



Care & Repair Cymru

How to do it Mini Guides

Dementia Awareness - Information & Training Pack

	Contents	Page
1.	Aim of the Mini Guide	3
2.	Introduction	3
3.	What is dementia?	4
4.	The progression of dementia	6
5.	The later stages of dementia	9
6.	Unusual or puzzling behaviour	11
7.	Communicating	15
8.	Offering simple choices	20
9.	Safety at home	21
10.	Top tip	22
11.	Training pack	23

1. AIM OF THE MINI GUIDE

This guide aims to summarise on Dementia Awareness, developed by Gofal a Thrwsio Gwynedd (in partnership with Alzheimer's Society), in providing information and training on dementia awareness for visiting officers and external contractors and trades people to enable its simple replication across those Agencies and Counties who wish to develop their own local training awareness along the same or similar lines.

It is hoped that the mini guide will encourage and promote the *Dementia Awareness: Information & Training Pack* across as wide an area of Wales as possible.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE DEMENTIA AWARENESS: INFORMATION & TRAINING PACK

The Welsh Assembly Government's National Dementia Vision for Wales: *Dementia Supportive Communities* launched in February 2011, highlights the impact of dementia on Wales with the projection in the number of people with dementia increasing 31% by 2021, and by as much as 44% in some rural areas. The document identifies four priority areas for improvement, and one being *'improved training for those delivering care, including research'*.

In 2010/11 Care & Repair Cymru were successful in obtaining Welsh Assembly Government funding to specifically develop literature and information to promote and share good practice amongst Care & Repair Agencies across Wales, and one of the four themes was on developing this information and training pack on dementia awareness.

3. What is dementia?

The term 'dementia' is used to describe the symptoms that occur when the brain is affected by specific diseases and conditions. These include Alzheimer's disease and sometimes as a result of a stroke.

Dementia is progressive, which means the symptoms will gradually get worse. How fast dementia progresses will depend on the individual. Each person is unique and will experience dementia in their own way.

Symptoms of dementia include:

- **Loss of memory** – for example, forgetting the way home from the shops, or being unable to remember names and places, or what happened earlier the same day.
- **Mood changes** – particularly as parts of the brain that control emotion are affected by disease. People with dementia may also feel sad, frightened or angry about what is happening to them.
- **Communication problems** – a decline in the ability to talk, read and write.

In the later stages of dementia, the person affected will have problems carrying out everyday tasks, and will become increasingly dependent on other people.

What causes dementia?

There are several diseases and conditions that cause dementia. These include:

- **Alzheimer's disease** – The most common cause of dementia. During the course of the disease the chemistry and structure of the brain changes, leading to the death of brain cells.
- **Vascular disease** – The brain relies on a network of vessels to bring it oxygen-bearing blood. If the oxygen supply to the brain fails, brain cells are likely to die and this can cause the symptoms of vascular dementia. These symptoms can occur either suddenly, following a stroke, or over time through a series of small strokes.
- **Dementia with Lewy bodies** – This form of dementia gets its name from tiny spherical structures that develop inside nerve cells. Their presence in the brain leads to the degeneration of brain tissue. Memory, concentration and language skills are affected. This form of dementia shares some characteristics with Parkinson's disease.
- **Fronto-temporal dementia (including Pick's disease)** – In fronto-temporal dementia, damage is usually focused in the front part of the brain. Damage to the frontal lobe can impact on our social skills and inhibitions causing unusual changes in behaviour.

Who gets dementia?

- There are about 750,000 people in the UK with dementia.
- Dementia mainly affects older people. However, it can affect younger people : there are over 16,000 people in the UK under the age of 65 who have dementia.
- Dementia can affect men and women.
- Scientists are investigating the genetic background to dementia. It does appear that in a few rare cases the diseases that cause dementia can be inherited. Some people with a particular genetic make-up have a higher risk than others of developing dementia.

Can dementia be cured?

Most forms of dementia cannot be cured, although research is continuing into developing drugs, vaccines and treatments. Drugs have been developed that can temporarily alleviate some of the symptoms of some types of dementia.

4. The progression of dementia

Each person experiences dementia in their own way, but it can be helpful to think of the way it progresses as a series of stages. The following outlines the characteristics of early-, middle- and late-stage Alzheimer's disease, and briefly looks at how other forms of dementia progress.

Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive illness. This means that the structure and chemistry of the brain become increasingly damaged over time. The person's ability to remember, understand, communicate and reason will gradually decline. Looking at Alzheimer's disease as a series of three stages can be a useful way of understanding the changes that occur over time.

Early stage

Alzheimer's disease usually begins gradually with very minor changes in the person's abilities or behaviour. At the time, such signs are often mistakenly attributed to stress or bereavement or, in older people, to the normal process of ageing. It is often only when looking back that we realise that these signs were probably the beginnings of the dementia. Loss of memory for recent events is a common early sign. Difficulties with short term memory and concentration may be the first signs that a person experiences, this can often be overlooked as stress or general illness, if symptoms persist or become worse, the person should seek medical advice.

Middle stage

As Alzheimer's disease progresses, the changes become more marked. The person will need more support to help them manage their day-to-day living. They may need frequent reminders or help to eat, wash, dress and use the toilet. They are likely to become increasingly forgetful - particularly of names - and may sometimes repeat the same question or phrase over and over because of the decline in their short-term memory. They may also fail to recognise people or confuse them with others. Due to the decline in the short term memory, the person may repeat the same question or phrase. Remembering names may be a challenge resulting in confusion with recognition, details or relationship to the person.

These challenges can be upsetting and frustrating for the person resulting in lack of confidence and insecurity or defensive behaviour or anger.

Some people at this stage become very easily upset, angry or aggressive - perhaps because they are feeling frustrated - or they may lose their confidence and become very clingy.

Late stage

At this stage, the person with Alzheimer's will need even more help, and will gradually become totally dependent on others for nursing care. Loss of memory may become very pronounced, with the person unable to recognise familiar objects or surroundings or even those closest to them, although there may be sudden flashes of recognition. Verbal communication may be challenging requiring those around the person to be much more creative in finding other ways to communicate and support the person.

The person may also become increasingly frail. They may start to shuffle or walk unsteadily, eventually becoming confined to bed or a wheelchair.

Vascular dementia

In vascular dementia, which is commonly caused by a stroke or a series of small strokes, brain cells are deprived of oxygen and die. This can occur in distinct parts of the brain, leaving other areas relatively unaffected.

Some people with vascular dementia find that symptoms remain steady for a time and then suddenly decline as the result of another stroke. Others experience a more gradual decline.

People in early stages of vascular dementia may have insight to the difficulties they are experiencing and are therefore at high risk of clinical depression, the symptoms for this can often be overlooked due to the diagnosis of dementia and as a result, may go untreated.

Fronto-temporal dementia (including Pick's disease)

This type of dementia is caused by damage to the frontal and/or temporal lobes of the brain. These are the areas responsible for our social skills (behaviour), our emotional responses and our language skills.

During the early stages of fronto-temporal dementia, memory for recent events may be unaffected. However, there may be other changes. For example, the disease may cause some people to appear uncharacteristically selfish and unfeeling. They may behave rudely, or may seem more easily distracted.

Other symptoms may include loss of inhibition and ritualised behaviour. In a small number of cases, a person's first problems may be with recalling the names of objects and comprehending words or with producing fluent speech.

Dementia with Lewy bodies

Dementia with Lewy bodies gets its name from microscopic deposits that are found in the brain after death. These cause the degeneration and eventual death of nerve cells in the brain.

Half or more of those affected by dementia with Lewy bodies also develop signs and symptoms of Parkinson's disease, such as slowness of movement, stiffness and tremor. They may also have difficulty in judging distances, and are more prone to falls. People with this type of dementia also commonly experience visual hallucinations.

One feature of this type of dementia that often puzzles those around them is that the abilities of the affected person may fluctuate from day to day, or even during the course of a single day. In the later stages, the symptoms are often very similar to those experienced in Alzheimer's disease.

5. The later stages of dementia

During the later stages of dementia most people will become increasingly frail due to the progress of the illness. They will also gradually become totally dependent on others for all their care. Knowing what to expect can help everyone to prepare, and can enable the person to write an informed advance decision before they reach this stage so they can have some say over how they will be cared for.

Symptoms in the later stages

Each person with dementia experiences their illness in their own individual way. The symptoms described below do not necessarily indicate that a person is in the later stages of the disease, as several of them can also be experienced in the earlier stages. However, these symptoms are very likely to occur in the later stages.

Memory loss

Memory loss is likely to be very severe in the later stages of dementia. People may be unable to recognise those close to them or even their own reflection. They may no longer be able to find their way around familiar surroundings or identify everyday objects. However, they may occasionally experience sudden flashes of recognition.

The person may believe that they are living in a time from their past, and may search for someone or something from that time. It can be helpful for those around them to use this as an opportunity to talk about the past and try to reassure the person. It is important for others to respond to and support the emotions that the person is expressing.

Communication

The person with dementia will experience increasing problems understanding what is being said to them and what is going on around them. They are likely to find it difficult to communicate with other people. They may gradually lose their speech, or they may repeat a few words or cry out from time to time. However, verbal language is only one way of communicating. The person's expression and body language may give clues about how they are feeling. Try not to correct any errors in what the person says, remember that the memory has been damaged due to the disease process, insisting on 'correct' details can make the person feel humiliated and frightened.

Loss of mobility

Dementia can cause difficulty with balance and coordination, the person may shuffle or seem unsteady appearing slow or clumsy in their movement. It is important to ensure walking areas are uncluttered and try not to move furniture around as the change in how the room looks can increase disorientation.

Many people with dementia gradually lose their ability to walk and to perform everyday tasks unaided. One of the first signs of this is that they shuffle or walk unsteadily. They may also seem slow or clumsy and be more likely to bump into things, drop objects or fall. A stroke, arthritis or the effects of a fall may also affect a person's mobility.

Incontinence

Due to the physical damage in the brain, the person may experience difficulty remembering where the toilet is, they may find it hard to recognise the toilet, especially if the seat is the same colour as the rest of the bathroom. Consider making it easier to orientate by changing the seat for a brighter contrasting colour. Make sure the bathroom and toilet are clearly signed with pictures and words to help the person orientate.

Many people lose control of their bladder in the later stages of dementia. Some also lose control of their bowels.

6. Unusual or puzzling behaviour

As dementia develops, it can cause behaviour changes that can be confusing, irritating or difficult for others to understand, leaving carers, partners and family members feeling stressed, irritable or helpless. By learning to understand the meaning behind the actions, it can be easier to stay calm and deal effectively with the challenges that arise. This factsheet outlines some typical sorts of unusual behaviour in people with dementia and explains some common causes.

Each person is an individual, with their own preferences and character traits. However, certain forms of behaviour are particularly common in people with dementia. If the person you are caring for has difficulty expressing him or herself in words, the unusual behaviour may become more extreme. By working out what each behaviour means, and finding ways to overcome the problem, the situation can become more manageable. It is important to remember that all behaviour is a form of communication, our role is to try and understand what the person may be trying to communicate, while this is not always easy, if we respond to the feelings being expressed we can often avoid situations that we may find challenging.

Common types of unusual behaviour

Repetitive behaviour

People with dementia often carry out the same activity, make the same gesture, or ask the same question repeatedly. Medical professionals sometimes call this 'perseveration'. This repetition may be because the person doesn't remember having done it previously, but it can also be for other reasons, such as boredom.

It is not unusual for a person with dementia to go through the motions of the activity they may previously have carried out at work. This can indicate a need to be occupied and to feel there is a purpose and structure to their life. Specific types of repetitive behaviour may include:

- **Asking the same question over and over again** - As well as memory loss, this can be due to the person's feelings of insecurity or anxiety about their ability to cope. People with dementia may become anxious about future events such as a visitor arriving, or a new face in the house, which can lead to repeated questioning.
- **Repetitive phrases or movements** - This can be due to noisy or stressful surroundings, or boredom.
- **Repetitive actions** - Actions such as repeatedly packing and unpacking a bag, or rearranging the chairs in a room, may relate to a former activity such as travelling or entertaining friends. If so, this may serve as a basis for conversation.
- **Repeatedly asking to go home** - This may take place in residential care, or when the person is already at home. It can be a sign of anxiety, insecurity, fear or depression. The concept of 'home' might evoke memories of a time or place where the person felt comfortable or safe, or

of a home, family and friends that no longer exist. If the person doesn't recognise their present environment as 'home', then it isn't home for them. Try to understand and acknowledge the person's feelings and reassure them that they are safe and loved.

- **Multiple phone calls** - Some people with dementia phone their loved ones over and over again - particularly in the middle of the night. This can be very frustrating and distressing. The person with dementia may forget that they have already called, or may be insecure or anxious.

Restlessness

Some people with dementia experience general restlessness. This can be a sign of hunger, thirst, constipation or pain, or the person may be ill or suffering from the side-effects of medication.

- **Pacing up and down** - Pacing may indicate that the person wants to use the toilet but is unable to tell you. Try asking the person whether they need to use the toilet, or lead them towards it. If they are adamant that they want to pace, try to find somewhere they can walk safely. If the person has previously been physically active, they may be feeling frustrated and want to go for a walk.
- **Fidgeting** - Someone with dementia may fidget constantly. As with pacing, try to distract their attention and offer reassurance. This can also be a sign of boredom or restlessness, try to find the person something to do that will help them feel useful and reduce anxiety.

Shouting and screaming

The person may continually call out for someone, shout the same word, or scream or wail over and over again.

- They could be in pain or ill, experiencing difficulties with visual perception or hallucinations, or the behaviour could be a result of physical damage within the brain.
- A person with dementia may feel lonely or distressed, if their short term memory is damaged they may not remember that you are in the next room and believe they are alone. They may feel anxious about their failing memory, bored, or stressed by too much noise and bustle.

Lack of inhibition

The person may behave in a way that other people find embarrassing because of their failing memory and general confusion. In a few cases, this may be due to specific damage to the brain. Try to react calmly.

- Some people with dementia may undress in public, having forgotten when and where it is appropriate to remove their clothes.
- Stroking or exposing genitals in public, or apparently inappropriate sexual behaviour, may be a result of the physical damage to the part of the brain

that allows us to recognise acceptable social behaviours. Without the logic and reason to remember that this behaviour may not be appropriate, the person may be seeking comfort or experiencing sexual frustration.

- Some actions, such as lifting a skirt or fiddling with flies, may not be related to sex at all - it may simply be a sign that the person wants to use the toilet.
- If the person behaves rudely - for example, by insulting people or swearing or spitting - don't attempt to argue or correct the behaviour. Try to distract their attention, remember that the ability to apply logic and reason may be damaged; therefore stating the obvious may increase the behaviour.

Night-time waking

Many people with dementia are restless at night and find it difficult to sleep. Older people often need less sleep than younger people in any case. Dementia can affect people's body clocks so that they may get up in the night, get dressed or even go outside.

Trailing and checking

Living with dementia makes many people feel extremely insecure and anxious. This can result in the person constantly following their carers or loved ones around, or calling out to check where they are. A few moments may seem like hours to a person with dementia, and they may only feel safe if other people are nearby.

Hiding and losing things

People with dementia sometimes hide things and then forget where they are - or forget that they have hidden them at all. The wish to hide things may be due to feelings of insecurity and a desire to hold on to what little the person still has.

Suspicion

Some people with dementia can become suspicious. If they have mislaid an object they may accuse someone of stealing it, or they may imagine that a friendly neighbour is plotting against them. These ideas may be due to failing memory and the loss of logic and reason, an inability to recognise people, and the need to make sense of what is happening around them.

Sleeplessness and 'sundowning'

Many people with dementia, especially in the middle stages, experience periods of increased confusion at dusk, with their disorientation continuing throughout the night. These periods of what is known as 'sundowning' usually diminish as the dementia progresses.

Tips: Coping with unusual behaviour

- Try to remember that the **person is not being deliberately difficult**; their sense of reality may be very different to yours but very real to them. Dementia can affect a person's ability to use logic and reason so things that may seem obvious to you might appear to be very different for the person with dementia.
- Ask yourself **whether the behaviour is really a problem**. If the behaviour is linked to a particular activity, ask yourself if this task really needs to be done right now or if you could leave it for a while until the person has calmed down.
- **Try to put yourself in the person's situation**. Imagine how they might be feeling and what they might be trying to express.
- **Offer as much reassurance as you can**.
- Remember that **all behaviour is a means of communication**. If you can establish what the person is trying to communicate, you will resolve the problem much more quickly.
- **Distract the person with calming activities** such as a hand massage, stroking a pet, a drive in the country or by playing their favourite music.
- Some people find unusual behaviours, particularly a repetitive behaviour, very irritating. If you feel you can't contain your irritation, make an excuse to leave the room for a while.
- If you find the person's behaviour really difficult to deal with, **ask for advice and assistance** from their carer or other professionals.
- Remember that **it is possible to be the cause of the behaviour through a lack of understanding** of what the person is trying to communicate. Try stepping away from the situation, look at the person's body language and try to understand what they might be feeling at that time. **Give the person space to calm down and offer reassurance**.

7. Communicating

We all need to communicate with other people. Communicating our needs, wishes and feelings is vital – not only to improve our quality of life, but also to preserve our sense of identity. **If you need to communicate with someone with dementia, it's important to encourage the person to do so in whichever way works best for them.**

We tend to think of communication as talking, but in fact it consists of much more than that. As much as 90 per cent of our communication takes place through non-verbal communication, such as gestures, facial expressions and touch.

Non-verbal communication is particularly important for a person with dementia who is losing their language skills. What is more, when a person with dementia behaves in ways that cause problems for those caring for them, it is important to realise that they may be trying to communicate something.

Dementia and language

An early sign that someone's language is being affected by dementia is that they can't find the right words – particularly the names of objects. The person may substitute an incorrect word, or may not find any word at all.

There may come a time when the person can hardly communicate through language at all. Not only will they be unable to find the words of objects: they may even forget the names of friends and family. People with dementia often confuse the generations – mistaking their wife for their mother, for example. This may be very distressing for their loved ones, but it's a natural aspect of their memory loss. Understand that while the person may not be able to correctly place their relative, they may be responding to how that person makes them feel; if their wife is taking care of them, this is something a mother would do, therefore the person may associate the feeling as the same as mother used to make them feel.

The person with dementia may be trying to interpret a world that no longer makes sense to them because their brain is processing information incorrectly. Sometimes the person with dementia and those around them will misinterpret each other's attempts at communication. These misunderstandings can be difficult, and may require some support.

Difficulties with communication can be upsetting and frustrating for the person with dementia and for those around them, but there are lots of ways to help make sure that you understand each other.

Tips: communicating with someone with dementia

General advice

- Listen carefully to what the person has to say.
- Make sure you have their full attention before you speak.
- Pay attention to body language.
- Speak clearly.
- Think about how things appear in the reality of the person with dementia.
- Consider whether any other factors are affecting communication.
- Use physical contact to reassure the person.
- Show respect and patience, remember it may take longer for the brain to process the information and respond.

Listening skills

- Try to **listen carefully** to what the person is saying, and give them plenty of encouragement.
- If the person has difficulty finding the right word or finishing a sentence, ask them to explain in a different way. **Listen out for clues.**

Attracting the person's attention

- Try to **catch and hold the attention** of the person before you start to communicate.
- Make sure they can **see you** clearly.
- Make **eye contact**. This will help them focus on you.
- Try to **minimise competing noises**, such as the radio, TV, or other people's conversation.

Using body language

- A person with dementia will read your body language. Agitated movements or a tense facial expression may cause upset or distress, and can make communication more difficult.
- **Be calm and still while you communicate.** This shows the person that you are giving them your full attention, and that you have time for them.
- **Never stand over someone to communicate:** it can feel intimidating. Instead, drop below their eye level. This will help the person to feel more in control of the situation.
- Standing too close to the person can also feel intimidating, so always **respect their personal space.**
- If words fail the person, **pick up cues from their body language.**

Speaking clearly

- As the dementia progresses, the person will become less able to start a conversation, so **you may have to start taking the initiative.**

- **Speak clearly and calmly.** Avoid speaking sharply or raising your voice, as this may distress the person even if they can't follow the sense of your words.
- **Use simple, short sentences.**
- Processing information will take the person longer than it used to, so **allow enough time.** If you try to hurry, they may feel pressured.

Whose reality?

- As dementia progresses, fact and fantasy can become confused. If the person says something you know isn't true, **try to find ways around the situation** rather than responding with a flat contradiction. Respond to the feelings being expressed rather than the facts.

Show respect

- **Make sure you don't speak down to the person with dementia** or treats them like a child, even if they don't seem to understand what people say. No one likes being patronised.
- Try to **include the person in conversations with others.** You may find this easier if you adapt the way you say things slightly. Being included in social groups can help a person with dementia to preserve their fragile sense of their own identity. It also helps to protect them from overwhelming feelings of exclusion and isolation.
- If you are getting little response from the person, it can be very tempting to speak about the person as if they weren't there. But disregarding someone in this way can make them feel very cut off, frustrated and sad.

Understanding and respecting the person with dementia

It's very important that people with dementia are treated with respect. It is important to remember that a person with dementia is still a unique and valuable human being, despite their illness.

When a person with dementia finds that their mental abilities are declining, they often feel vulnerable and in need of reassurance and support. The people closest to them - including their carers, health and social care professionals, friends and family - need to do everything they can to help the person to retain their sense of identity and feelings of self-worth.

Helping the person feel valued

The person with dementia needs to feel respected and valued for who they are now, as well as for who they were in the past. There are many things that the people around them can do to help, including:

- trying to be flexible and tolerant
- making time to listen, have regular chats, and enjoy being with the person
- showing affection in a way they both feel comfortable with
- finding things to do together, like creating a life history book.

What's in a name?

Our sense of who we are is closely connected to the names we call ourselves. It's important that people address the person with dementia in a way that the person recognises and prefers.

- Some people may be happy for anybody to call them by their first name or nickname.
- Others may prefer younger people, or those who do not know them very well, to address them formally and to use courtesy titles, such as Mr. or Mrs.

Acting with courtesy

Many people with dementia have a fragile sense of self-worth; it's especially important that people continue to treat them with courtesy, however advanced their dementia.

- **Be kind and reassuring** to the person with dementia without talking down to them.
- Never talk over their head as if they are not there - especially if you're talking about them. **Include them in conversations.**
- **Do not scold or criticise them.**
- **Look for the meaning behind their words**, even if they don't seem to be making much sense. Whatever the detail of what they are saying, the person is usually trying to communicate how they feel.
- Try to **imagine how you would like to be spoken to** if you were in their position.

Respecting privacy

- Try to make sure that the person's right to privacy is respected.
- Everyone involved - including the person's friends, family members, carers, and the person with dementia themselves - reacts to the experience of dementia in their own way. Dementia means different things to different people.

Helping the person feel good about themselves

There are lots of things you can do to help the person with dementia feel good about themselves.

When you spend time with someone with dementia, it is important to take account of their abilities, interests and preferences.

Praise what the person does well and try not to criticize what they may get wrong.

Supporting the person to express their feelings

Dementia affects people's thinking, reasoning and memory, but the person's feelings remain intact. A person with dementia will probably be sad or upset at times. In the earlier stages, the person may want to talk about their anxieties and the problems they are experiencing.

- Try to understand how the person feels.
- Make time to offer them support, rather than ignoring them or 'jollyng them along'.
- Don't brush their worries aside, however painful they may be, or however insignificant they may seem. Listen, and show the person that you are there for them.

8. Offering simple choices

- Make sure that, whenever possible, you inform and consult the person about matters that concern them. Give them every opportunity to make their own choices.
- When you are helping someone, always explain what you are doing and why. You may be able to judge the person's reaction from their expression and body language.
- People with dementia can find choice confusing, so keep it simple. Phrase questions so that they only need a 'yes' or 'no' answer, such as *'Would you like the grabrail placed here?'* rather than *'Where would you like the grabrail placed?'*

Tips: maintaining respect

- Avoid situations in which the person is bound to fail, as this can be humiliating. Look for tasks that they can still manage and activities they enjoy.
- Give plenty of encouragement. Let them do things at their own pace and in their own way.
- Do things with the person, rather than for them, to help them retain their independence.
- Break activities down into small steps so that they feel a sense of achievement, even if they can only manage part of a task.
- Our self-respect is often bound up with the way we look. Encourage the person to take pride in their appearance, and compliment them on how they look.
- Try not to correct what the person says to you, the accuracy of the information is not as important as what the person is trying to express.

9. Safety in the home

When considering the needs of someone with dementia, it is important to find the right balance between independence and the need for protection. The person with dementia should be involved in decision making and their consent sought and given, where possible. Where this is not possible, it is vital that those making the decision have the person's best interests at heart. There is no such thing as a completely risk-free environment for any of us, and when someone is living with dementia it may be that some minor accidents are inevitable.

Dementia leads to changes in a person's capabilities and behaviour, and those around them need to be alert to these changes and adapt as necessary. Of course, each person with dementia is different, and every home situation varies. However, accidents involving people with dementia are more likely to happen, for the following reasons:

- Sense of balance and speed of reaction tend to decline as people get older.
- Physical difficulties and mobility problems make it harder to carry out some activities.
- Dementia affects memory and judgement. It also affects insight, so a person with dementia may not be aware that doing something might be dangerous to themselves or to other people.
- Those caring for someone with dementia are often tired, and feel under pressure.
- Accidents can be more likely to happen when people are stressed or confused.
- Damage in the brain may be causing visual perception problems making it harder for the person to make sense of what they see and understand.

10. Top Tip

Always try to remember

- Each person with dementia is a unique individual with their own individual experiences of life, their own needs and feelings, and their own likes and dislikes.

- Although some symptoms of dementia are common to everyone, dementia affects each person in different ways.

- We all need to feel valued and respected and it is important for a person with dementia to feel that they still have an important part to play in life. Give encouragement and reassurance and support other family members to understand the person's needs and concerns.

11. Training Pack

Dementia awareness training from Alzheimer's Society

Alzheimer's Society can work with organisations to provide dementia training for staff who come into contact with people with dementia.

In addition to the training we deliver to care professionals, we provide tailored training sessions for staff from organisations outside the health and social care sector who wish to improve their services for people with dementia.

We offer workshops which provide an insight into the everyday experience of people with dementia, and aim to put the learner in the shoes of the person with dementia.

Areas covered by our training include:

- The experience of people with dementia
- What is dementia?
- Communication
- Supporting people and meeting needs

Below are some example course objectives from our one day Dementia awareness course

The experience of people with dementia

- ✓ Describe what the experience of dementia might be like for a person living with a dementia.
- ✓ Explain that a person's experience of living with a dementia is unique to each individual and defies any stereotypes or assumptions.

What is dementia?

- ✓ Explain what dementia is and describe some of the common signs and symptoms of dementia.
- ✓ Describe that dementia is a syndrome caused by a number of different conditions.
- ✓ Identify factors that can cause 'secondary losses of ability'.
- ✓ Explain that everyone is affected differently by dementia and will therefore have different experiences and needs.

For further information, including cost, or to discuss the dementia training needs of your staff please email workforcedevelopment@alzheimers.org.uk or call **01904 633 581**.