



How to be a dementia friendly GP

There are currently 850,000 people in the UK with dementia, and this is set to rise to 1 million by 2025. We know that people with dementia can face challenges in accessing their GP but the services they provide in terms of diagnosis, support and planning can be a lifeline. For many it is the GP who opens the door to information, support and planning. GPs often provide the signposting needed to access support; and GPs hold responsibility for care plans and reviews for ongoing management.

When all the staff at a GP practice understand dementia and how it can affect someone this raises the standard of support and provision of support for people with dementia and their carers. A great starting point for this is to avail of Alzheimer's Society free Dementia Friends information sessions, which can then be followed with our more in-depth training sessions.

Dementia Friends sessions and further training cover many aspects of how to support people affected by dementia. Part of this involves understanding how best to modify our interactions and environment in order to be more accessible to people with dementia. The symptoms of dementia such as memory loss and communication difficulties can make accessing general practice more challenging for people with dementia. Though it can often be challenging to make changes and difficult to find time for training, even small changes to make your practice more dementia friendly can have a big impact, for example:

Ensuring the appointment booking system isn't complicated to navigate and is accessible to people with dementia.

To reduce the number of missed appointments by sending reminders through texts, calls or stickers to put in diaries so people with dementia are more likely to remember to attend an appointment.

Putting procedures in place to obtain consent to involve carers as appropriate. Involving carers can be vital for people with dementia, for example helping to ensure that appointments are attended and that agreed care plans are followed.

Making small changes to the environment of the practice to reduce the likelihood of causing distress or anxiety in people with dementia – for example ensuring all areas are well-signposted, and the waiting area promotes calm.

We encourage GP practices to signpost people with dementia and their carers to Alzheimer's Society. Alzheimer's Society offers practical information, advice and support locally and nationally on living well with dementia. Patients can get help in a number of ways including through our National Dementia Helpline (0300 222 11 22), which is open seven days a week providing information, advice and emotional support; our online community forum, Talking Point; our Dementia Connect Online Directory, where details of support services can be found through a postcode search; and a wide range of publications and information online.

Too many people with dementia report not receiving any information or signposting after diagnosis. Well informed, Dementia Friendly GP practices are vital to enabling people with dementia to access support and information, manage their condition, and to plan for the future.