

## **Safeguarding - Dementia**

The week beginning the 15th of May was Dementia Action week and hopefully some of you managed to find the stands at the various events where they were represented.

Dementia is a challenge that touches many of us in one way or another and Dementia awareness is an important part of facing that challenge. Dementia leaves people vulnerable, and hence safeguarding those affected is of particular importance.

### **What to look for**

If someone you know well is becoming increasingly forgetful this may be an early sign of dementia (but there are other reasons, like severe stress, why someone might be experiencing memory loss).

Other signs of dementia include:

- increasing difficulty with tasks and activities that require concentration and planning.
- changes in personality and mood.
- periods of mental confusion.
- difficulty finding the right words or not being able to understand conversations as easily.

### **How to talk to someone you think may have signs of dementia**

Talking about memory loss, and the possibility of dementia, can be difficult.

Before starting a conversation with someone you're concerned about (such as a close friend or relative), the Alzheimer's Society suggests that you should ask yourself:

- has the person noticed their symptoms?
- do they think their problems are just a natural part of ageing?
- are they scared about what their symptoms could mean for their future?
- do they think there will not be any point in seeking help?
- are you the best person to talk to them about memory problems?

When you do talk to them, choose a place that is familiar and not threatening. Also, allow plenty of time so the conversation is not rushed.

The Alzheimer's Society has more tips on how to talk to someone about memory problems.

## **What to do next**

If there is some evidence of early dementia, you may like to suggest you go with your close friend or relative to see a GP so you can support them. You'll also be able to help them recall what has been discussed.

A GP will ask how the symptoms have developed over time. They may also do a memory test and physical examination.

If the person does not want to see a GP, many UK dementia charities offer support and advice from specialist nurses or advisers, such as:

- Dementia UK helpline: 0800 888 6678 or email: [helpline@dementiauk.org](mailto:helpline@dementiauk.org)
- Alzheimer's Society's national helpline: 0333 150 3456 or email: [helpline@alzheimers.org](mailto:helpline@alzheimers.org).
- Gloucestershire's "Managing Memory Team" (telephone number 0800 694 8800 or e-mail via [managingmemory@ghc.nhs.uk](mailto:managingmemory@ghc.nhs.uk))

As a follow on from Dementia Action Week, we intend to invite the Managing Memory Team to attend one of our Open Meetings to allow members to obtain information and ask questions relating to Dementia, care and other aging issues. More information on this will follow in due course.