

Practical and Pastoral Responses to Dementia

The diagnosis of dementia can be very difficult for both the person living with dementia and their loved ones and carers. This information sheet gives basic information around dementia and signposts to other organisations that may help you support others in your community.

Symptoms of dementia can vary from person to person but may include:

- Memory loss
- Changes in judgement and perception
- Confusion
- Difficulty expressing thoughts
- Changes in understanding
- Getting lost in what are normally familiar surroundings
- Repeating questions
- Taking longer to complete everyday daily tasks
- Losing interest in activities
- Loss of balance / problems with movement
- Changes to personality/inhibitions



Remember: these symptoms may indicate that a person is living with some form of cognitive impairment which could potentially be dementia, but may not necessarily be so as other illnesses also present similar symptoms.

There are over 200 different forms of dementia [1] and no two people are the same. Therefore, just because you may know a person with dementia who exhibits symptoms in a particular way, this does not mean others will too.

What to do if you are concerned about someone who may be showing signs and symptoms of dementia?

- Speak to the person very gently and respectfully about whether they feel any changes/symptoms, eg short-term memory loss. Do not suggest that they may have dementia since only a professional diagnosis can determine this. Remember the person may feel frightened and even judged about what they are experiencing.
- Speak to a member of their family/friendship group, carers, etc and consider if you need to offer to accompany the person to a GP appointment for an assessment and to find out what support they need.
- Contact The Alzheimer's Society Dementia Connect Support Line where personalised information, support and advice can be given by professionals. Call 0333 150 3456 (English speakers). Call 0330 094 7400 (Welsh speakers). Call 033 150 3456 (non-English speakers). Further support and information can be found at [alzheimers.org.uk](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk), and for local support visit [alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect)

Further Training Sessions

The Dementia Friends Session is the Alzheimer's Society's biggest initiative to change people's perception of dementia. It aims to transform the way people think, act and talk about the diagnosis of dementia. Stigma and lack of understanding cause many people living with dementia to experience loneliness and isolation. By becoming a Dementia Friend you will learn what dementia is and how to support those living with dementia, their loved ones and carers.

We want to create dementia-friendly communities that are inclusive. Our Older People's Ministries Team run regular one-hour Dementia Friends sessions on behalf of Alzheimer's Society UK via Zoom. This is an information session, not dementia training. Many people who have attended have testified to how this has changed the way they support people living with dementia in their own families and church communities.

Dementia in the Ministry Context (one-hour session via Zoom). This session dovetails beautifully with the Dementia Friends session and looks at how we support those living with dementia in our churches/corps and communities. With a view of how the Bible shapes our response, we provide hints and tips about how best to serve those in our care with considered and relevant pastoral approaches. Dementia-friendly worship is explored and the session offers other resources to aid your local ministry.

Singing by Heart is a Salvation Army singing session resource for those living with dementia and their loved ones / carers. Using well-known hymns and songs interspersed with Bible readings and prayer, these sessions stimulate both the mind and heart of those attending. Everyone is included equally, and many testify to how these sessions have become 'church for them'. Two volumes of Singing By Heart are now available on the Salvationist website and include 60 songs.

Christmas Singing By Heart booklet (plus a two-hour training session via Zoom) with well-loved Christmas carols and songs. For further information please contact: dan.elson@salvationarmy.org.uk (Music and Creative Arts).

Memories of Christmas – a dementia-friendly carol service leader's guide, outline and carol sheets with guidance on running an inclusive carol service. Please contact ali.thornton-dean@salvationarmy.org.uk or dan.elson@salvationarmy.org.uk for your copy. (Please note people will have needed to have completed the Dementia Friends Session to receive this.)



To find out about any of the upcoming (training) sessions mentioned above, please email:
ali.thornton-dean@salvationarmy.org.uk or
andrew.wileman@salvationarmy.org.uk

Safeguarding



If you are concerned that the signs and symptoms someone is showing present a safeguarding risk to themselves or others, please speak to The Salvation Army's Safeguarding team.

Individuals are considered to have capacity to make their own decisions unless established otherwise. Therefore any decision to refer them to Adult Care Services or other agencies should only be done with their consent unless there is a clear risk of harm to themselves or others. If the person or others are in immediate danger, call 999.

For further support with any safeguarding concerns, please contact The Salvation Army Safeguarding Department – Tel: 020 7367 4767 or email safeguarding@salvationarmy.org.uk

For further information about mental capacity, please visit:

<https://ourhub.salvationarmy.org.uk/Safeguarding/Encyclopedia%20Safeguardia/Mental%20Capacity.aspx> (requires OurHub access)