

DEMENTIA INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

A guide for emergency services**Why should you care?**

There are currently 55,000 people living with dementia in Ireland. 30 people develop the disease every day and over 500,000 families have been affected. The majority of people with dementia (63%) live in the community and want to continue to be active and included. For emergency service providers effective communication skills are vital and this is especially true when supporting people with dementia. Being able to recognise when somebody may have dementia is important, whether it is to provide information and assistance, or support a person during a period of acute need. Do not underestimate the difference you can make by having an understanding of dementia. People with dementia say that it is the personal interactions which make the biggest difference to their experience.

What are some of the symptoms of dementia?

People with dementia can be physically well and living independently in the community. Identifying a person who has dementia can be difficult. Everyday challenges differ for people with dementia. Some common difficulties may include:



1. Remembering names or details like their address, or those of loved ones



2. Communicating their needs or wishes

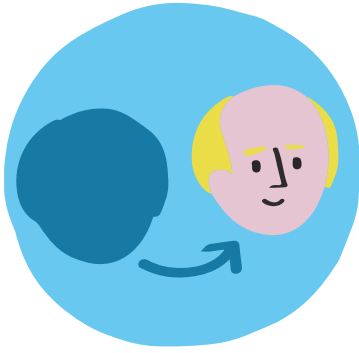


3. Navigating new or unfamiliar environments, also in their own neighbourhood



4. Getting anxious or agitated in a highly charged situation

There are simple things you can do to support a person:



See the person, not the dementia

Dementia does not define the person. Behind the dementia is an individual who may need a little support and understanding.



Body language

Smile warmly and make eye contact. Approach the person in a friendly open manner and ask if you can help. Be conscious that the uniform may be intimidating for some people.



Listen carefully

People with dementia may have difficulties with their speech and this can be made worse if they feel stressed or hurried. Take time to listen carefully to what the person is saying to you, give reassurance that you are there to support.



Speak clearly

Use short simple sentences allowing the person time to understand and respond. Try saying or showing things in a different way if the person does not understand.



Emergency situations

If a person is lost, injured or confused check to see if they have an identity card or other items which can tell you they have dementia and who you should contact.



The environment

A noisy and stressful environment can make the person more distressed and confused. Where possible reduce unnecessary noise or interruptions e.g. turn off flashing lights or sirens.

Dementia Inclusive Communities

To find out more about the things you can do in your community, training and other resources visit the HSE's

www.understandtogether.ie/get-involved/

dementia

understand together

Everyone has a role to play in making our communities inclusive. Often it is the small things and acts of kindness that make the biggest difference in a person's life.