

# Allied Health Professionals

Supporting you to support people living with dementia and their families every day.



**Alzheimer  
Scotland**  
Action on Dementia

An estimated **90,000 people** have dementia in Scotland, around 3,200 of whom are under the age of 65. People with dementia experience a decline in cognitive function that, over time, affects their ability to live independently and can shorten their life expectancy. Dementia can not only have a considerable impact on the quality of life of the person living with the condition, but also their families and carers.

You will find that dementia is increasingly becoming part of your core role as an **Allied Health Professional** (AHP) regardless of your practice setting. We know that people with dementia over 65 years of age currently use up to one quarter of hospital beds, and are also more likely to be admitted to hospital than people without dementia due to co-existing conditions and/or secondary complications of dementia such as falls, fractures and infections (Health Improvement Scotland 2017). An estimated two thirds of people living with dementia live in the community and one third will be living in care-home settings (Alzheimer Society 2013). While dementia is often viewed as an isolated illness, people living with dementia may have other medical conditions. As a result, AHPs working in the community will also be working with people who have dementia, in their daily practice.

People living with dementia benefit greatly from a **biopsychosocial approach** of care that acknowledges the interactions of **neurological, psychological, physical, social and emotional** elements, and the AHP approach in dementia therefore combines all these elements (Alzheimer Scotland 2017, 2020). You can find out more about our work at [www.alzscot.org/ahpdementia](http://www.alzscot.org/ahpdementia).

This resource has been designed for all Allied Health Professionals, to help facilitate positive outcomes when working with people with dementia and their families whether you consider this as your area of speciality or not.

The resource provides you with practical ways that you **CAN** support people living with dementia and their families/carers in your everyday work, and you can also add to the resource with your own ideas too. Email us your ideas or feedback at [AHPDementia@alzscot.org](mailto:AHPDementia@alzscot.org) telling us, what you like about this booklet, what would make it even better and what's missing.





# Supporting families and carers as equal partners

**Families and carers can be a spouse, daughter/son, other relative, friend or neighbour and are key and equal partners in the person with dementia's care, view them as a source of expertise.**

## **This is what you can do to help:**

- Be an empathetic but informed listener
- Ask the person with dementia if they want their carer involved in discussions/decisions about their healthcare
- Carers can act as a co-therapist to your rehabilitation programme
- Keep family informed of input, actions, and appointments



# Enhancing daily living

**Activities of daily living include all tasks a person would complete on a daily basis, for example wash, dress, prepare food, leisure activities and engaging in the community.**

**This is what you can do to help:**

- Encourage the person to continue to engage in activities that are important to them
- Break down tasks into simple achievable steps, ensuring the person has what they need nearby in a clutter free area
- Supportive seating can provide pressure relief, postural support, can help with digestion and improve respiratory function
- If the person with dementia or their carer is still working, consider a referral to your local Occupational Therapist for vocational rehabilitation

**For further advice consider a referral to the local occupational therapist.**



# Adapting everyday environments

**The environment relates to where the person is staying. Even small changes can make a difference to the person living there.**

**This is what you can do to help:**

- Offer simple advice to improving lighting, and reduce environmental trip hazards e.g. rugs
- Offer advice to ensure flooring is consistent in colour and paving is even with any steps in good repair
- Consider the use of assistive technology, for example fall detectors, medication prompts, door exit sensors, GPS tracker
- Consider the use of labels and signs to improve orientation within the home environment

**If you are looking for more specialist information on equipment and adaptations speak to your local Occupational Therapist. Refer to the local Fire and Rescue Service for a free home fire safety check.**



# Maximising psychological well-being

People with dementia may encounter difficulties following conversations or finding the correct words to answer questions, effective communication is essential.

## This is what you can do to help:

- Find out what the person likes to be known as, always introduce yourself and explain why you are there
- Make sure glasses, hearing aids are of the correct prescription, working and the person is wearing them
- Reduce background noise and avoid interruptions
- Direct your conversation toward the person with dementia, use good eye contact, short simple sentences, yes/no questions, speak slowly and give the person time to answer

For more specialist information or assessment speak to your local Speech and Language Therapist. If you have concerns regarding hearing or sight refer to Optician or Audiology.



# Maximising physical well-being

**Always ask the person with dementia if they can do something themselves before helping.**

## **This is what you can do to help:**

- Activity and exercise programmes should be structured, repetitive, purposeful and in pictorial form if required
- If the individual is experiencing unexplained falls, liaise with the pharmacist for a medication review as well speaking to your local physiotherapist
- If the person develops foot pain, changes in colour or breaks to the skin, refer to the local podiatry service.
- Ensure footwear is well fitting
- Access to the right nutrition and hydration can help maintain health and wellbeing. Ensure all food and drinks are within sight and reach of the person
- Check that dentures fit and whether the person likes to wear them for eating

**Consider a referral to Podiatry, Orthotics, Audiology, Dentist, Dietitian, Speech and Language Therapist, Pharmacy and Physiotherapist.**

# Helpful resources

## Supporting Families & Carers

**Resilience Booklets:** [www.alzscot.org/living-with-dementia/caring-for-someone-with-dementia/resources-for-carers/for-carers-by-carers-a-resilience-project](http://www.alzscot.org/living-with-dementia/caring-for-someone-with-dementia/resources-for-carers/for-carers-by-carers-a-resilience-project)

**Carers assessment:** contact local social services department

## Enhancing Daily Living

**Post Diagnostic Resource:** [tinyurl.com/SDWGpdsresource](http://tinyurl.com/SDWGpdsresource)

**Living Well with Dementia:** [tinyurl.com/SDWGoTips](http://tinyurl.com/SDWGoTips)

## Adapting Everyday Environments

**Adaptations without Delay:** [www.rcot.co.uk/adaptations-without-delay](http://www.rcot.co.uk/adaptations-without-delay)

**Travelling safely with Dementia:** [www.dementiavoices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Travelling-with-dementia-V4-07.09.16.pdf](http://www.dementiavoices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Travelling-with-dementia-V4-07.09.16.pdf)

**A guide to making general practice dementia friendly:** [www.alzscot.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/A%20guide%20to%20making%20general%20practice%20dementia%20friendly.pdf](http://www.alzscot.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/A%20guide%20to%20making%20general%20practice%20dementia%20friendly.pdf)

**Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:** [www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/for-householders/home-fire-safety-visit.aspx](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/for-householders/home-fire-safety-visit.aspx)

## Maximising Psychological Wellbeing

**Dementia and Sensory Challenges:** [www.lifechangestrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/Leaflet.pdf](http://www.lifechangestrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/Leaflet.pdf)

**Communicating with someone who has dementia:** [tinyurl.com/c8eyj6h](http://tinyurl.com/c8eyj6h)

## Maximising Physical Wellbeing

**Nutrition and Diet Resources (2014) Eating well with Dementia**

– **A carers guide:** [www.lifechangestrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/publication/files/Eating-with-Dementia-a-carers-guide.pdf](http://www.lifechangestrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/publication/files/Eating-with-Dementia-a-carers-guide.pdf)

## Allied Health Professionals and Dementia

Allied Health Professionals have created a suite of information resources for people with dementia and those who support them. This includes information on activities at home, physical activity, footcare, tips for talking and diet and hydration. This information is relevant for people living at home, being supported at home or in a care home setting. This will be updated on a regular basis so please check back to see the most up-to-date information at [www.alzscot.org/information-and-resources-by-our-allied-health-professionals](http://www.alzscot.org/information-and-resources-by-our-allied-health-professionals) and [www.alzscot.org/ahpresources](http://www.alzscot.org/ahpresources) and [www.connectingpeopleconnectingsupport.online](http://www.connectingpeopleconnectingsupport.online)



## Further information

Alzheimer Scotland is Scotland's national dementia charity. Our aim is to make sure nobody faces dementia alone. We provide support and information to people with dementia, their carers and families, we campaign for the rights of people with dementia and fund vital dementia research.



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