

I know first-hand the enormity of the shock of the situation when dementia diagnosis has been given to both the family and the individual. You are cast unwillingly into the world of dementia and probably find yourself the main one having to find a suitable place for your elderly relative to live etc.

I put together this e-book to help you and give you the immediate information you will need and make you aware of the services that are available.

Once the initial feelings have passed, it's time to move on and create an action plan for the future. Dementia is a progressive illness, so the sooner you take care of legal, financial and healthcare matters the better.





These are the key things to think about:

Get Assessed

Your local authority has a duty to carry out a community care assessment to establish which of its services you need. To arrange an assessment, contact social services or your GP. You can get the relevant phone numbers from your local yellow pages or internet.

Services and Support

Find out what's available locally so you're prepared and able to call on this support as and when you need it. Services arranged by local authorities vary from area to area, but may include home care services, equipment and adaptations for your home, and so on. Some services, such as community nursing, are arranged through the NHS. Ask your hospital consultant for details.

Charities such as the Alzheimer's Society, Age UK and Dementia UK provide a range of services, including information, helplines, support groups, lunch clubs and home care schemes.

Specialist Care Home Accommodation

You can get a list of Dementia Care homes or they may be listed as EMI homes. I would suggest you read on line the CQC inspectorate reports and visit each home. Don't be afraid to ask questions. I have listed a few that you can ask, that may be of help to you.

Ask how many staff is on shift during the day and the night

Ask if all the staff are trained up to NVQ level 3?

Ask to see an example of menus available.

Ask what kind of activity schedule is available.

Ask what facilities are available in the home such as garden, hairdresser, shop etc.

Also look around and get a sense of the home, if you feel you would like to arrange to come back again another day to visit, do so. If you find the home you and your loved one decide on go and visit a week or so before they agreed move in date, arrange to spend the morning or afternoon a few times prior their move in date and make sure your happy with the care and feel of the of home. Integrate them slowly into their new home if that is possible, sometimes that is not always possible if someone has be admitted straight away for personal reasons, but if you are able to do this then you should.

Making a will

It's a good idea to make a will if possible. This ensures that all affairs are done to your loved ones choosing. A person with dementia can still make or change a will, providing you can show that you understand what you are doing and what the effects of it will be. Your solicitor will decide if this is the case.

.

Putting your papers in order

Make sure that all important papers can be easily found. These might include bank and building society statements, mortgage or rent documents, insurance policies, your will, tax and pension details, bills and guarantees.

Consider setting up direct debits or standing orders for your regular bills. This will mean that they are paid automatically from your bank account each month.

Claiming benefits

Check that you are claiming all the benefits that you're entitled to. In particular, check:

- whether you are eligible for personal independence payment (which replaced disability living allowance in early 2013) or attendance allowance
- whether your carer (if you have one) is eligible for carer's allowance

Other benefits you may be eligible for include income support or minimum income guarantee, incapacity benefit, housing benefit and council tax relief.

Lasting power of attorney

You can appoint one or more people as "attorneys" to manage your affairs, including your finances, property and medical treatment, should it become necessary. You can choose anybody you trust to be your attorney, usually a close friend or family member, but they must be over 18.

Advance care planning

Your loved one may wish to make an advance care plan so that they can have a say in their future medical care. It enables them to refuse, in advance, a specific medical treatment or procedure should they become unable to decide in the future.

Mental Health

If your loved one is depressed or feeling very down, talk to their GP. Depression is very common in early dementia and there are a range of treatments, including talking treatments that can help.

As with other long-term conditions, when you have dementia it's important to look after yourself by stopping smoking, eating healthily and taking regular exercise.

Memory Books

Memory books can be a helpful way of stimulating your memory and reconnecting you with your loved ones in the future. Essentially, it's a "this is your life" compilation of photographs, notes and keepsakes from your childhood through to the present day. It can be either a physical book or a digital system like a photo book.

If you need advice or help them please feel free to contact us at the Lovejoy Centre and we would be more than happy to signpost you in the right direction. We also offer a closed Facebook group which only members of the group can see comments, so ask us to join and we post the latest news in dementia advancements in the group and our product and services we have available and offer support.

Finally never ever lose hope!