



Coronavirus: How you can support people with dementia in your community

Five top tips for individuals volunteering their time in the coronavirus response



Foreword from our CEO, Kate Lee

Living with dementia at any time brings challenges for those with the condition and the people close to them. Many face stigma and isolation in everyday life and coronavirus (COVID-19) is making things much harder. Now more than ever, it is important that they get the help and support they need.

If you are volunteering in your local coronavirus response, whether for the NHS, through a community group or by supporting a neighbour or friend, you may be helping somebody living with dementia. This guide is for you.

We have worked with people affected by dementia to understand the unique challenges they face in this pandemic. This guide brings together the top five things that you can do to support them during this time.

You won't always know that somebody has dementia, and every person's dementia will be unique. These actions will give you a basic understanding of

the condition and its impact. In your role as a volunteer, you're already doing the most important things for people affected by dementia; showing kindness, patience and empathy.

Thank you for the invaluable support you are providing to our communities. It is amazing to see so many people throughout the country coming together to support people affected by dementia.



Kate Lee
CEO of Alzheimer's Society



Our five top tips on supporting people affected by dementia, for anyone volunteering in the coronavirus response:



Become a Dementia Friend

There are many misconceptions surrounding dementia; that it's just about losing your memory or that it's a natural part of ageing, for example. But there's so much more to the condition and so much more to a person than their dementia. If you're helping someone with the condition, it's important to have an understanding of how it can affect someone and the challenges they might face, so you know how to best support them.

Becoming a Dementia Friend simply means finding out more about how dementia affects a person – and then, armed with this understanding, doing small everyday things that help.

You can join online by watching our short 5-minute video or signing up to more in-depth interactive webinar or live streaming session.



Consider how you communicate

Dementia can affect a person's communication abilities. For example, a person with dementia may forget words or have problems following a conversation. Each person will experience dementia in their own way, but there are some simple things that you can do to communicate more effectively in person and on the phone:

- **Speak clearly, calmly and at a slightly slower pace if the person is having difficulty understanding**
- **Use short, simple sentences**
- **Be patient and give the person time to respond**
- **Try to avoid asking too many questions, or complicated questions, phrasing them in a way which allows a 'yes' or 'no' answer**
- **If you're supporting somebody in person, stand or sit where the person can see and hear you as clearly as possible, and try to be at eye level**
- **If you're supporting somebody remotely, try to use video calling, so the person can see your facial expressions and body language**

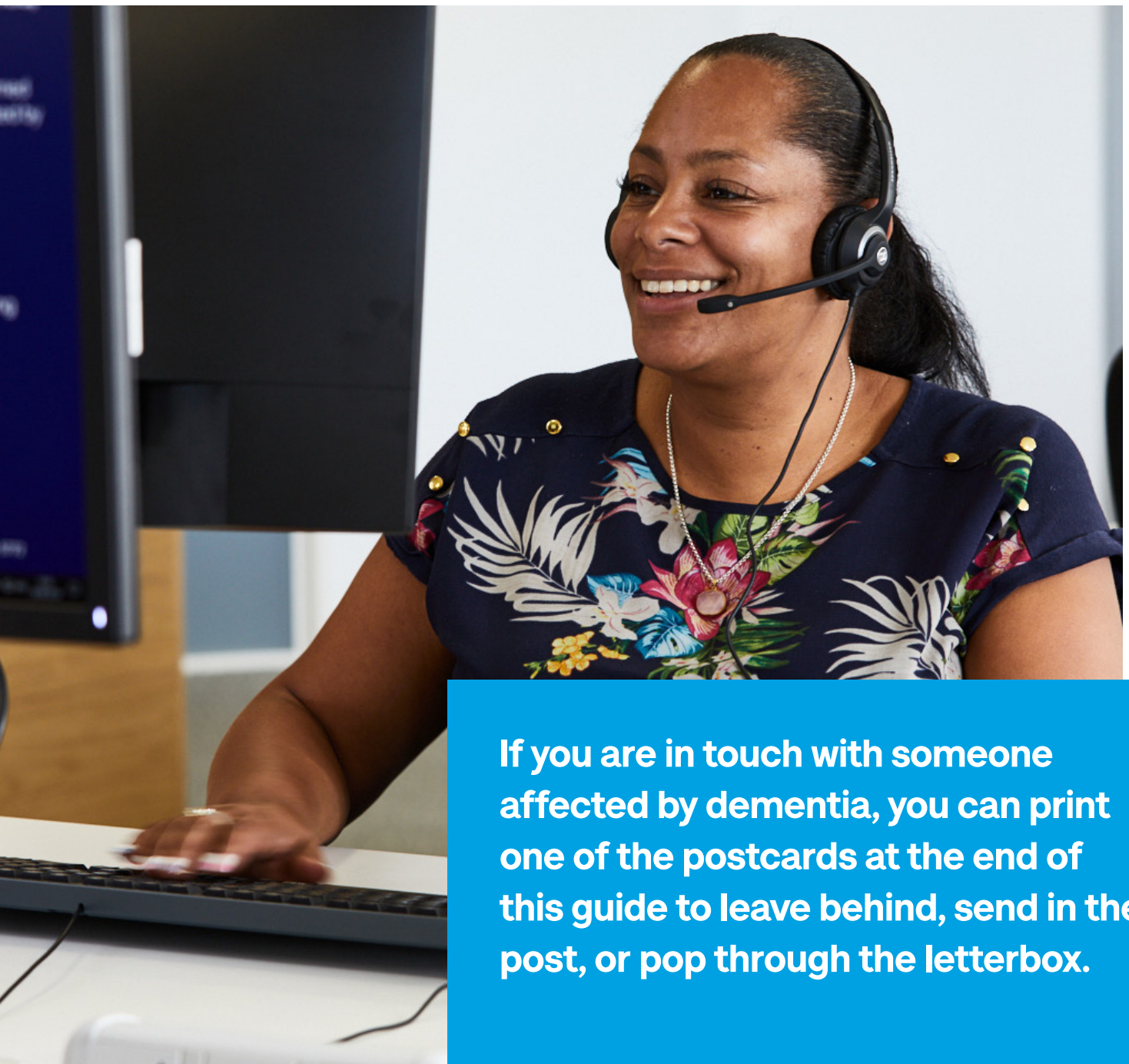


Share information about our Dementia Connect support line

You won't always know that somebody has dementia and it may be a subject the person doesn't want to discuss, so try to approach this conversation carefully.

Alzheimer's Society is here for anyone affected by dementia, offering personalised information, support and advice through our **Dementia Connect support line 0333 150 3456**.

Our dementia advisers are available on the phone to provide the support needed. They can help with things like connecting you to local groups, helping to understand dementia and coping techniques and advice on Lasting Power of Attorney.



If you are in touch with someone affected by dementia, you can print one of the postcards at the end of this guide to leave behind, send in the post, or pop through the letterbox.



Share information about support available to carers

Coronavirus is also adding to the challenges faced by carers. Many may be social isolating with the person living with dementia or caring for others from afar.

Somebody may tell you about their caregiving responsibilities and ask for additional support.

We've got lots of information on our website they might find useful, including a carers guide.

You can also signpost carers to Dementia Connect Talking Point. It's our helpful online community where anyone who is affected by dementia can receive valuable support. It's free, open day or night, and has lots discussion and experiences specific to coronavirus.



Share Dementia Connect Talking Point with anybody who might benefit from sharing their experience with other people affected by dementia:
alheimers.org.uk/talkingpoint



Share tips on staying busy and active at home

Keeping active and purposeful when staying at home will fight off boredom and frustration. It may also help a person living with dementia retain skills and independence for longer. If somebody you are supporting tells you they are struggling to stay occupied, there are lots of activities you can suggest:

- **If the person enjoys music, the website [BBC Music Memories](#) can help people with dementia reconnect with their most powerful memories**
- **If the person has a garden you could encourage them to get outside – they could plant some seeds and look forward to seeing them grow'**
- **Love to Move is a seated gymnastics programme for people living with dementia. You can download a pack from their website to try activities at home**
- **Puzzles and games that keep the mind active and engaged can be helpful, and a good distraction from the news. Our online shop has a variety of products specifically for people with dementia**
- **You can create home versions of somebody's favourite sports, like ten pin bowling with plastic bottles, or using rolled up socks to play indoor bowls.**



There are so many more ideas on Alzheimer's Society's website:
[alzheimers.org.uk/covid-activities](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/covid-activities)



Alzheimer's Society is here to support everyone affected by dementia.

If you are living with dementia or are concerned for a loved one, especially during the coronavirus outbreak, we're here for you.

Call our Dementia Connect support line for the support and advice you need:

0333 150 3456 (open every day)

Visit our website

alzheimers.org.uk



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Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity. We provide information and support, improve care, fund research, and create lasting change for people affected by dementia.

Keeping safe whilst volunteering

It is important to keep yourself and others safe whilst volunteering. If you find somebody in immediate danger, always call 999.

If you think somebody is at risk or is being abused, contact your local authority safeguarding team.

When supporting others, please ensure you follow the latest government advice on coronavirus and social distancing.

If someone you're supporting needs help with other tasks or additional support, make sure to refer them to the NHS GoodSAM patient referral scheme: **goodsamapp.org/NHSreferral**

Become a Dementia Friend
dementiafriends.org.uk/join

Dementia Connect support line
0333 150 3456

Staying active at home ideas
alzheimers.org.uk/covid-activities

Dementia Connect Talking Point
alzheimers.org.uk/talkingpoint

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20045sd

0300 222 1122
info@alzheimers.org.uk
alzheimers.org.uk

Registered office
Alzheimer's Society
43-44 Crutched Friars
London EC3N 2AE

