home care
COVID-19 places additional demands on home care provision, both for carers and for provider organisations. Guidance on PPE, the needs of extremely

Dying Well

Resources for people with dementia and their carers

Admiral Nurse Dementia Helpline **Call 0800 888 6678 or email helpline@dementiauk.org Open 7 days a week**
Free and confidential advice and support service for anyone with a question or concern about dementia, staffed by experienced dementia specialists.

Age UK **Advice Line 0800 055 6112 Free to call 8am 7pm 365 days a year**
Information and advice about staying well and safe, providing care, accessing services, arranging funerals and telephone befriending.

Alzheimer's Society / Dementia Connect **Helpline 0300 222 112 Available 7 days per week**
Support and advice from dementia advisors. Includes access to an online community, **Talking Point,** to connect with others affected by dementia.

Carers UK **Helpline 0808 808 7777 Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm or by emailing advice@carersuk.org**
Information and advice about how to get help and support as a carer.

Carers Trust Support and resources for carers.

Cruse bereavement information **helpline@cruse.org.uk**
Emotional support to anyone affected by bereavement.

Decision aid: Supporting family carers of people living with dementia to make difficult decisions during COVID-19

Resources for people with dementia and their carers

Dementia Change Action Network (DCAN) Practical ideas for living with dementia during the COVID-19 pandemic, including advice on managing social distancing **https://distancingwithdementia.org.uk/**

Dementia Carers Count Education, training and skills development for family and friends who care for a person with dementia.

Dementia UK