



# Dementia-friendly sport and physical activity guide

Supporting people affected by dementia to lead more active lives in their community



## Document purpose

This is a practical guide for the sport and physical activity sector to become more dementia friendly.<sup>1</sup> It aims to inform and educate individuals and organisations so they have a better understanding of dementia and how it affects people. It also provides tools and guidance so that the sector can help more people affected by dementia lead more active lives.<sup>2</sup>

This guide shares good practice and creative ideas from across the sector. It includes ways for individuals and organisations to make their activities more suitable to people who are starting an activity for the first time or after a period of inactivity. It also signposts to relevant organisations and explains where to find more information.

## Title

Dementia-friendly sport and physical activity guide: Supporting people affected by dementia to lead more active lives in their community

## Publication date

February 2019

## Target audience

- Anyone who wants to make their leisure centres, gyms, sports clubs and community centres more dementia friendly.
- National governing bodies, county sport partnerships, local authorities and other physical health teams that are considering how their organisations, programmes and built environment can become more accessible for people affected by dementia.
- Individuals who deliver physical activities, such as exercise professionals and community sports coaches.

<sup>1</sup> This guide uses 'physical activity' as an umbrella term that includes: aerobic exercise, walking or cycling, work-related activity, active recreation, dancing, playing active games, and organised and competitive sport.

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Sport England for its support and expertise, and for the funding support from the National Lottery. We also thank the Prime Minister's Champion Group for Sport and Leisure: Alzheimer's Society, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Community Leisure UK, Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), Later Life Training, Public Health England, the Richmond Group of Charities, Sheffield City Trust, the Sport and Recreation Alliance, the Sporting Memories Network, Swim England and ukactive.

Thank you to the following Focus on Dementia Network groups for their contributions: Bexley Focus on Dementia Group, Mid Sussex Dementia Forum, North Somerset Living with Dementia Group, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Dementia Blazers, The Adventurers in Luton and Young People with Dementia Peer Support Group in Twickenham. Thanks also to the following organisations for their input: Alsager Memory Café, Burnley FC in the Community, Golf in Society, LiveWire, Nuffield Health and Worcester Warriors.

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## Photo credit

Page 38 - Daniel Hopkinson Architectural Photography

## Publisher

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[alzheimers.org.uk/organisations](http://alzheimers.org.uk/organisations)

<sup>2</sup> This guide uses the term 'people affected by dementia' to include people with dementia and those who are important to them, which may include friends or family members (including family carers).

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# Foreword by Jeremy Hughes CBE

## Chief Executive Officer, Alzheimer's Society

**Dementia is one of the biggest challenges we face in society today. It can affect every aspect of a person's life and often prevents them from doing things that many people take for granted. For example, people affected by dementia often have to give up things they want or need to do due to a lack of understanding and stigma, as well as inaccessible and unsupportive environments.**

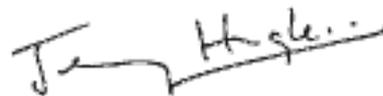
Physical activity can allow people with dementia to connect with other people by creating a shared experience. This is why visiting a sports club, leisure centre or gym is one of the top activities that people with dementia want to do.

For the sport and physical activity sector, becoming more dementia friendly means providing opportunities to support every person with dementia, whether they are a customer, volunteer or spectator. We need to make sure all sport and physical activity providers train their employees to be aware of the impact of dementia. They must also adapt their programming, and consider environments and processes, to tackle the challenges that their customers and employees face. This guide highlights the many ways that organisations can better support people affected by dementia, so that they can participate in their local community. It also provides examples of how it makes good business sense to be dementia friendly.

Keeping active can reduce the risk of dementia, and evidence suggests that being active can slow the progression of dementia. The sport and physical activity sector can therefore play a crucial role in tackling the social and economic impact of dementia. From golf clubs to gyms, and leisure centres to football clubs, the entire sector has a part to play. Defeating dementia won't just happen in a lab or a care setting.

The Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia states that by 2020 the UK will be the first dementia-friendly nation. This means providing opportunities to support every person with dementia to continue to do the things they enjoy and to retain their independence. With the number of people living with dementia in the UK set to increase to over a million by 2021 and over two million by 2050, there has never been a more important time to take action and improve the lives of people living with dementia.

We need a step change in the way people think, talk and act about dementia – the whole of society has a role to play.



**Jeremy Hughes**

Chief Executive Officer  
Alzheimer's Society



## Foreword by Tim Hollingsworth

### Chief Executive, Sport England

**Sport and physical activity can and does make a positive difference to many people's lives. However, a quarter of the population in England are inactive, and within that there are worrying trends in relation to physical activity participation among those with long-term health conditions. People with long-term health conditions are almost twice as likely to be inactive as the rest of the population. At least 15 million people in England live with at least one health condition, and millions more are at risk due to their inactivity levels.**

As part of our work with the Richmond Group of Charities, we are working to support the sport and physical activity sector to become dementia friendly. We want to transform the way the sport and physical activity sector responds to and engages with people affected by dementia, and provide opportunities to support every person with dementia into physical activity.

Awareness of how to reduce the risk of dementia is low, as well as the understanding of the benefits of physical activity to help manage the condition. People affected by dementia have highlighted specific challenges they face when trying to be active, such as difficulty with navigation in sports facilities or in using equipment in a leisure centre. What may seem like a simple task of remembering which door you came in from a changing area can be a disorientating and distressing experience for someone living with dementia. These challenges mean people living with or affected by the condition can miss out on much-loved activities such as swimming and increase their risk of isolation and loneliness.

Our vision is that everyone, regardless of their age, background or level of ability, feels able to engage in sport and physical activity. We want every provider to be equipped with the resources to meet the needs of those affected by dementia. Whether it is the management teams running a leisure facility, staff on the reception desk, an exercise professional leading a class, coaches out in the community, or volunteers. We need the sport and physical activity sector to make small changes to adapt

services, programming and activities to support people affected by dementia to get active and keep active for prevention, management and quality of life.

Defeating dementia won't happen overnight, but until that day, we must all pull together to create a more dementia-friendly society. I'm proud to support this guide and its call to action to support more people living with and affected by dementia to become and stay active.



**Tim Hollingsworth**

Chief Executive  
Sport England



# Introduction

**People with dementia should be supported to live well in their community and to continue to do the everyday things that many people take for granted. This includes going to a local leisure centre or being part of a community sports club. Carers also need to receive support and understanding, so that they can continue to do activities they've always done while accompanying the person with dementia as their condition progresses.**

**This practical guide is aimed at leisure centres, gyms and sports clubs. However, it can be used by anyone who is looking to deliver physical activity – such as sports coaches, personal trainers, health professionals or community activators. It outlines adaptations and changes that can make activities dementia friendly. The ideas in this guide are relevant for activities that are delivered in a variety of settings including community halls, care homes and other non-traditional physical activity venues.**

**This guide includes checklists with 'key actions' on three main areas: people, programme and place. The actions can have a big impact on the lives of people living with other long-term health conditions, and not just people affected by dementia. This guide can therefore help to create a more accessible and inclusive environment for everyone.**

## Alzheimer's Society and Sport England partnership

**Leisure centres, sports clubs and gyms can be the hub of community life. As well as providing an opportunity for physical activity, they enable people to socialise and pursue their hobbies and pastimes. They also offer people an accessible and easy way to become and remain active.**

That is why Alzheimer's Society and Sport England have produced this guide to give organisations in the sport and physical activity sector the information they need to become more dementia friendly in everything they do. We hope that leisure centres, sports clubs, gyms and other activity hubs in the community will use this guide to enable people with dementia to continue to do the things they enjoy for as long as possible by creating places, programmes and people that understand their needs.

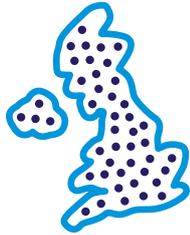
Alzheimer's Society works to improve the quality of life of people affected by dementia. Many of the people we support and work with have personal experience of dementia – as carers, health professionals or people with dementia

themselves. But we want to reach new audiences. Through working with the sport and physical activity sector we know we can do more together to improve the lives of people affected by dementia.

Alzheimer's Society is part of the Richmond Group of Charities, a collaboration of 14 leading health and social care organisations in the voluntary sector. We are working with Sport England to combine our knowledge and share good practice to help increase the physical activity levels of the people we support. Our ultimate goal is for people with long-term health conditions who are not physically active enough to move more as part of their daily lives.



## The scale of the challenge



Over 850,000 people are living with dementia in the UK



1 in 3 people born in the UK this year will develop dementia in their lifetime



Over 40,000 people under the age of 65 are living with dementia



1 in 6 people over the age of 80 have dementia



Alzheimer's disease is the biggest concern among people aged over 60 (Alzheimer's Society, 2015)



Two-thirds of people with dementia live in the community; one-third live in a care home



Dementia is the leading cause of death in England and Wales (ONS, 2016)



There are 670,000 carers of people with dementia



225,000 people will develop dementia this year (that's one person every three minutes)



The cost of dementia is £26 billion per year (based on 2013 cost data).

# Dementia and physical activity

# What is dementia?

**The word ‘dementia’ describes a group of symptoms that may include memory loss, difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language, and often changes in mood, perception or behaviour. These changes are usually small to begin with, but for someone with dementia they can quickly begin to have an effect on daily life.**

Dementia isn’t a natural part of ageing. It occurs when the brain is affected by a disease. There are more than 100 known types of dementia – the most common are Alzheimer’s disease and vascular dementia.

Dementia is not just about memory loss – it is a very multi-faceted condition. It can share many characteristics with other conditions, disabilities and impairments. This means that if you are dementia friendly and you get it right for people with dementia, you get it right for everyone.

## **Everyone experiences dementia differently. A person with dementia might:**

- have problems with their day-to-day memory – for example forgetting their address, birthday or where their locker is
- have difficulties making decisions, solving problems or carrying out a sequence of tasks – for example following instructions during an exercise class
- have problems with language, including difficulty following a conversation or finding the right word – for example a person may know that they are looking for the changing rooms but be unable to remember what it is called
- lose track of the day or date, or become confused about where they are
- show changes in their mood – for example becoming frustrated or irritable, withdrawn, anxious, easily upset or unusually sad
- have visuo-perceptual difficulties – for example difficulty judging distances or misinterpreting patterns or reflections, seeing things that are not really there (visual hallucinations) or strongly believing things that are not true (delusions)
- show changes in their behaviour – for example repetitive questioning, pacing, restlessness or agitation.

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**‘When you’ve met one person with dementia, you’ve met one person with dementia’**

Professor Tom Kitwood

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## Talking about people with dementia

**People with dementia are individuals first. Their diagnosis should not be treated as the defining aspect of their life. The following terms and phrases should be used when talking about a person with dementia:**

- a person/people with dementia
- a person/people living with dementia
- a person/people with a diagnosis of dementia
- a person/people affected by dementia.

Terms such as ‘sufferer’ and ‘victim’ should not be used to describe people with dementia. These words are disempowering because they make people with dementia seem passive, childlike or worthy of pity.

## Living well with dementia

It is possible to live well with dementia. A person who has dementia can continue to enjoy their hobbies, daily activities, friendships and relationships. As their condition progresses, they may need adjustments or extra support with these things. Therefore, everyone can play a part in supporting a person with dementia to live well and remain independent for as long as possible.

# Why is it important to stay active?

**Inactivity and ill health are intrinsically linked. Evidence suggests that people who are inactive are more likely to have a long-term health condition, and people with a long-term condition are much more likely to be inactive. Over a quarter of people in England are living with one or more long-term health condition. Therefore, helping more people with long-term conditions to be active could have a significant impact on the lives of millions of people.**

The Richmond Group of Charities has identified that some of the most commonly cited benefits of physical activity are psychological, including increased self-esteem and confidence, as well as improved mood and motivation. Keeping active is also hugely important for reducing the risk of dementia, managing the condition and increasing people's quality of life. As a general rule, what's good for the heart is good for the head.

But we know that people affected by dementia often stop doing the things they enjoy in their local community as their condition progresses because they worry about not getting the support they need (Alzheimer's Society, 2013). This can be due to a lack of understanding, stigma around the condition, confusing processes and inaccessible environments. The impact on their quality of life and the implications for their health are huge.

This includes not being able to access parts of community life such as shops or pharmacies, as well as other aspects of everyday life such as swimming at the local leisure centre or enjoying a physical activity in a local sports club or community hall.

## Being dementia friendly is friendly for everyone

The focus on dementia might seem restricted, given that many disabilities and long-term health conditions can impact on people's lives. However, the impact of dementia and the barriers that people with dementia face are very broad. Therefore the learning and progress that are made to become dementia friendly will simultaneously tackle a number of barriers that are associated with a wide range of disabilities and long-term health conditions.

## What people living with dementia have told us

An Alzheimer's Society survey (2013) found that:

**73%**

nearly three-quarters of UK adults surveyed do not think that society is equipped to deal with dementia.

**47%**

less than half of people living with dementia feel part of their community

people with dementia have had to give up activities such as:

**28%**

getting out of the house

**16%**

using transport

**23%**

shopping

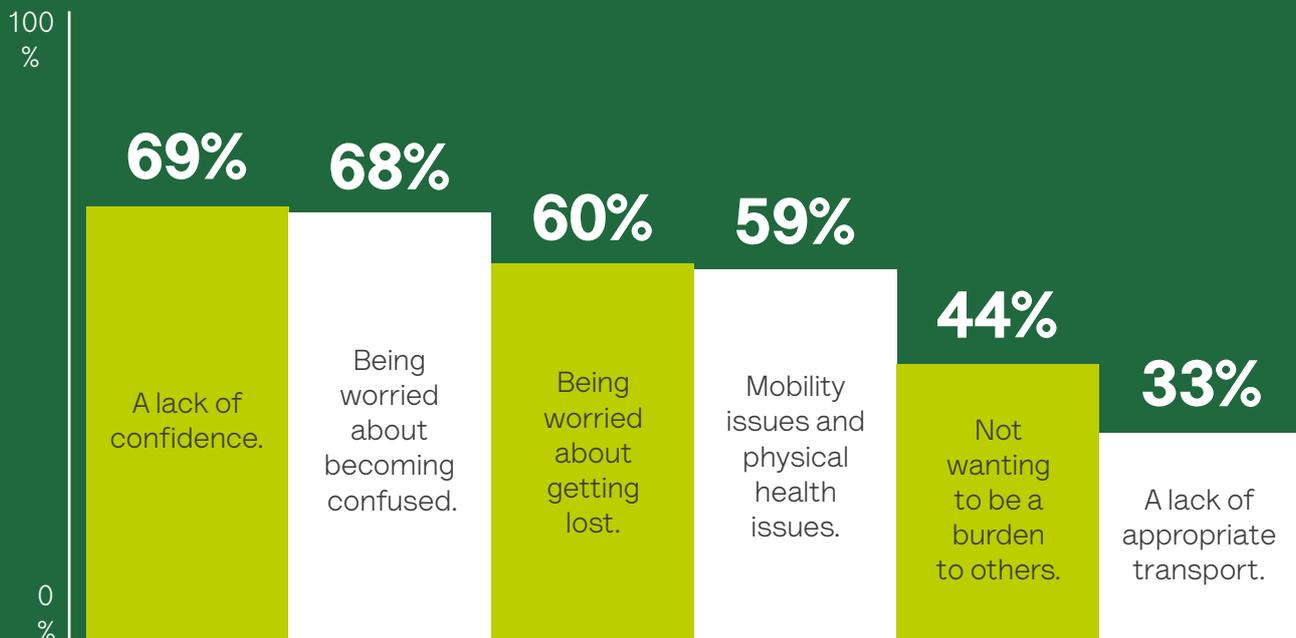
**22%**

exercise.

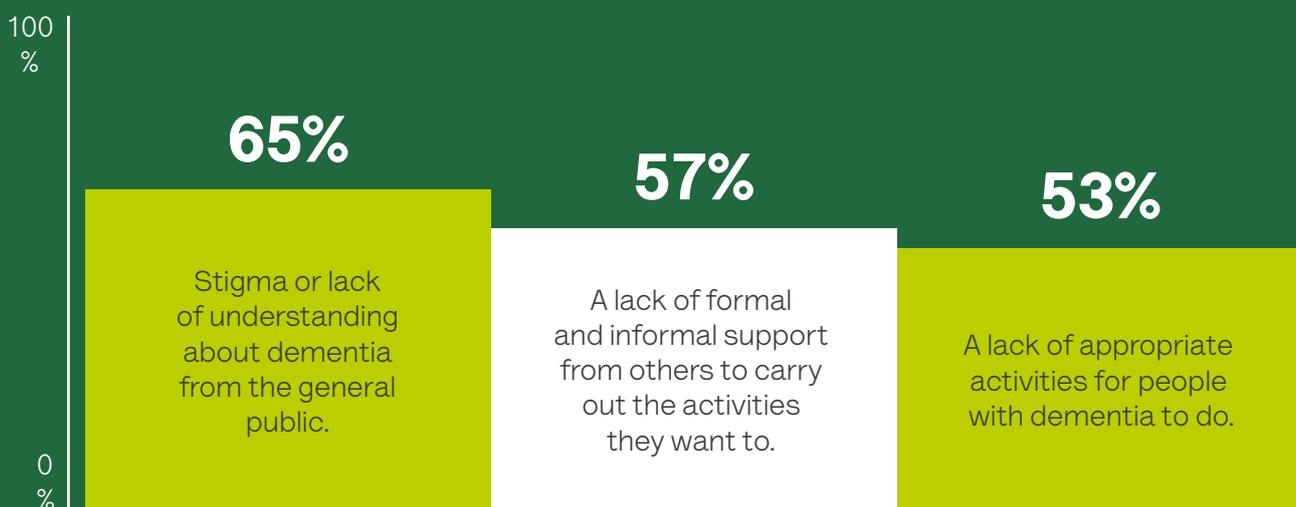
## What challenges do people with dementia face?

People with dementia may face many psychological and emotional barriers to doing more in their community. This section summarises some of the challenges faced by people with dementia, the challenges faced by carers, and specific challenges that people face when they interact with an activity provider.

In an Alzheimer's Society survey in 2013, people with dementia said the most common barriers they face are:



The Alzheimer's Society poll found that UK adults think people with dementia face barriers due to:



## Challenges when visiting leisure centres, sports clubs or local community facilities

People affected by dementia told us about the challenges they face when they interact with sport and physical activity providers. The challenges can be grouped into four main themes:

### 1 Worries about what to expect:

- not knowing who to ask or speak to for additional support
- thinking about how loud it might get
- not knowing or misjudging the ability level of the activity.

**‘The music was a bit loud but I didn’t have the confidence to ask someone to turn it down’**

Person living with dementia using their local gym

### 2 Worries about other people’s reactions:

- people not understanding their difficulties
- fear of not meeting the required standards
- a lack of confidence to find activities and feel comfortable taking part.

**‘I’m aware I have dementia but I can get embarrassed if things go wrong’**

Person living with dementia

**‘I need them to understand my memory isn’t good. So they need patience and to give me time when I forget the rules’**

Person living with dementia

**‘I’ve got a lack of confidence and you compare yourself with people next to you’**

Person living with dementia

### 3 Problems with mobility, navigating around leisure centres or community sports clubs:

- signage
- difficulty recognising places
- fear of getting lost.

**‘I needed to use the lift but there was no sign to say where it was and it was making it really difficult for me’**

Person living with dementia

### 4 Challenges caused by memory problems:

- forgetting where their locker is
- being unsure of or forgetting how to use sports or gym equipment
- confusing information or being unable to find the right words to describe the items they need.

**‘I was shown how to use the equipment but I wouldn’t remember it for next time’**

Person living with dementia

## What people with dementia have told us

We asked people with dementia what mattered most to them and what physical activity providers could do to create a more dementia-friendly experience. We’ll explore these ideas throughout this guide. In summary, people affected by dementia told us:

**‘Make people feel comfortable. You shouldn’t be judged by dementia. Their staff should have dementia training and they should be friendly and supportive’**

Person living with dementia

**‘I would like some sort of physical exercise which is fun but not too hard for me and a place to relax and have a cup of tea afterwards’**

Person living with dementia

**‘I wouldn’t just walk into a gym and have a look around. But if there was an open day for a group of us that would be good’**

Person living with dementia

## What does good dementia-friendly physical activity look like?

### For the sport and physical activity sector, becoming more dementia friendly means:

- understanding the impact of dementia and how it changes the needs of a person who is looking to access activities
- considering how the environment, programmes and activities can help people affected by dementia, and taking action to remove barriers
- improving staff awareness of dementia – increasing their knowledge and understanding, and ensuring that they develop the skills required to support people affected by dementia
- making activities accessible to a wide range of people – what is more suitable for people affected by dementia can also be helpful for people with a range of other long-term health conditions
- supporting all people who may be showing signs of dementia, whether they are members, participants, volunteers or employees.

### This doesn't mean that leisure centres, gyms or sports clubs are expected to:

- become dementia friendly from day one
- have all the answers
- identify customers who have dementia
- ask customers difficult or intrusive questions
- breach existing privacy guidelines such as General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

## Dementia friendly commitments

**Any organisation that delivers physical activity can make a big difference by committing to become more dementia friendly in three areas:**

### 1 people

Awareness, training and support.

### 2 programme

Planning, adapting and designing activities.

### 3 place

The physical environment and work in local communities.

# People: Awareness, training and support

# Key actions

- Support staff to become Dementia Friends – [dementiafriends.org.uk](https://dementiafriends.org.uk)
- Appoint a senior-level Dementia Friends Champion.
- Create a supportive environment for people by being patient, understanding and open to conversations.
- Signpost people affected by dementia to the right support – see the list of useful organisations at the end of this guide.

Raising awareness of dementia, including how it might affect people and how employees can support customers and colleagues who are affected, will create a more person-focused environment.

Employees who have an understanding of dementia are more likely to act in a considerate way to support people in a patient, kind and respectful manner. This can enhance the organisation's reputation, and therefore lead to more satisfied customers and increased revenue.

## Improve employees' awareness and understanding of dementia

- Aim for 60% or more of all staff to become Dementia Friends.
- Ensure that all customer-facing staff become Dementia Friends.
- Join Alzheimer's Society's dementia-friendly communities to understand the challenges that people affected by dementia face.
- Support customer-facing staff to gain further training on dementia, enabling them to better identify and support customers living with dementia.
- Provide support for customer-facing staff who interact with people affected by dementia on a regular basis.
- Provide support for employees who are directly affected by dementia – for example those who have family or friends living with dementia.
- Where possible, ensure that policies are designed to safeguard people living with dementia and ensure classes or activities are accessible for their family members or carers.

**For more information, see the dementia-friendly business guide: [alzheimers.org.uk/business](https://alzheimers.org.uk/business)**

## Dementia Friends

Becoming a Dementia Friend is about learning what it might be like to live with dementia and then turning that understanding into action. Anyone, at any level of an organisation, can become a Dementia Friend. As more people become Dementia Friends, more people with dementia will feel understood and supported in their communities.

Colleagues in your organisation can become Dementia Friends via video, e-learning, face-to-face or presentation sessions. To ensure they are sustainable, the sessions

need to be embedded within organisational procedures – such as employee inductions and refresher training – as well as staff being signposted to the sessions via online course bookings.

Dementia Friends training can be delivered to a range of audiences such as adults with learning disabilities or young people aged as young as five.

**If you are interested in rolling out Dementia Friends for your staff, members and volunteers please contact:**  
[programmepartnership@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:programmepartnership@alzheimers.org.uk)

A photograph of two men standing outdoors at what appears to be a sports stadium. The man on the left is middle-aged with glasses and a dark jacket, smiling and looking towards the man on the right. The man on the right is older with white hair, wearing a red sweater, and smiling broadly. The background shows stadium seating and a green field.

## Case study – Dementia Friends with CSW Sport

**CSW Sport is working with partners to support more people in Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire (CSW) to be more active more often. By ‘inspiring active communities’ CSW Sport intends to ensure that everyone in the CSW area can benefit from and enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle in safe and thriving communities.**

Abi Dixon, who is part of the senior management team, leads on Community Engagement, Workforce and CSW Sport’s work to advocate the benefits of physical activity to partners and providers who work with the ageing population. Abi is interested in the positive contribution that sport and physical activity can make in terms of improving physical and mental health.

In particular, she’s interested in how physical activity can help to improve the lives of those living with dementia. As an Alzheimer’s Society Dementia Friends Champion, Abi advocates increasing awareness and understanding about what it’s like to live with dementia and the ways in which we can all help to create a more dementia-friendly community.

**‘Dementia Friends is a great way of raising people’s awareness of dementia, challenging their perceptions and helping them think about the small things that they could do which can make a big difference to the lives of someone in their family or community who is living with dementia. Through our work with local leisure providers, we have so far made over 30 Dementia Friends across their leisure facilities in Warwickshire. As the face-to-face Dementia Friends session only takes an hour, we have been able to fit the session into existing team meetings which makes it easier for the staff to attend. A range of staff including lifeguards, receptionists, gym instructors and managers have become Dementia Friends. The Dementia Friends sessions have been the first step towards the leisure centres creating an action plan for their facilities to become more dementia friendly, enabling people living with dementia to use their leisure facilities, be active and therefore keep living well with dementia for longer.’**

Abi Dixon, CSW Sport

## The impact of Dementia Friends

By becoming a Dementia Friend within your organisation, you'll be supporting your customers and colleagues affected by dementia. It can help you to make people feel understood and supported, and improve their customer experience. As more people become Dementia Friends, more people with dementia will feel understood and supported in their communities.

**'All staff should complete a Dementia Friends information session so they have some basic knowledge of the diverse types of dementia. This is hugely important for any staff member running a dementia-friendly session.'**

Football Development Officer, Cumberland Football Association

**'GLL are committed to play an active role in supporting the health and wellbeing of our customers, communities and staff members through the wide range of services that we offer. We recognise our position in the Industry and have been working with Alzheimer's Society over the past two years to share knowledge and experience in promoting access among our sector peers as well as our own staff. In 2019 we are taking the initiative to ensure that our frontline staff, as well as our support and management teams, are Dementia Friends. We'll be embedding Dementia Friends into all of our staff induction period going forward and will continue to work towards becoming a dementia-friendly business.'**

Peter Bunday, GLL Deputy Managing Director and Chair of GLL Sport Foundation

**'It helped me to consider possible perception of participants based on patterns and colour contrast. I then ensured that my clothing was in contrast to the seating in order to enable participants to better see and follow my leg movements. Information on language and communication enabled me to provide timely paced cueing throughout our session'**

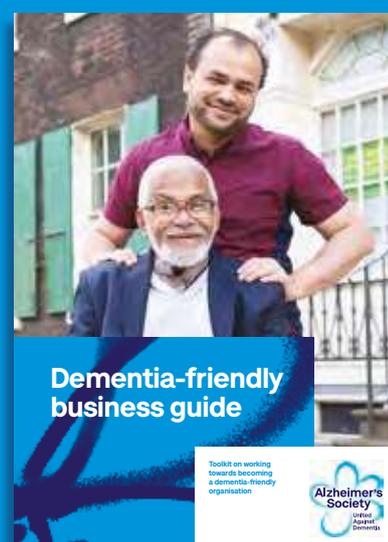
Group Exercise Instructor, feedback on a Dementia Friends information session

## Becoming a Dementia Friends Champion

A Dementia Friends Champion is a volunteer who encourages others to make a positive difference to people affected by dementia in their community. They do this by providing information about the personal impact of dementia, and what people can do to help.

In a one-day induction, Champions learn how to run Dementia Friends information sessions to inspire other people to become Dementia Friends and help to create dementia-friendly communities. Champions also get lots of information and resources to help them to answer people's questions about dementia and direct people to sources of further information and support.

**For more information, see the dementia-friendly business guide or visit the Dementia Friends website: [dementiafriends.org.uk](http://dementiafriends.org.uk)**





## Case study – British Wheel of Yoga

**British Wheel of Yoga is the largest yoga membership organisation in the UK. It is committed to promoting a greater understanding of yoga and its safe practice through experience, education, study and training. As part of its Gentle Years Yoga programme, which is a system of yoga that covers the needs of older adults with a range of conditions including dementia, British Wheel of Yoga is working to become a dementia-friendly organisation.**

They have created 432 Dementia Friends via the video route after registering their organisation and creating a code to send out to their staff, volunteers and members. They have also delivered some face-to-face Dementia Friends information sessions, creating an additional 347 Dementia Friends through a volunteer Dementia Friends Champion.

**‘Gentle Years Yoga is great for those living with dementia because it incorporates so much of what is helpful: spatial awareness, balance training, sensory activities, singing and social integration’**

Yoga Instructor, British Wheel of Yoga

## Videos and elearning

As well as the Dementia Friends videos, many online videos and elearning packages show the different issues that people affected by dementia face.

**The following videos about successful dementia-friendly activities can be used to refresh people's understanding and awareness of dementia during team meetings or training.**

- Alzheimer's Society YouTube Channel:  
[www.youtube.com/AlzheimersSociety](http://www.youtube.com/AlzheimersSociety)
- Golf in Society:  
<https://youtu.be/PH3g5DEINps>
- Dementia-friendly walking football – Leyton Orient FC Community Trust:  
<https://youtu.be/KrhlGB-nsQk>
- British Gymnastics Foundation Love to Move Programme:  
<https://youtu.be/1rAnMJkDIB4>
- Dementia Friendly Swimming:  
<https://youtu.be/Wa-0RB6nVys>

Organisations could also look to work with their local Alzheimer's Society or other charity branches to make their own videos and raise awareness about the challenges that people face in their local area.

## Training

**Building on the knowledge gained from Dementia Friends information sessions, people can undertake further dementia awareness training with Alzheimer's Society and other organisations, including continuing professional development (CPD) accredited courses and qualifications. These courses can be a great tool for increasing staff understanding of dementia.**

Training is important to ensure that staff are equipped to support customers who are affected by dementia. Organisations could consider how to embed dementia awareness within existing staff training and e-learning packages. For example, Alzheimer's Society develops and delivers high-quality training and consultancy services to individuals and organisations across all sectors. Organisations can get expert dementia training from just £695 per day for up to 16 people.

**To find out more contact:  
[DementiaTraining@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:DementiaTraining@alzheimers.org.uk)**





## Case study – **Planning for I Can**

**‘Planning for I Can’ is a person-centred assessment tool for people affected by dementia to use in exercise and physical activity settings.**

It has been produced by Later Life Training, which has developed guidance for exercise and physical activity teachers, leaders and instructors on a range of assessment strategies that are appropriate for people affected by dementia. ‘Planning for I Can’ uses a structured conversation, together with health and functional assessments, to enable best practice in planning, monitoring and evaluating programmes for people affected by dementia.

**laterLife**  
**training™**

## Case study – **1st Steps in dementia**

**This one-day CPD course is for physical activity, exercise and recreation professionals who work with people affected by dementia. It is accredited by the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) and Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA).**

### **It includes:**

- developing skills and abilities in person-centred planning
- auditing dementia-friendly places and spaces
- planning for successful programming in a range of activities
- communication and leadership skills for group and individualised activities.

Attendees also receive additional pre- and post-course learning activities.

# Supporting people affected by dementia

## Carers

Those who care for a person who is living with dementia also need to be supported. The support that a caregiver provides for a person living with dementia has been found to be a predictor of whether or not that person will remain or become physically active (Stubbs et al, 2014). However, caregivers often have limited knowledge about the factors that influence the physical activity levels of people with dementia. This lack of knowledge is reported to be challenging and distressing (Lord, Livingston and Cooper, 2015).

## Employees and volunteers

While dementia is more common in people aged over 65, people of working age (including people as young as 30) can be diagnosed with the condition. It is therefore important for leisure centres, sports clubs, gyms and other organisations to be equipped to support any employees and volunteers who are affected by dementia. Reasonable adjustments should be made to enable them to continue to work for as long as they can.

**For more information on supporting employees who are affected by dementia to continue working, see our dementia-friendly business guide.**



**'A member attending for the first time felt the café wasn't for him as he was newly diagnosed and therefore not as advanced as some of the others in his progression. His views were listened to and provision has been made for him to become a volunteer at the café rather than just another participant. This was welcomed by him, his family and us as an organisation, aiding his "coming to terms with his condition" in a way that is acceptable to his needs'**

Session Leader at Worcester Warriors'  
'Tackling Dementia' café

# **Programme: Planning, adapting and designing activities**

# Key actions

- Look at what you already offer and build in some dementia-friendly practices, such as adaptations to make existing physical activities dementia friendly.
- Design social and respite opportunities for people with dementia and their carers.
- Be creative, innovative and flexible in your approach to planning and delivering activities.
- Engage with local dementia services run by Alzheimer's Society and local charities by talking to them about the opportunities, services and activities you offer.
- Become part of your local dementia-friendly community: [alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-friendly-communities](https://alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-friendly-communities)

## How to achieve good dementia-friendly programming

- Connect with people affected by dementia in your area and involve them in your programmes.
- Find creative solutions to allow people affected by dementia to participate – don't close down opportunities for them to stay active.
- Take time to plan and monitor your programmes, and to learn from feedback along the way.
- Review your online and offline communication channels to ensure the messages are clear and easy to understand for people affected by dementia. The Alzheimer's Society website has tips and information on how you can do this: [alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/symptoms-and-diagnosis/symptoms/communicating-and-language](https://alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/symptoms-and-diagnosis/symptoms/communicating-and-language)

# Programme adaptations and considerations – case studies

**Some organisations have started to adapt their programmes and activities to make them more suitable and accessible to people living with dementia.**

This section includes case studies from organisations that have developed dementia-friendly programmes. Many of the adaptations and considerations they have enacted can be applied to other activities in a range of settings. It is important to remember that, before they created these dementia-friendly programmes, these organisations were not specialists in providing activities for people affected by dementia. They have instead built up their knowledge over time and made adaptations from what they have learnt along the way by working with local people affected by dementia. They are all working to improve the lives of people affected by dementia.

Everyone with dementia is different and will be affected by their condition in different ways. This means that what works for some people might not work for others. It is therefore always important to consider individual risk assessments within your planning, such as adjusting the intensity and type of activity if participants have vascular disease.

It is also important to remember that, as highlighted in the introduction to this guide, being dementia friendly isn't just good for people with dementia. It will also make programmes more accessible to a range of people who may need additional support.

## Featured case studies

The case studies on the following pages outline adaptations and considerations that can make sport and physical activity programmes accessible to many people, including those affected by dementia.

- Golf in Society
- Dementia-friendly dance fitness
- In the gym with Tracey
- Dementia-friendly walking football
- Dementia-friendly swimming
- ‘Love to Move’ seated exercise
- ‘I Can’ project with Sheffield City Trust
- Bounce Alzheimer’s Therapy Foundation
- ‘Tackling Dementia’ at Worcester Warriors
- Sporting Memories Network
- Partnership working to address

### Case study – Golf in Society

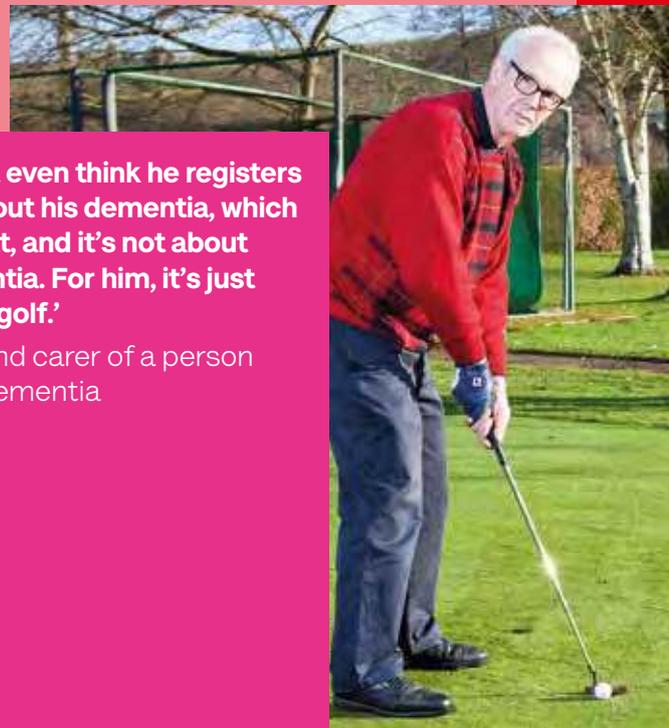
**The Golf in Society initiative is designed to give people living with dementia access to supported golf sessions in a local club. By providing a person-centred approach, Golf in Society allows people with dementia to continue (or start) playing golf. It ensures that the environment is safe, social and – most importantly – fun!**

Golf in Society weekly sessions mirror the structure and consistency of the regular club sessions. This is found to be beneficial for the participants with dementia. But the sessions remain creative to keep them fun and interesting. On a weekly basis, people with dementia spend time on the driving range, the putting green and the course. Together they have a cup of tea, play golf, eat lunch and enjoy each other’s company.

The programme isn’t just important for the golfers but for the carers too. While the golfers take part in a group warm-up on the driving range, carers in the café have an opportunity to talk and provide peer support. The weekly sessions therefore provide the opportunity to create a support network for carers. The partners and family members of people living with dementia report that the three-hour sessions give them and the golfers much-needed time to do their own thing. They both have the chance to relax and do things they love. The carers felt this was a huge positive in their lives. They felt these supported golfing sessions have given their loved ones with dementia a new lease of life. It is something to look forward to every week that helps to increase social confidence and

improve physical fitness. The golfers regularly enjoy challenges, teamwork, high-fives and celebratory air-punches. It doesn’t matter that the people with dementia have differing levels of golfing experience.

The session brings so much fun, laughter and positive experiences for everyone involved. For the people living with dementia, this isn’t about their diagnosis.



**‘I don’t even think he registers it’s about his dementia, which is great, and it’s not about dementia. For him, it’s just about golf.’**

Wife and carer of a person with dementia

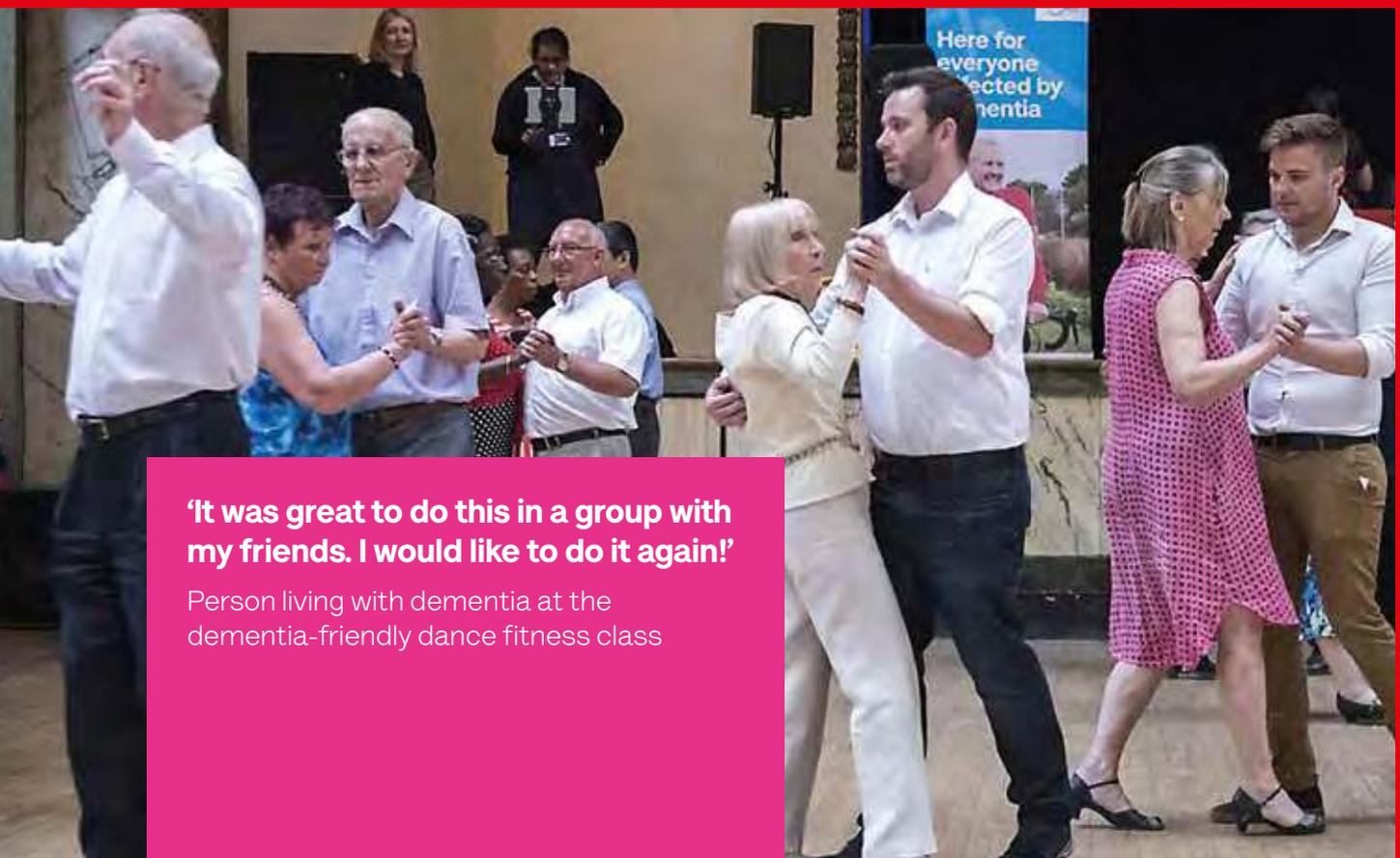
## Case study – Dementia-friendly dance fitness

**Exercise, Movement and Dance UK (EMD UK) is the national governing body for group exercise. Working in partnership with Alzheimer’s Society and five dementia cafés, EMD UK created dementia-friendly programmes.**

EMD UK wanted to work with people who were inactive, to show them the benefits of group exercise. For example, they delivered a seated dance fitness programme that fuses Latin, salsa, ballroom and other international styles. It is adapted to different people’s needs, alongside a suitable soundtrack. They also offered HulaFit, which uses hooping techniques to improve co-ordination and strength. The benefits of the sessions include social inclusion, improved co-ordination and noticeable increases in participants’ energy levels.

### **Other considerations that have emerged from the sessions include the following.**

- Introduce yourself and spend time with the participants ahead of the session to get a sense of their communication needs and general abilities.
- Speak clearly, be patient and use visual demonstrations where possible to help communication.
- Think about the participants’ positioning in the class – allowing people to stand at the front of the class may help you to communicate more easily.
- Stick to regular routines so the participants can become familiar with the activities, but also be creative and keep it interesting for everyone.
- Build resistance into the exercises by using body weight, resistance bands and adding suitable weights where appropriate.
- Allow time for people to freestyle and enjoy movement of all kinds.
- Compile a playlist of popular music from an era that reflects the general age of the group.
- Try to include recognisable, fun and upbeat songs, and ask the group to suggest songs that they like.



**‘It was great to do this in a group with my friends. I would like to do it again!’**

Person living with dementia at the dementia-friendly dance fitness class

## Case study – In the gym with Tracey

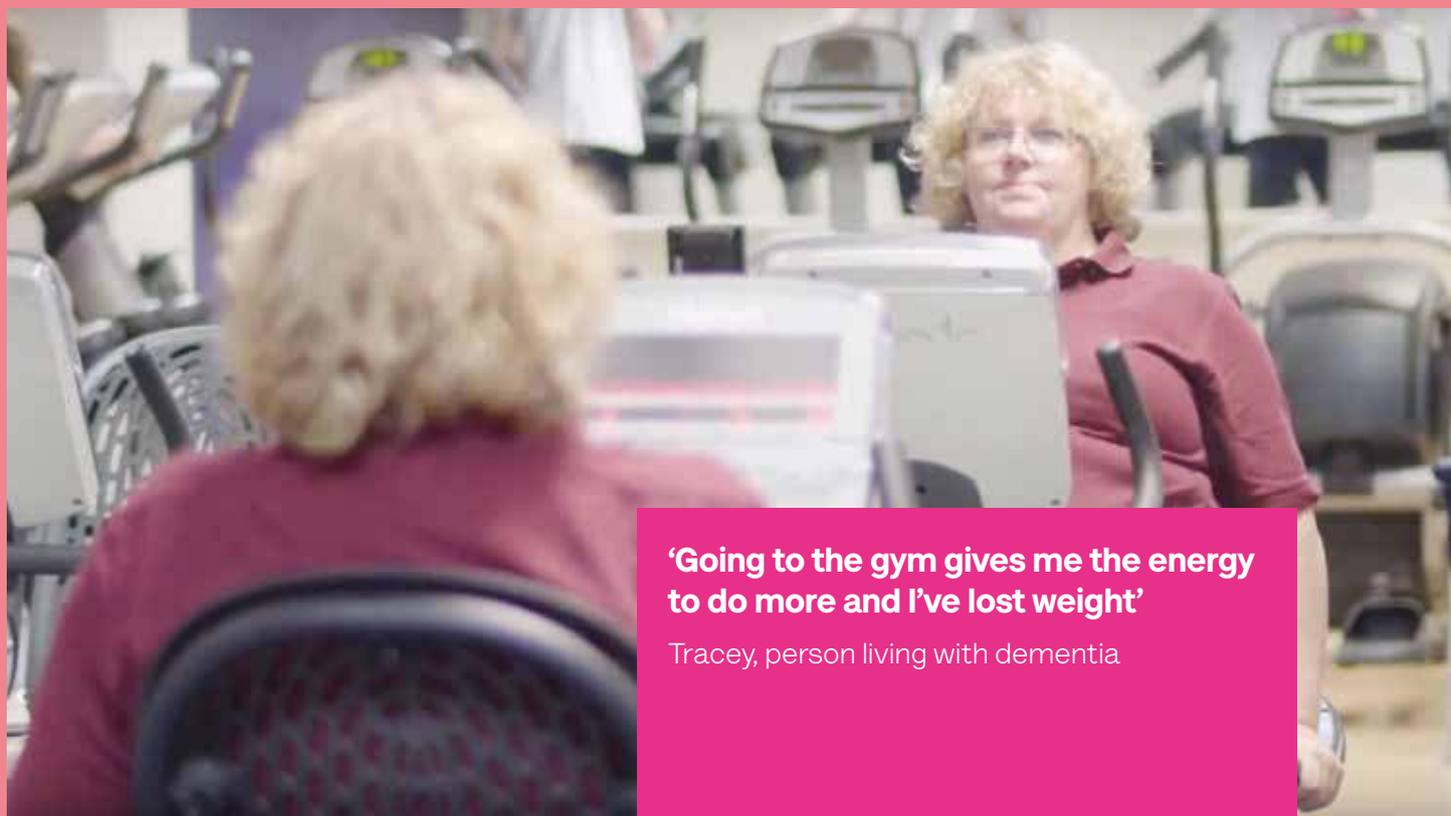
**Tracey was diagnosed with young-onset dementia and posterior cortical atrophy (PCA) when she was in her mid-forties. She broke her foot in 2014. She also has asthma and is recovering from a stroke that has left some weakness down her left side. But that doesn't stop her from being active and being an inspiration to others.**

Tracey started going to the gym after she was referred for a 12-week physiotherapy health programme. She now goes three times per week and gets additional support from a personal trainer. Tracey generally goes to the gym alone and she follows a specific programme for a routine. Her programme includes: weights, squats, balance work, treadmill, cross trainer and stretches. She likes to vary her programme because she sometimes loses concentration as a result of dementia.

According to Tracey, the personal trainer at the gym supports and believes in her. Tracey shares her experiences and teaches her trainer about dementia and how it affects her. Since she has started going to the gym, Tracey is making great progress – she has gone from walking with two sticks to walking with only one, which is having a huge effect on her wellbeing.

**Other considerations from Tracey's experience include the following.**

- Ensure that staff understand what dementia is and the ways that they can support people – for example to use technology or to identify their locker.
- Support people to use equipment that can require lots of co-ordination or balance – for example people with dementia might need further explanation and more time to learn to use machines like a cross trainer.
- A person with dementia may not be able to learn to use new equipment or retain information about it for the next session.
- Allow people time to start slow and build up their confidence to achieve more.
- A gym can be a loud and overwhelming environment, so having quiet times or quiet areas can help people with dementia to enjoy themselves.



**'Going to the gym gives me the energy to do more and I've lost weight'**

Tracey, person living with dementia

## Case study – Dementia-friendly walking football

The Football Development Officer at Cumberland Football Association had not previously set up or delivered a dementia-friendly football session. However, working with local groups to learn about people affected by dementia, the Officer learnt to create dementia-friendly walking football sessions.

**Some of the adaptations they considered were:**

- understand that every person who is living with dementia is unique
- people with dementia can struggle with colours and contrast, so it helps to use brightly coloured bibs so that players can identify each other
- be patient with those living with dementia, particularly if they repeat stories or questions several times, and avoid finishing their sentences or speaking for them
- integrate people affected by dementia – treat them equally
- avoid changing ends or swapping the players in teams, to ensure consistency and reduce confusion
- add colour – for example tape or bibs – to goalposts to provide contrast and make it easier for people to identify the goals
- use name badges to help players and coaches to communicate
- arrange a social activity after the session for participants and carers to enjoy.

## Case study – Dementia-friendly swimming

Following a series of Dementia Friends information sessions, a leisure facility in Derbyshire – Ripley Leisure – created a dementia-friendly swimming programme to support people affected by dementia to enjoy using their local pool.

Ripley Leisure recognised the impact that a dementia-friendly leisure centre could have and understood that it had the ability to reach out and engage with the wider community. Building on the learning from Swim England's Dementia Friendly Swimming programme and their own guidance, Ripley Leisure decided to deliver similar sessions in the pools.

Working with the local Alzheimer's Society Dementia Friendly Community Officer, Ripley Leisure contacted local services and people affected by dementia.

**They discussed the programme and feedback, and Ripley Leisure acted on some of the suggested adaptations, including:**

- install in-pool guidance for participants who need it
- improve the selection of swim aids on offer in the pool
- update signs in the changing village

- introduce locker location finders, to help people get back to their locker
- encourage carers to meet during the sessions, to provide peer support
- build social activities into the programme (which has been hugely important to people enjoying coming to the leisure centre to swim)
- provide wider lanes for people who lack confidence, to give them a safe environment to enjoy swimming.

The Dementia Friendly Swimming programme developed by Swim England has helped many physical activity operators to gain an 'outstanding' on the QUEST assessment. It has also had a big impact on the physical and emotional wellbeing of participants.

**To find out more about Dementia Friendly Swimming, visit the Swim England website: [www.swimming.org/dementiafriendly](http://www.swimming.org/dementiafriendly)**

## Case study – Love to Move seated exercise

The British Gymnastics Foundation has developed a seated exercise programme called 'Love to Move'. It is an age- and dementia-friendly seated gymnastics programme that is transforming the lives of people living with dementia. The British Gymnastics Foundation has been delivering Love to Move sessions in care homes and community settings across the UK. It has seen brilliant results in terms of helping to improve the lives of people with dementia.

**To ensure that seated exercises are enjoyable and safe, the programme has considered the following points:**

- set realistic goals and build on what people can do
- build up slowly and aim to gradually increase the repetitions of each exercise over time
- ensure that participants wear loose and comfortable clothing
- ensure that water is available
- for chair exercises, choose a chair that is stable and solid – if someone is using a wheelchair, make sure the brake is on
- think about different exercises that improve balance, co-ordination, flexibility and strength
- provide seated and standing exercises as appropriate (based on the individuals' abilities)
- remember to keep instructions simple and clear
- use visual aids to demonstrate positions.

**For more detailed information, download the Love to Move exercise guidance from the British Gymnastics Foundation website:**  
[www.britishgymnasticsfoundation.org/lovetomove](http://www.britishgymnasticsfoundation.org/lovetomove)



## Case study – ‘I Can’ project with Sheffield City Trust

Sheffield City Trust’s ‘I Can’ project is designed for people with young-onset dementia. It creates a comfortable and social environment for people to be physically active.

**The considerations and learning from the rolling 12-week programme include the following.**

- A structured session is not as effective or enjoyable – the design was therefore changed to simple weekly multi-activity sessions. The sports hall was laid out to include a walking route, badminton, table tennis and low-intensity circuits, to help participants improve their mobility and balance. This was much more successful, and also enabled carers to take a ‘short break’.
- Many carers went for a swim or had coffee during the sessions, but some carers joined in. One carer lost four stone over the course of the programme from more regular swimming!
- Sheffield City Trust initially provided one member of staff to lead the sessions, but it quickly learnt that more staff support and volunteers were needed.
- All levels of the organisation have committed to the project, starting with the Chief Executive Officer and Director. This has been really important, and dementia became a priority area across their strategy as a result.

## Case study – Bounce Alzheimer’s Therapy Foundation

The Bounce Alzheimer’s Therapy (BAT) Foundation was inspired by research published in America and Japan which stated that table tennis is one of the best activities to reduce cognitive decline. BAT Foundation works on the premise that table tennis isn’t a sport – it is a therapy. BAT Foundation’s work to design equipment and develop training and resources reflects this thinking.

**Following feedback and testing, BAT Foundation has adapted some equipment to meet the needs of people affected by dementia.**

**For example:**

- it has designed a white table that is used alongside a bright orange ball, as the contrast helps players’ sight and perception
- the net can be lifted, to allow the balls to roll across the table instead of being bounced – this can reduce frustration for people who have reduced complex motor skills
- side panels can be attached to the table. It helps the players by limiting the peripheral distractions and keeps the ball on the table and in play for longer.



**‘Table tennis is an excellent stimulation for the brain and our local club has started a project focusing on working with people with dementia’**

Carer of a person living with dementia

## Case study – ‘Tackling Dementia’ at Worcester Warriors

Worcester Warriors is a Premiership Rugby club. It has created a dementia-friendly activity café in its community. The café is called ‘Tackling Dementia’ and it is adding real value to the lives of people in the community who are affected by dementia.

**Following feedback from people affected by dementia, some adaptations that the club has made to the activity café include:**

- deciding not to use name badges at the café, as some people didn't like using them – people instead choose to introduce themselves and are remembering people's names
- providing a wide variety of equipment so that people with a range of abilities can choose their activities each week – including table tennis, indoor bowls, balloon games and outdoor options including cricket, tennis and (of course) rugby throws on the pitch
- giving people opportunities to do other activities, such as colouring and board games, with lots of encouragement but no pressure to take part
- recognising that friendship has been an important aspect of the café for carers, who have extended their social circle by having lunch after the café
- flexibility allows members who may feel uneasy on their first visit to gain confidence
- creating a parallel yoga session to give carers an opportunity to remaining active.



**‘He was sat with his coat on at 10am this morning ready to go!’**

Carer of a person with dementia at a Worcester Warriors session

## Case study – Sporting Memories Network

**The Sporting Memories Network supports older people across the UK who are living with dementia, depression and loneliness. It engages them in social activities and helps them to recall memories of watching or playing sport. Sharing memories of sporting moments and tapping into a passion for sport helps people to connect with others and with their past. It also helps people recall positive thoughts and feelings that otherwise remain hidden away.**

Sessions can take place in a variety of settings, including libraries, village halls and other large community areas. They include physical activities such as table tennis, indoor curling and darts, and other games are available on different weeks.

**Some of the adaptations that the Network has used include:**

- giving people the option to stand or sit down, depending on their physical capacity
- allowing people to move more by collecting balls at the end of each turn
- being creative with games to improve hand–eye co-ordination – for example throwing bean bags into a box
- allowing people to roll the balls if throwing is too challenging
- allowing time for conversation between games, to give people a chance to socialise and enjoy themselves.

The following case study demonstrates how working collaboratively within a community can have a significant impact on the success of an initiative.

## Case study – Partnership working to address social isolation and dementia



**East London is famous for hosting tea dances. Better's York Hall Leisure Centre decided to recreate this tradition by hosting their own Tea Dance to support older people to use the facility and to reach people who are socially isolated.**

The event came about after significant consultation with groups for older people, care homes and disability groups. Their insights identified the demand for a tea dance, to incorporate: fun, exercise and socialising – all under one roof. Local partners and community groups –including LinkAge Plus, Age UK, Russia Lane and Riverside – as well as local residents helped to promote the event and to get people excited about the day.

Over 175 people attended the event, 50 of whom were living with dementia. The attendees had a chance to socialise, make new friends, watch the entertainment and dance with the Better staff in the famous York Hall venue. It was an opportunity to let everyone know about the social and activity programme that is delivered in the centre, as well as promoting the dementia-friendly swimming programme that is delivered across the borough. As a result of having the chance to meet the staff at York Hall and feel comfortable visiting the centre, participants wanted to return and they felt more confident about doing an activity within the centre, including getting into the pool.

# How to design dementia-friendly programmes

**Physical activity providers need to adapt their activities to remove barriers to participation. They can use the case studies in this guide to find examples of ways to support people living with dementia and consider carers' additional needs. Small changes can have a big impact.**

Some of the best programmes have been created by organisations that have been innovative in creating programmes that work both for them and for local people who are affected by dementia.

## How to create a dementia-friendly programme

- Look at what you already offer. Consider how you can make any activities that are offered dementia friendly by using some suitable adaptations.
- Within the activities, design opportunities for socialising and respite for both people living with dementia and carers.
- Be creative, informal and flexible in your approach to planning and delivering opportunities.
- Provide information about the programme in dementia-friendly formats – for example, session outlines with timings and photos, specific access information for each activity and general information (suggested clothing and contact details).
- Support people to go at their own pace and take part in activities they enjoy.
- Not everything will work first time, but listening to participants and adapting activities based on their feedback can make them successful.
- Designing a dementia-friendly programme doesn't have to mean a huge financial commitment – but making reasonable adaptations to programmes will also benefit the wider local community.

The case study examples outlined in this guide explain just some ways to build better and more accessible programmes to support people affected by dementia. When you are looking to create a dementia-friendly programme, it's important to consider a wide range of features.

## Involving people affected by dementia

- Ensure that your organisation becomes part of a local dementia-friendly community that provides support, guidance and links to people affected by dementia.
- Offer the right opportunities for people with dementia to get involved, either with or without carers. This could even be a parallel activity – for example if there's a dementia-friendly football session, could there be a yoga session alongside it?
- Think about the people affected by dementia – why are they taking part in the activity? What's important to them? What are their motivations? What are their capabilities?

You need to consider the needs of people with dementia in all aspects of your work, to ensure that sessions and activities are relevant and that people with dementia are safeguarded, when necessary. This can be done by engaging with local people who are living with dementia or specialist organisations.

**For more information, see the full list of useful organisations at the end of this guide.**



## Dementia-friendly communities

Dementia-friendly communities are geographical communities that are committed to making their local area accessible, inclusive and supportive for people affected by dementia. Everyone shares the responsibility for ensuring that people with dementia feel understood, valued and able to contribute to their community.

Leisure centres, gyms and sports clubs should be an active part of their local community by supporting and engaging with the issues that matter to local people. To enable this, dementia-friendly communities provide a support mechanism, a network of local businesses and a platform to engage the local community and people affected by dementia.

**There may already be a dementia-friendly community in your area. See the list of recognised communities to get involved, or start your own: [alzheimers.org.uk/dementiafriendlycommunities](http://alzheimers.org.uk/dementiafriendlycommunities)**

## Existing activities

- Make sure your existing activities are meaningful – that they promote people's sense of worth and of being a valued member of society, and that they help people maintain their sense of identity.
- Make sure you promote your existing activity programmes to people with dementia in your local area. They don't only have to take part in specialised dementia-friendly activities.

## New activities

- Involve people affected by dementia when you develop a new dementia-friendly activity.
- Learn from programmes that already exist – replicate best practice and add your own ideas.
- Offer open days to local dementia groups, to give people a guided tour around your facility – welcome them and give them the chance to try the activities.
- Build social activities into your programme, before or after sessions.

## Case study – 'Living well' open day

**The Dolphin Leisure Centre in Sussex created a 'living well' open day that was aimed at older people.**

They developed a partnership with a local dementia network group and a dementia café, to make sure people affected by dementia in the community were part of the open day and were able to access the facilities. The day itself included free activities such as aqua aerobics, Pilates, bowls, swimming and using the gym. This allowed people to try a range of activities and become familiar with the environment. As a result, people affected by dementia now attend Dolphin Leisure Centre and are interested in joining the gym for exercise classes and physical activity.

It was the first time the open day was delivered. Based on feedback from people such as the local dementia group, lots of learnings have been noted for future open days, to try to engage more people and offer a range of different activities.



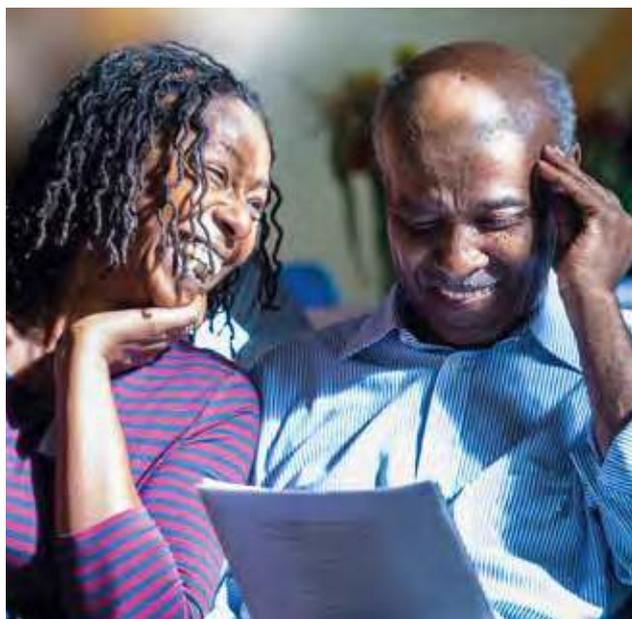
## Planning

- Plan shorter classes or include breaks so that activities are not too tiring or overwhelming.
- Think about the physical environment in which activities are taking place, to ensure it is safe.
- Maintain a consistent timetable so that people know what and who to expect.
- Think about your scheduling, to give people affected by dementia extra time before, during and after the activity.
- Ask whether people need support when they enter the leisure facility or arrive at a local sport or community activity group.
- Depending on the activity, make a range of adapted equipment available.

## Signposting isolated people to local support

You should aim to communicate with isolated groups and people with dementia, to inform them about the activities that are available. This could include people who are affected by dementia and are inactive but are not thinking about becoming physically active. For example this could involve putting adverts in local newspapers or sending leaflets to doctors' surgeries, pharmacies or local shops.

For more information on how you can be involved in Alzheimer's Society services and support, visit [alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/your-support-services](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/your-support-services)



## Communication

- Keep your messaging simple and clear – pictures and icons can be helpful.
- Think about how you communicate, use demonstrations or repeat instructions where relevant.
- Provide reassurance that anyone can be physically active and be positive about the benefits, while being realistic about what is achievable.
- Consider offering services to help people remember their chosen activity – for example text reminders, a phone call on the day, timetables, calendar stickers or appointment cards.
- Advertise that you are dementia friendly and let people know if certain sessions are not suitable for people living with dementia.
- Ensure that key information and timetables are updated and consistent on websites and other channels.

Create a communication plan to make sure information about the impact of dementia and the support that is available for both staff and customers is well communicated across the whole organisation. This needs to include both online and offline communication, to ensure that all employees have access to the information they need.

### A communication plan could include:

- website or intranet page signposting to support organisations, key internal documents and policies
- social media posts or blogs posts that focus on understanding more about dementia
- signposting to specialist services such as Alzheimer's Society's **National Dementia Helpline** or other key schemes, and how to get support for different conditions
- themed days or weeks, including Dementia Action Week in May – [alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-action-week](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-action-week)
- newsletters and magazines that have articles on local and national services, schemes and programmes that support people with different conditions
- when referring to people with dementia, use positive language and sensitive terms – see the 'Talking about people with dementia' section on page 10 of this guide for more details.

## Risk enablement

The Department of Health published ‘Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained’: Risk Guidance for people with dementia. The messaging in that guidance focuses on enabling people to live well with dementia. It explains that personalising a programme involves making sure individuals have choice, control and independence.

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**‘At a time when there is also great concern to get safeguarding right – not least for people with dementia – it is important to build on accounts of what works well and not so well in mitigating risks. Practitioners do not have all the answers but there seems to be widespread acceptance that they have some expertise and that there are now more checks and balances in risk enablement. Above all, this review suggests that it is important not to close down options prematurely; that we should be looking for creative solutions; that we need to realise that others are facing similar challenges; and that we may find the process of seeking advice and support is, in itself, helpful. There is a groundswell of support for seizing opportunities to considering quality of life gains as well as potential harm, and this needs to be backed by support for making the most of the decision making capacities that the person with dementia often retains. And, where this is lost, there still needs to be respect for the individual and family regardless of a person with dementia’s ability to make decisions.’**

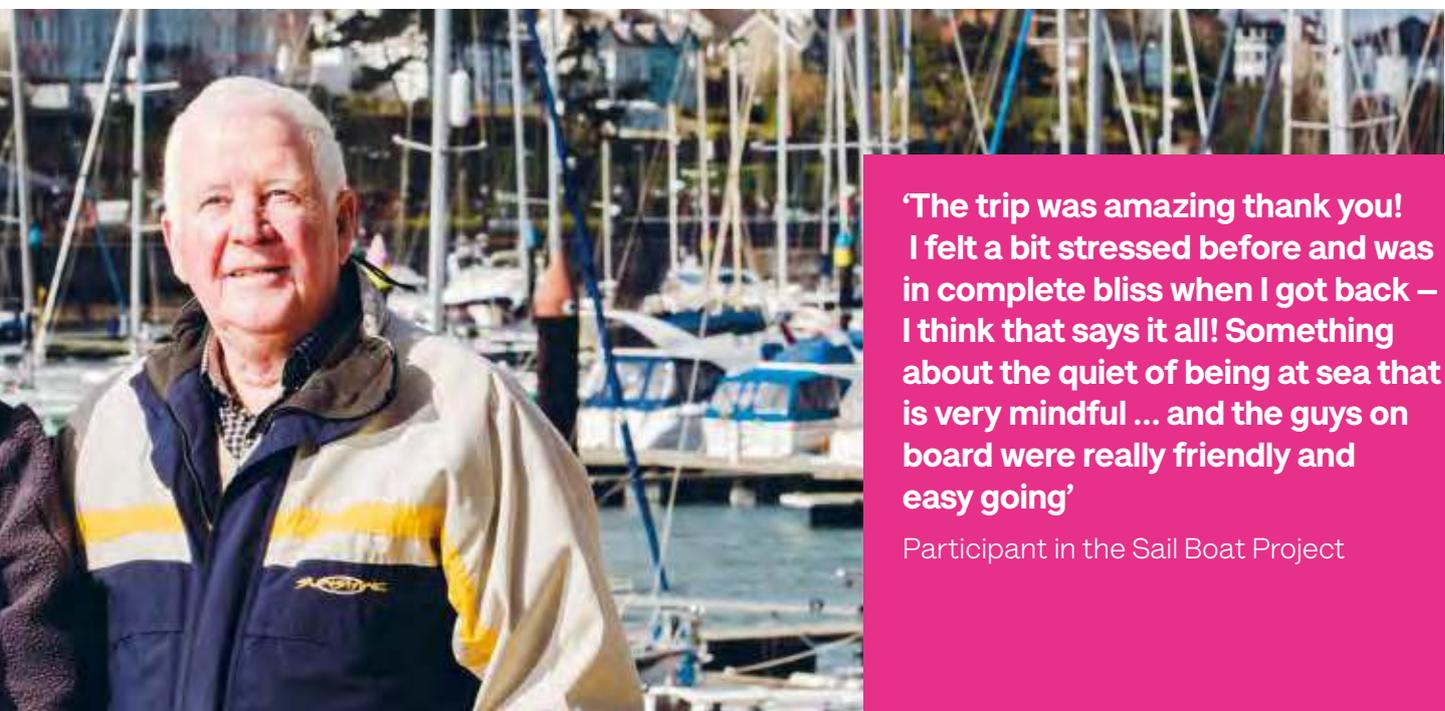
Department of Health, ‘Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained’ (2010)

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If your organisation has processes in place to support vulnerable people, such as those with long-term health conditions, then you are moving in the right direction. You may have to think about additional considerations and make sure people with different types of dementia – such as vascular dementia – are considered in your planning.

**Find more information about physical activity and dementia on Alzheimer’s Society website: [alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/daily-living](https://alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/daily-living)**

Adapting some elements of your programme can allow people to get involved and take part in activities. It’s easy to underestimate the genuine impact that these adaptations can have on a person’s health and wellbeing. Remember that taking part in an activity might become the highlight of someone’s week.



**‘The trip was amazing thank you! I felt a bit stressed before and was in complete bliss when I got back – I think that says it all! Something about the quiet of being at sea that is very mindful ... and the guys on board were really friendly and easy going’**

Participant in the Sail Boat Project



**Place:**  
**The physical  
environment  
and work  
in local  
communities**

# Key actions

- Do a self-guided accessibility audit to understand what small changes can make your environment accessible to people affected by dementia.
- Be aware of potential barriers and challenges that people affected by dementia might face. Put proactive support measurements in place to overcome these barriers.
- Review the signage throughout your premises to make sure all signs are clear and prominent.
- Review the lighting to ensure it is consistent and natural (where possible), and reduce shadows, glares and pools of light.
- Use your space as a community.

## Case study – Dementia-friendly Great Sankey Neighbourhood hub

**LiveWire is the largest provider of leisure facilities in the Warrington area. It is committed to ensuring that all members of the community have access to local facilities and activities.**

Working with Warrington Borough Council, Walker Simpson Architects and other supporting partners, LiveWire has developed a community hub that is designed to be dementia friendly. It is a safe and welcoming environment for people affected by dementia.

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**‘Taking the time to understand dementia friendliness was key from the very beginning of this project. We wanted this to be regarded as one of the most dementia-friendly community facilities in the UK so, from the first stages of the design process we considered all aspects of the customer experience from lighting and layout to signage and colour scheme.’**

Managing Director, LiveWire

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**There was a lot of thought, consultation and planning involved in considering how people affected by dementia could be supported in this environment. Some of the dementia-friendly features at this facility include the following.**

## Entrance

- A friendly welcome from staff who, through becoming Dementia Friends, have a better understanding of the condition and how they can support people affected by dementia.
- Free-flowing standing reception pods instead of a big reception desk. This encourages interaction and is more approachable.
- The first four things people see when they enter the facility are welcoming staff, toilets, a library and a quiet room. This helps to create a safe space and reassurance, where people can instantly feel comfortable.

## Community space

- A removable rolling library is offered throughout the facility. This gives people the chance to sit down, read and relax before or after doing a physical activity.
- In collaboration with a local museum, there is a display of reminiscence boxes that can stimulate conversations.
- Lots of local references have been built in to the space, to make it relevant to people from the local community. One example includes photos of a local champion cyclist that are displayed outside the spin studio.

## Gym

- The gym is open plan and has a seating area at the entrance, to help people relax and feel comfortable.
- There are quiet times, when music is quieter or switched off.
- The weights area is clearly signed but is located away from the main entrance, as this can often be a daunting area for people.
- The wooden floating floor in the main gym and the concrete floating floor in the weights section reduce noise throughout the facility.

## Signage

- Clearly visible signage to show people the entrance and exit.
- There is a view of the main entrance throughout, so that people can see their route back to reception if needed.
- Signage is clear at decision points in the facility. For example, when you exit the lift, the first thing you will see is clear signage to indicate where you can go, which minimises the risk of confusion.
- Colour schemes have been carefully selected, including contrasts between walls, floors and doors, to create a comfortable physical environment for people with dementia.

## Changing rooms and toilets

- The site has an accessible mixed gender changing village, which contains a Changing Places toilet with a bench and hoist, shared cubicles for families and carers, as well as other spacious changing areas.
- Areas of the changing room can be closed off to manage the flow through the changing rooms. For example, if a school session is taking place, part of the changing room can be closed to reduce congestion and noise.
- There is a good colour contrast in the changing areas, which has clear signage and directions.
- The toilets are fully accessible.

## Sports hall and studios

- The floor patterns and coloured markings are not confusing, and there is a contrast between the wall, the floor and the divides.
- The hall provides good acoustics to reduce noise levels.
- One studio is double height, so it can be used for dancing or can be used as a cultural hub to show cinema screenings.
- The studios have curtain mirrors, so that the mirrors can be covered to reduce confusion.
- Virtual classes in the spin studio can increase levels of social interaction during a class.

### A dementia-friendly and accessible environment can support people to continue to do things for themselves for longer and to feel confident in their community.

Small changes to layout or signage, for example, can go a long way to reducing stress and confusion. Walkways, signage and lighting therefore all need special consideration.

All aspects of the physical environment should be reviewed, including the internal and external area – both built and natural. This will help to alleviate the physical challenges that people living with dementia face. A well-designed environment is one that is accessible and easy to navigate.

Well-designed environments also have the power to stimulate, refresh, remind and give pleasure to people who have dementia or other long-term health conditions.

#### For example, The King's Fund (2013) found that for people with dementia, improving an environment can:

- reduce the incidence of agitation and behaviours that challenge
- reduce the need for antipsychotic medication
- reduce falls
- promote independence
- increase engagement in meaningful activities
- encourage greater carer involvement
- improve employee morale, recruitment and retention.

## Physical environment checklist

Area	Things you can do
<b>Parking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review the areas immediately outside the facility for safety, particularly if there is an area for cars to park or drop/collect people.</li> <li>■ Create larger parking spaces or offer 'family spaces' rather than 'mother and baby' spaces. This can make a real difference if someone is not yet eligible for a blue badge but is experiencing cognitive difficulties.</li> <li>■ Check the route from the car park to the building, to ensure there are safe walkways and designated crossing points.</li> </ul>
<b>Entrance and reception</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Make sure the entrance is friendly and welcoming, to put people at ease.</li> <li>■ Ensure the entrances are well lit – for example make as much use of natural light as possible and avoid pools of bright light or deep shadows.</li> <li>■ In larger premises, provide adequate seating, especially in areas where people are likely to be waiting.</li> <li>■ Limit the number of reflections on surfaces and clearly label any glass doors and partitions.</li> <li>■ Offer a quiet space for anyone who might be feeling anxious or confused. A few minutes with a supportive person might be all they need to feel comfortable.</li> <li>■ Ensure the reception is clearly signposted and that members of staff are clearly identifiable.</li> <li>■ Support older customers and those living with dementia to use machines for signing in, or give them priority to speak to a member of staff.</li> </ul>

<b>Signage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review all signs to make sure they are clear – for example in bold with good contrast between the text and background.</li> <li>■ Consider using pictorial signs as well as written signs.</li> <li>■ Avoid using block capitals.</li> <li>■ Fix signs to the doors they refer to, at eye level, and make sure they are in places that are well lit. If possible, signs should not be on adjacent surfaces.</li> <li>■ Place signs at key decision points for people who are trying to navigate the premises for the first time. People with dementia may need such signs every time they come to your building.</li> <li>■ Have clear repeated signs for the toilets and exits. These are important, as they can really help to guide people back to the area they came from.</li> </ul>
<b>Navigation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Think about landmarks in your facility. Research shows that people with dementia use ‘landmarks’ (an item such as a clock or a plant) to navigate their way around, both inside and outside. The more attractive and interesting the item, the easier it will be remember and to use it as a landmark.</li> <li>■ Having minimal or no contrast is a useful way to de-emphasise features that are not for public access. For example, make sure there is no contrast for doors to store rooms, so they blend in.</li> <li>■ Provide a map of your facility to help people find where they are and where they need to go.</li> </ul>
<b>Toilets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Make sure there is clear signage inside and outside the toilets. Having a ‘way out’ sign inside the toilets is really effective.</li> <li>■ Provide a unisex toilet or changing facility to allow people to receive assistance from a carer of the opposite gender without embarrassment.</li> <li>■ Put colour contrasted grab rails in showers, changing rooms and toilets.</li> <li>■ Toilet seats that are a contrasting colour to the walls and the rest of the toilet will be easier for them to see for people with problems with vision and perception</li> <li>■ Ensure that door locks and taps are easy to use for a person with limited dexterity.</li> <li>■ Give people the option of using paper or fabric handtowels as well as hand driers.</li> </ul>
<b>Changing rooms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where applicable, create a changing area in which an opposite sex carer or partner can help a person with dementia with their clothes. If this is not possible, staff should be briefed on how to meet this need sensitively.</li> <li>■ Make sure the seating looks like seating and is clearly visible against walls and surfaces – for example a wooden bench is preferable to an abstract metal bench.</li> <li>■ Develop a method to help people identify their locker. For example, using a re-useable sticker or locker saddle.</li> <li>■ Changes in their perception mean that some people with dementia can be confused or disorientated by mirrors – think about the size and position of mirrors in the centre.</li> </ul>

Area	Things you can do
<b>Gym</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Make sure gym equipment is clearly labelled with information on how to use it safely, potentially with a notice that states ‘if you need help with any equipment please ask a gym instructor before use’.</li> <li>■ Provide clear signposting to different areas and the exit, if the space is sufficiently large to warrant that.</li> <li>■ Clearly identify areas where people can get water or go to the toilet.</li> </ul>
<b>Flooring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Be mindful that changes in floor surfaces can be confusing for people with perception difficulties. For example, shiny floors or reflective surfaces might look wet and could make people anxious.</li> <li>■ Steps can also be trip hazards.</li> <li>■ Avoid bold patterned carpets – plain or mottled surfaces are better, as patterns can cause problems to people with perception difficulties.</li> <li>■ Colour is useful – particularly at the red/yellow end of the spectrum to highlight routes or items you want people doing an activity to notice.</li> <li>■ Avoid areas of contrast such as rugs or mats – to a person with dementia these can look like holes in the floor or pools of water.</li> </ul>
<b>Noise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ For people with dementia, background noise can be distracting and disorientating. For example, excessive background noise can affect their ability to concentrate, and can become disorientating or interfere with hearing aids. Leisure centres and gyms can be particularly noisy environments. This problem is often exacerbated when music or radio stations are played in activity areas.</li> <li>■ Consider whether music is necessary in the facility. Could it be switched off at certain times that are promoted as part of a ‘relaxed’ activity time?</li> <li>■ Provide a quiet space with seating where people can take time out.</li> </ul>
<b>Swimming and poolside</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improve signage and access by marking footsteps or wayfinding on the floor to direct people to the changing room and the swimming pool.</li> <li>■ For dementia-friendly sessions, use free-standing signage and pop-up banners.</li> <li>■ Add grab rails in showers and areas with gradient changes, and towel hooks at the poolside.</li> <li>■ See Swim England’s dementia-friendly swimming resource for more details <a href="http://www.swimming.org/dementiafriendly">www.swimming.org/dementiafriendly</a></li> </ul>
<b>Communal areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ For people who have mobility issues, the prospect of going out into the community with no opportunity for a rest can be daunting. As a result, a lack of seating can act as a real barrier and can lead to exclusion.</li> <li>■ Put people at ease by ensuring that communal areas have enough well-signposted seating and resting places.</li> <li>■ Create easy read and large print menus.</li> <li>■ Make sure the method for serving food is clear – for example let people know whether there is table service or they should order at the counter.</li> </ul>

Sport England has an accessible facilities section on its website that has useful guidance about planning facilities for people with other long-term health conditions.

**[www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/accessible-facilities](http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/accessible-facilities)**

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**‘Gyms can be quite noisy places with loud music etc. Maybe they could hold “quiet times” when the music is off and this might also be helpful for others’**

Person living with dementia

**‘Changing rooms are a real challenge. You really need access to unisex disabled changing facilities to make this work; it can be very difficult otherwise. Also things like negotiating lockers for storing your stuff – very difficult with dementia. So at least a couple of lockers in a unisex area’**

Carer of a person living with dementia

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## Further steps

Further adaptations might involve some investment. However, devoting additional resources can help to future-proof the business by making your facilities more accessible for people affected by dementia. For example, if a leisure centre is being refurbished or refitted, consider the layout – as budgets allow. Improving accessibility in this way could benefit a large number of people living with other long-term health conditions, not only people affected by dementia.

Temporary and low-cost changes are also a good starting point – for example putting up temporary signs could be a useful way to encourage people to start thinking about becoming more dementia friendly. See examples of dementia-friendly signage in the Alzheimer’s Society shop – **[alzheimers.org.uk/shop](http://alzheimers.org.uk/shop)**

It may not always be possible to change the physical environment. If this is the case, it is even more important that staff have a good understanding of dementia. With basic awareness and training, staff can be on hand to support people who are confused or having difficulties.

## Engaging and supporting the local community

Leisure centres and gyms can play an important role in making the local community more dementia friendly. A key example is supporting awareness-raising activities or working with other organisations to implement local dementia initiatives. Dementia-friendly communities are part of a social action movement across all sectors and industries. They inspire sector support and collective action to effect change. The strengths and focus of organisations within a community need to be identified and built in to the plan to establish a dementia-friendly society through local collaboration and partnerships.

### Using your space as a community space

**Some sport or leisure facilities may have a suitable area to host activities for people with dementia either during off-peak or peak times. Alzheimer’s Society local services often co-ordinate sessions that can be hosted in leisure centres, sports clubs or community halls including:**

- Dementia Friends sessions
- Singing for the Brain®
- dementia cafés
- peer support groups.

By inviting people with dementia and carers to your organisation, you can show your commitment to becoming more dementia friendly. People will become familiar with the environment, which can lead to the development of physical activity programmes with these groups.

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**‘Initially he didn’t want to go because he thought it was going to be competitive. There was an Alzheimer’s Society meeting at the golf club and that opened him up to a conversation about the golf. Then he came along and has loved it ever since.’**

Carer of a Golf in Society participant

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## Working with partner organisations

Other charities and partners that support people with long-term health conditions, like those that are part of the Richmond Group of Charities, could add real value to your work.

## Outreach schemes and community programmes

Outreach services and programmes in the community can help you reach people who find it difficult to travel to a facility. This could be particularly helpful for people in rural communities, independent living facilities and care homes. By working with other people and organisations that deliver local activities and offer physical activities in different environments, you can help to build people's confidence with activities and help to start moving people away from isolated settings and into more active lives.

## Supporting accessible transport

Travel can be a barrier for people affected by dementia who want to stay active. To enable isolated people to reach support and advice, you could work with the local authority, local community transport or bus companies to establish a specific or regular transport service.

## Volunteering

Volunteering for a local Alzheimer's Society or dementia service provides organisations and their employees with a great opportunity to support their local community.

**For more information about volunteering visit:**  
[alzheimers.org.uk/volunteer](https://alzheimers.org.uk/volunteer)

**If you want to discuss your requirements in more detail, please contact:**  
[volunteers@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@alzheimers.org.uk)

## Fundraising

Alzheimer's Society has a calendar of national events – including Memory Walk, Cupcake Day and Elf Day – as well as challenge events, which organisations and employees can get involved in.

**For more information visit:**  
[alzheimers.org.uk/fundraise](https://alzheimers.org.uk/fundraise)

## Charity of the Year and strategic partnerships

Many companies are discovering the benefits of working with Alzheimer's Society to motivate their colleagues and make a real difference for people affected by dementia. Strategic partnerships are an exciting way to link Alzheimer's Society's work with your company's long-term objectives. The Society can work with you to devise an extensive programme of fundraising, events and involvement opportunities that will motivate and inspire your staff by harnessing their expertise and skillsets. This work will also demonstrate to customers and the local community that you are committed to supporting people affected by dementia.

**For more information visit:** [alzheimers.org.uk](https://alzheimers.org.uk)



# The benefits of becoming dementia friendly

## Organisational benefits

Becoming a dementia-friendly organisation is not just a socially responsible step – it can also benefit your business. There are clear economic benefits in supporting people with dementia to use your services and facilities. This does not mean prioritising dementia over other conditions or disabilities. But when a business responds to the challenges faced by people with dementia and takes positive action, it can reap the benefits of improved customer experiences, increased revenue and better staff retention.

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**‘When a business gets it right for people with dementia, it gets it right for everyone.’**

Person living with dementia

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## The cost of dementia

- Dementia affects more than 850,000 people and a further 670,000 carers in the UK.
- With an ageing population, the number of people who are living with dementia in the UK is estimated to double in the next 30 years.
- Dementia costs the health service, local government and families £26 billion per year. And estimates suggest that this may treble by 2040 (Alzheimer’s Society, 2012), so there is a clear need for us to take urgent action.

## The economic benefits

Economic benefits that have been measured include: increased revenue, improved customer service, enhanced brand reputation and future-proofing your business.

## The grey pound

In order to stay relevant, KPMG has advised businesses to focus on the ‘grey pound’ rather than millennials. Older customers are ‘living younger longer, are working harder, have the pensions to spend and are adapting to technology’. Tailoring programmes and services to meet the needs of older people makes business sense because people aged over 50 account for 76% of the nation’s wealth, we have an ageing population and there is uncertainty about the economic impact of Brexit.

One in three people over the age of 80 live with dementia and 225,000 people are diagnosed each year, so becoming age- and dementia-friendly goes hand in hand. By 2030, 27% of the total adult population will be aged over 65, with households including someone aged 65 or over spending £145 billion annually (Family Spending 2014, ONS, 2014).

## Social benefits

The social benefits that have been measured include: helping people to live well with dementia, helping people stay independent, improving accessibility for the whole community and reducing social isolation.

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**‘Social confidence is improving, they are comfortable with each other, with the environment and now their personalities are coming through.’**

Carer of a Golf in Society participant

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**For more information on the economic and social benefits of becoming dementia-friendly, as well as the opportunity of the ‘grey pound’, please see our dementia-friendly business guide.**



## Case study – Football and reducing social isolation

**Hendon Football Club has become the first non-league club in the country to offer free tickets to matches for anyone in its local community who feels isolated.**

Its venue operates as a seven-day community hub, which provides a range of community programmes to support people with mental health challenges. It is now starting to look at how to support people with dementia.

Hendon FC is working with local Alzheimer's Society services. Its staff are becoming Dementia Friends. It is also setting up a community café to make people affected by dementia feel welcome and part of the club.

Hendon FC has to run as a business to survive as a football club. However, the club is putting the wellbeing of its fans and community first, to support them to reduce the risk of isolation and create meaningful projects that give people support and a sense of purpose.

# Useful resources

The following resources can offer support or information for people affected by dementia.

## General resources

### **Alzheimer's Society resources**

**[alzheimers.org.uk/publications](https://alzheimers.org.uk/publications)**

Publications orders: 0300 303 5933  
Alzheimer's Society publications provide information on all aspects of dementia.

### **Dementia Connect Online Directory**

**[alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect](https://alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect)**

Alzheimer's Society's online dementia services directory is for anyone affected by dementia in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Use it to find support in your local area.

### **Dementia Friends**

**[dementiafriends.org.uk](https://dementiafriends.org.uk)**

Dementia Friends is an Alzheimer's Society initiative to change people's perceptions of dementia. It aims to transform the way the nation thinks, acts and talks about the condition.

### **Dementia-Friendly Communities**

**[alzheimers.org.uk/dementiafriendlycommunities](https://alzheimers.org.uk/dementiafriendlycommunities)**

Find more information, resources and guidance about setting up a dementia-friendly community.

### **Talking Point**

**[alzheimers.org.uk/talkingpoint](https://alzheimers.org.uk/talkingpoint)**

Talking Point is Alzheimer's Society's online community that anyone who is affected by dementia can use to get support.

### **National Dementia Helpline**

**[alzheimers.org.uk/helpline](https://alzheimers.org.uk/helpline)**

For information, support or advice about dementia, call the helpline: 0300 222 11 22. Please see the Alzheimer's Society website for up-to-date opening hours.

### **Worried about your memory?**

**[alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/publications-and-factsheets/worried-about-your-memory](https://alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/publications-and-factsheets/worried-about-your-memory)**

This free resource from Alzheimer's Society can help you understand more about memory loss. If you are worried – either about your own or someone else's memory – you can seek advice and, if necessary, get treatment.

### **Dementia-friendly business guide**

**[alzheimers.org.uk/business](https://alzheimers.org.uk/business)**

### **Dementia-friendly signage**

**[alzheimers.org.uk/downloads/download/2055/dementia\\_friendly\\_signage](https://alzheimers.org.uk/downloads/download/2055/dementia_friendly_signage)**

### **Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project (DEEP) guides**

**[dementiavoices.org.uk/resources/deep-guides](https://dementiavoices.org.uk/resources/deep-guides)**

## Sport and physical activity resources

Alzheimer's Society exercise and physical activity guidance  
[alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/daily-living/exercise](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/daily-living/exercise)

Age UK's Dementia Friendly Programme  
[www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/evaluation-reports/rb\\_july15\\_dementia-friendly-programme---final-evaluation-report.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/evaluation-reports/rb_july15_dementia-friendly-programme---final-evaluation-report.pdf)

British Gymnastics Foundation  
Love to Move Programme  
[www.britishgymnasticsfoundation.org/lovetomove](https://www.britishgymnasticsfoundation.org/lovetomove)

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Swim England's Dementia Friendly Swimming Project  
[www.swimming.org/dementiafriendly](https://www.swimming.org/dementiafriendly)

Sport England's accessible facilities  
[www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/accessible-facilities](https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/accessible-facilities)

# Useful organisations

The following organisations can offer guidance for people living with dementia and carers. They can also signpost people to more specialist support and advice.

## Alzheimer's Society

[alzheimers.org.uk](http://alzheimers.org.uk)

The UK's leading dementia support and research charity, Alzheimer's Society is here for anyone affected by any form of dementia in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## Age UK

0800 055 6112

(advice line, 8am – 7pm every day)

[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

Age UK aims to make the UK a great place to grow older through providing information and advice, services, campaigns, products, training and research.

## Carers Trust

0300 772 9600

[www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)

Carers Trust works to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring for a family member or friend.

## Citizens Advice

03444 111 444 (England)

03444 77 20 20 (Wales)

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

Your local Citizens Advice can provide information and advice in confidence or point you in the right direction. To find your nearest Citizens Advice, look in the phone book, ask at your local library or look on the Citizens Advice website. Opening times vary.

## DEEP

[www.dementiavoices.org.uk](http://www.dementiavoices.org.uk)

DEEP engages and empowers people living with dementia to influence attitudes, services and policies that affect their lives.

## Public Health England

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england)

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities.

## The Richmond Group of Charities

<https://richmondgroupofcharities.org.uk>

The Richmond Group of Charities is a collaboration of 14 of the leading health and social care organisations in the voluntary sector.

## Sport England

0345 8508 508

[www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)

Sport England is working towards an active nation where everyone feels able to do sport and activity, no matter what their age, background or gender.

## Sporting Memories

[www.sportingmemoriesnetwork.com](http://www.sportingmemoriesnetwork.com)

Tackling dementia, depression and loneliness through the power of sport and reminiscence.

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**Sport England is a public body and invests around £300 million National Lottery and government money each year in projects and programmes that help people get active and play sport.**

It wants everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or level of ability, to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. That's why a lot of its work is specifically focused on helping people who do no, or very little, physical activity and groups who are typically less active – like women, disabled people and people on lower incomes.



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Alzheimer's Society operates in England, Wales, Isle of Man and Northern Ireland. Registered charity in England and Wales (296645) and Isle of Man (1128).

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