



Supporting Care Homes

Supporting residents with Dementia
during the COVID-19 pandemic

Supporting care homes

Care homes across the country have been adversely affected by coronavirus.

The Alzheimer's Society have raised concerns about the impact the loss of social and family contact has had on people with dementia. Staff wearing full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) can be confusing and frightening for residents with dementia.

The council in partnership with SW London CCG have put together this guide on how to support care homes who are taking care of residents with dementia.

This guide is mainly for care home staff; however, friends and family can also benefit from the information provided.



Local concerns

Some of the concerns care home providers face are:

- The loneliness residents experience as a result of lack of contact with friends and family or lack of participation in group activities
- Residents' isolation and lack of social interaction resulting in disorientation and contributing to cognitive deterioration
- Residents being frightened when staff wear masks and other PPE
- Residents not understanding the need of social distancing
- Residents wellbeing being impacted by the changes in the home and on their usual routine.

Visiting and Activities

Activities for residents with dementia are important to help them pass time, keep engaged and stimulated. Family visits allow for social stimulation and regular face to face contact with loved ones helps residents with dementia to feel secure, improving their anxiety and mood, maintain basic cognition, communication skills and maintain their independence. There have been some limitations on family visits to care homes during COVID-19 – see guidance is available on the council website; [Wandsworth Visits in care homes](#).

Ideas on visiting and activities

- Ask family members to bring in familiar items that belong to the resident which have been washed/wiped down, when they visit
- Individual activities such as puzzles, colouring websites, music, films and TV shows can be carried out on individual tablets
- Newspapers and magazines can be accessed online via tablets
- Concerts, visits to theatre, museums, nature reserves and other places can be accessed virtually
- Group based virtual socially distanced workout classes, chair-based exercises
- When the care home is open for visitors, relatives and friends can go outside for a walk.
- Video calls can be used as a way for people living with mild dementia to keep in contact with relatives

Resources and further ideas:

Activities for Older Adults During COVID-19

Activity ideas during coronavirus for people with dementia

Dementia United collated resources for care home staff - in relation to dementia and COVID-19

Living with Dementia - Getting help in Wandsworth

Mental Health and Wellbeing

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Changes to daily routines can be difficult especially when residents may not understand what is happening to them. Not being able to see their friends and family has led to residents experiencing fear, anxiety, and loneliness.

Ideas on wellbeing

- Referral to the local Community Mental Health Team for support in managing changes in behaviour or any deterioration in the person's well-being
- Activities such as doll or pet therapy to reduce anxiety
- Offering comfort and support in a quiet area when the person is distressed.

Resources:

Wandsworth Older People's Community Mental Health Team which includes Behaviour and Communication Support Service (BACSS) supports staff who care for residents that are experiencing behavioural and emotional difficulties associated with a mental health diagnosis and/or dementia

The use of dolls in dementia care

Supporting Carers and Care Staff to Understand and Respond to Changes in Behaviour in People with Dementia during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dementia wellbeing in the COVID-19 pandemic

PPE

PPE is essential to reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19. However, residents with dementia can become confused or frightened when they interact with staff who wear PPE as some may no longer recognise familiar staff.

Ideas to try with your PPE

- Introducing yourself and remind the person why you are wearing PPE
- Laminate your name, role, and a photograph of you to wear around the neck or pinned to clothing
- Laminate a smiley face and attach this to your clothing or carry it with you. This may help the person feel safer when they cannot see facial expressions behind a mask.

Resources:

Impact of PPE on individual with Dementia

Dementia and COVID-19

Dementia United collated resources for care home staff - in relation to dementia and COVID-19

Meeting the Needs of People with Dementia Living in Care Homes during Covid-19 (VIDEO)



Decisions about care and treatment

During COVID-19 it may be necessary to change the way care and support is delivered to residents in care homes. Where residents lack the capacity to consent to these changes it is important to determine if this is a deprivation of the person's liberty and whether a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards authorisation is needed. In most cases, this will not be the case. For more information see [MCA and DOLS in COVID-19](#)

Where a person lacks capacity to make decisions about care and treatment, a best interest decision must be made and documented.

End of Life Care

When residents are in the last months of their life, they need support to live as well as possible and to die with dignity. This may be particularly difficult during COVID-19. It is important to be aware of any advanced decisions made by the person and where these are not in place to fully involve family members in making decisions about the person's care.

Resources:

[End of life care during the coronavirus pandemic while in a care home](#)

[COVID-19: End of life care in older people](#)

[Feelings after the person has died](#) (useful resources for families)

[Living with Dementia](#) (Wandsworth local dementia services, support and information)

[Royal Trinity Hospice](#)

[Marie Curie services](#)

Our contact details

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