Alzheimer’s Society services evaluation 2018

Spotlight on dementia advisers
Spotlight on dementia advisers

‘She has been a lifeline.’
Person with dementia

Alzheimer’s Society’s dementia adviser service gives personalised information and advice to people affected by dementia, usually at the point of their diagnosis. It also signposts them to other services and support. The dementia adviser service enables people to use information they have received, and helps them to receive the care they need.

The 2018 evaluation collected data from 258 people with dementia and 178 carers who had used the dementia adviser service.

Did people who used the dementia adviser service feel supported by staff?
People who used the dementia adviser service overwhelmingly agreed that the dementia adviser understood their needs (100% of people with dementia and 99% of carers). They felt that their dementia adviser had good listening skills and showed empathy and patience. They also said the adviser took the time to understand them. People with dementia valued their dementia adviser’s expertise and knowledge, and their ability to explain information in an accessible way.

The feedback from people who have used the service suggested that unique situations were understood and respected:

‘Our dementia adviser’s listening skills should not be underestimated as she was brilliant at understanding our needs and our lifestyle. She wanted to know and understand our experiences and the day in a life of both of us. I felt supported in my needs.’
Person with dementia

Did people who used the dementia adviser service feel they were provided with useful information?

The people who used the service agreed that their dementia adviser gave them useful information (98% of people with dementia and 100% of carers). They found it particularly useful that the dementia adviser helped them to understand their dementia and signposted to relevant services. Some people with dementia said that the paper-based resources were particularly useful because they could return to the information at a later date.

‘She provided me with so much information. What I like is she didn’t just pass the leaflets over, she highlighted parts of them that would be relevant to us.’
Person with dementia

‘I have never had to deal with dementia and the problems it brings. The dementia adviser explained how dementia affects the person living with it, gave me information, and empathised with the situation we are in. Made me feel I wasn’t on my own and that help was at hand when needed.’
Carer
Did people who used the dementia adviser service feel it was a useful point of contact?
The people who used the service agreed that it was a useful point of contact (98% of people with dementia and 100% of carers). As well as supporting them to navigate other services, people with dementia said that the dementia adviser service gave them a chance to discuss challenges. They felt it was reassuring that the ‘dementia adviser was only a phone call away’ – knowing that the service was there when they needed it made people feel less isolated and more supported.

‘I feel it is a central framework for other services to be explored. It was very helpful to have an occupational therapy referral.’
Person with dementia

‘You feel very alone when caring for a loved one with conditions you have no idea how best to deal with. The internet almost has too much information and is hard to navigate. A dementia adviser bridges the gap.’
Carer

Did people who used the dementia adviser service feel it made their life better in any way?
People who used the service agreed that it had made their life better (94% of people with dementia and 96% of carers). They felt that their dementia adviser was a source of essential information that they would otherwise not have. This helped carers in particular to feel reassured and more confident in their caring role. Some carers also said that their relationship with their loved one with dementia improved – this suggests that the service helps carers to feel more able to cope with everyday life.

‘She has been a lifeline. I know where she is if I need to talk if something is worrying me or if I need advice. She helped me by supporting me when I had my driving assessment by just talking to me before I went out on my test.’
Person with dementia

‘Not only did the dementia adviser make me feel like we were a team but he made us an effective one. Feeling like you have a losing battle alone is soul destroying on top of the emotional stress involved. Without this help I would have felt very low and like there was no one who cared.’
Carer

Some people felt it was too early to say whether the service had made their life better. However, they recognised that the dementia adviser service would be useful in the future when they need it.

Acknowledgements: The Evaluation and Impact Team would like to thank all the people affected by dementia and the staff and volunteers across Alzheimer’s Society who contributed to this evaluation. This report was written by: Laura Freeman, Evaluation and Impact Programme Manager, Alzheimer’s Society; Natasha Morgan, Evaluation Manager, Alzheimer’s Society; Dr Suzie Snowden, Evaluation Officer, Alzheimer’s Society; Carly Tillyer, Evaluation Officer, Alzheimer’s Society.