

# Guidance for caring for people with dementia during this period of lockdown

People with dementia are particularly vulnerable to the psychological and social impacts of isolation and lockdown.

Worries expressed by people affected by dementia include maintaining supplies of food and medication, anxiety about hospital admission, lack of confidence, feelings of loss and grief, agitation, and rapid decline in cognitive and functional ability.

Carers feel more captive in their role and lack respite opportunities. Many find it difficult to explain the current restrictions to a person with dementia and worry about their safety and well-being.

Those with more advanced dementia may also have difficulty understanding the need for self-isolation or hand washing techniques. They may not be able to describe their symptoms, so carers have to rely on observations about the signs of COVID-19. During this crisis, the carers of people with dementia can feel particularly isolated and so support for them and their families is also essential.

People with dementia, their family and carers are disproportionately affected by social distancing, isolation and lockdown. Many people living with dementia and carers felt isolated and lonely before COVID-19, and now these feelings will be amplified. They can feel overwhelmed by the volume of generic advice and guidance available, and may be unsure how to select information that is relevant to them and their families and what information to trust.

For those people living alone this is particularly difficult as any caring they receive is from a distance.

## What is caring from a distance?

Caring from a distance is when you support and help someone from afar. It could be a mile away, ten miles or more. Alternatively, you may have been visiting someone but no longer can due to COVID-19.

Whether the person living with dementia lives alone, with someone, or in a care home, hospital, hospice or anywhere else, there are lots of things you can help them with.

If you are supporting a person with dementia, this could include:

- ensuring they have meals delivered
- speaking to them on the phone to offer companionship, support and reassurance
- paying their bills
- managing their daily household matters, such as food shopping deliveries or arranging for their rubbish to be put out
- arranging for their prescriptions to be fulfilled and delivered
- providing spiritual support

## Staying connected to carers

If you are supporting someone from a distance, who themselves is caring for someone with dementia, you might be:

- providing emotional and spiritual support, by phone, email, letters or maybe video calls
- helping them to arrange support for the person with dementia, such as befriending services,

## Staying connected to the person with dementia

Caring from a distance might feel like it involves a lot of coordination of tasks and jobs. It may well do! However, connecting with each other, no matter the distance, can be enjoyable and helpful for everyone.

For many people with dementia their routine has been totally disrupted, no pastoral visitors, no one coming to take them to church on a Sunday, no relatives visiting, they will feel totally isolated and frightened.

Regular contact times may give the person living with dementia something to look forward to.

Some people say that having a set time to receive a phone call helps to reduce feelings of isolation and anxiety.

Any worries, no matter how small, can be reported to the District Safeguarding Officers, who will be able to offer advice or refer the person to their Local Adult Care team.

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