

# A guide for religious and spiritual providers

## 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 involved. Religious and spiritual providers can play an important role in promoting the inclusion of people with dementia and providing opportunities for them, their families, friends and neighbours to engage on a regular basis. Do not underestimate the difference you can make by having an understanding of dementia and inviting communities to take small actions to support the person with dementia and their families. 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?

Everyday challenges differ for people with dementia. Some common difficulties may include:



1. Remembering names or specific details

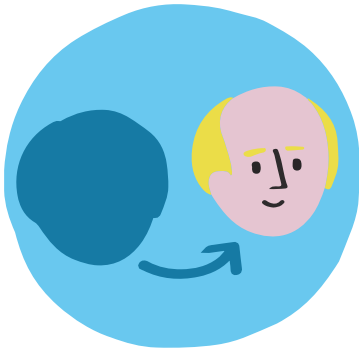


2. Finding words to express themselves



3. Following or actively engaging in the religious service and activities

# What are things you can do to support a person to stay included?



## 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 to stay involved and connected in their community.



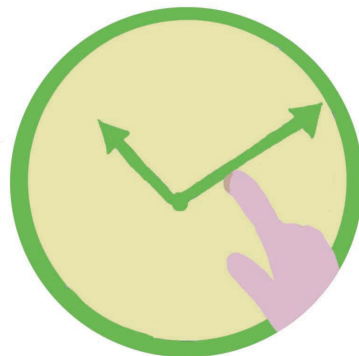
## Body language

Smile warmly, make eye contact and encourage people to continue to partake in community services and activities. Check if there is anything you can do to help the person to stay included in community life.



## Know the signs and symptoms of dementia

Understanding the signs and symptoms of dementia may enable you to recognise changes in a person. If you do notice changes, ensure that the person and their family know you are available to lend them your support.



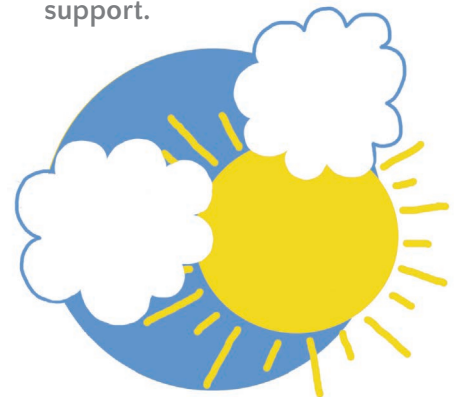
## Take time

It is important to focus on the person with dementia and listen attentively to what they are saying. By giving someone extra time it can enable a person to express themselves, and encourage them to stay involved.



## Provide information

If you know that a person is experiencing difficulties, make them aware of relevant local services. Provide leaflets about dementia as this may enable people to find out about supports and services. Encourage the community to be inclusive and supportive.



## Be positive

It is easy to think of what people with dementia cannot do, rather than what they can do. Invite people to stay involved. The person may lose confidence so reassurances and supports are enabling and empowering.

## 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/](http://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.