

Caring for someone with dementia



Community Mental Health Team for Older People

Caring for a loved one who has dementia can be challenging, but it can also be a very rewarding experience. Dementia will affect each person differently and your relative may require different things from you during the course of their illness. You may find it helpful to read 'What can help on a practical basis when living with dementia?' for guidance on practical strategies you can use to support your relative to live well with dementia.

A diagnosis of dementia will not only impact on the person but will also impact on other family members. As well as the coming to terms with the emotional impact of your relative receiving a diagnosis, you will also have to consider how becoming a carer may impact on your own life and daily routine and the lifestyle changes you and other family members may have to make.

It is really important that you, and those helping you to care for your relative, take good care of yourselves – physically and emotionally – you can't care for others if you are below yourself.

Here are some tips that others have found helpful:

- Get in touch with support groups in your area as soon as you can because talking to others in the same position can be really helpful. If you don't like the idea of a group just at the minute have a look at some of the books that are listed on the back pages.
- Practice talking to yourself in a positive way e.g 'I may not be doing this perfectly but I'm doing ok' is much more helpful than 'If anything else happens I'll not be able to cope'.
- Give yourself a break. Think about how you like to relax and then try to take time for this every day.
- Start to think about what sort of support you might want or need from other family members, friends, and health professionals. You may not need any assistance at the moment but it is useful to think about what you might want from others in the future. It helps to know that you are not alone and just like others caring for a relative with dementia, you can let others help.

Dementia will effect each person a little differently. On a day to day basis making small changes on how you interact and respond to the person, can be helpful in avoiding one or both of you becoming distressed. Some things that have been helpful for others are listed here; see what works for you both:

- Ensure your relative is well rested, fed, has plenty to drink and takes their prescribed medication; feeling tired, hungry, thirsty, or unwell perhaps through infection, constipation, or pain can make the symptoms of dementia worse.
- Encourage your relative to continue doing as much for themselves as possible. This can sometimes take extra time but it is time that is very well spent as it helps your relative to stay independent.
- If your relative has problems with their memory and they are forgetting things, pointing this out can be distressing for them. Try to avoid terms like – 'you already told me that.'
- Memory problems can lead to repetitive questions which can be hard to listen to. Try to understand the reason for questioning- are they anxious or fearful. Try to distract them by talking about a topic they enjoy. With patience you might be able to change the subject, or, maybe ask family or friends to spend some time with your relative – a change can be as good as a rest for you both.
- Just like any of us, your relative will feel good being involved in activities that they like, try to schedule something they will enjoy into the day.
- Take things at their pace, trying to rush may lead to confusion and your relative feeling overwhelmed.
- Encourage as much choice and control as is possible and safe. Try to avoid telling your relative what to do, being critical or pointing out mistakes. Think of how you feel when this happens to you. None of us really like to be told we are wrong.
- Remember, try not to take any negative things your relative says or does personally, it is not usually your relatives intention to hurt your feelings - dementia can be cruel sometimes.

What help is available for carers?

There are a range of options to support carers including:

- emotional support through one to one or support groups and
- practical help to assist you in the caring role.

Carer Education and Support

Information about dementia or support and guidance with responding to behaviours associated with the illness can be helpful.

Carer's education and support can be provided on both an individual and group basis. Individual support can be provided through the Community Mental Health Team for Older People and a carers' education and support through the Alzheimer's Society Crisp Programme.



Carer's Assessment

Every carer has a legal right to an assessment of their own needs to help them in their caring role. This is called a Carers' Assessment. You can request a carer assessment to be arranged through any healthcare professional involved in supporting you to care for your relative. Your GP can also refer you for a carer assessment.

Respite

There are a range of respite care options to allow a carer an opportunity to take a break. The option you will find most helpful will be individual to you and your personal circumstances. These may include:

- The person you are caring for attending a day centre.
- Someone sitting with the person within their own home or taking them out for a defined period.
- The person you care for going to stay in a care home for a defined period.

Information and support within the Belfast HSC Trust for carers of people living with dementia

Carers' Strategy

The Belfast Trust has developed a Carers' Strategy which can be accessed at the following web address www.belfasttrust.hscni.net

Carers' Coordinator BHSCT

The Carers' Coordinators can provide support for carers of all ages in their caring role to promote, enhance and protect the health and wellbeing of carers. They can provide information and help to organise a Carer's Needs Assessment.

Contact details for the Trust's Carers' Coordinators:

North or West Belfast - Lynne Calvert	Tel: 028 9504 6108
South or East Belfast and Castlereagh - Margaret McDonald	Tel: 028 9504 6702

Community Mental Health Team for Older People

Members of the team will listen and provide the appropriate information and support for particular issues raised by a carer. A referral can be made by your GP or you can contact the team directly.

Community Mental Health Team for Older People
Graham Clinic, Knockbracken Healthcare Park,
Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8BH
Tel: 028 9504 0346

Integrated Care Teams

Within Integrated Care Teams a range of health and social care staff work together to offer people easier access to the services required. Care Managers in the Integrated Care Teams provide an assessment for those with complex needs, requiring a high level of support, either at home or in a residential or nursing home.

Social Work staff working with the Integrated Teams provide an assessment for those with complex social needs and provide social services to support the person to meet their assessed need.

Care management and Social Work staff are important in arranging services or respite care to support carers and the person living with dementia.

You can:

- refer yourself
- be referred by a family member
- be referred by your GP or
- be referred by other health professionals.

All referrals are handled centrally by a Call Management Centre 028 9056 5565 which is available 24 hours a day.

General enquiries

Bradbury ICT, Bradbury Well-being and Treatment Centre
Tel: 028 9504 7770

Knockbreda ICT, Knockbreda Well-being and Treatment Centre
Tel: 028 9504 4450

Dundonald ICT, Arches Well-being and Treatment Centre
Tel: 028 9504 2330

Inner Arches ICT, Arches Well-being and Treatment Centre
Tel: 028 9504 2330

Grove Well-being and Treatment Centre
Tel: 028 9063 6800

Carlisle Well-being and Treatment Centre
Tel: 028 9504 2500

Beech Hall Well-being and Treatment Centre
Tel: 028 9504 0044

Shankhill Well-being and Treatment Centre
Tel: 028 9504 0043

Information and support provided by other agencies for carers of people living with Dementia

Alzheimer's Society

The society provides information for carers to support them in their caring role. They also provide various support groups throughout Belfast and a helpline.

www.alzheimer's.org.uk/northernireland

Unit 4, Balmoral Business Park, Boucher Crescent, Belfast, BT12 6HU

Tel: 028 9066 4100

Alzheimer's Society National Dementia Helpline 0300 222 11 22

CAUSE

CAUSE is a Northern Ireland mental health community organisation directed by carers. It provides:

- support
- education and
- respite for the relatives of people with serious mental illness.

CAUSE has a telephone helpline on 0845 60 30 29 1 with further information on their website www.cause.org.uk

CAUSE provides short courses and carers support groups.

Belfast Carers' Centre

Belfast Carers' Centre is an independent organisation dedicated to supporting carers of all ages, from all walks of life and from all areas. They provide someone to talk to, help with claiming benefits or accessing social and health services and advocacy on behalf of carers.

Website www.carers-centre.org

Belfast Carers' Centre
The Mount Conference Centre
2 Woodstock Link
Belfast BT6 8DD
Tel: 028 9073 0173

Carers NI

Carers NI works with and for carers all across Northern Ireland.

They:

- provide information
- support and
- campaign on behalf of carers.

Carers NI
3rd Floor
58 Howard Street
Belfast
BT1 6PJ
Tel: 028 9043 9843

Benefit Enquiry Line

This provides advice on a range of benefits including carers allowance and carers credit.

Contact the Benefit Enquiry Line Tel: 0800 220 674

9.00am-5.00pm weekdays, except Thursday 10.00am-5.00pm

How to contact us:



**Community Mental Health Team for
Older People Tel: (028) 9504 0346**

operates from Monday to Friday
9am to 5pm

We also offer an extended telephone advice
and support service for people living with
DEMENTIA and their carers operating:
Monday to Friday until 8pm
Saturday to Sunday 10am to 2pm

If you need to speak to someone
outside these hours please contact:
Regional Emergency Social Work Service
(028) 9504 9999

[www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/services/
CommunityMentalHealthTeams](http://www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/services/CommunityMentalHealthTeams)