October/November 2025

Dementia together

Alzheimer's Society

In this issue

Independent and positive, winning poems, toilet problems and much more

ISSN 2516-4406
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Welcome

Dementia together magazine is for anyone affected by dementia – people with a diagnosis as well as carers, family and friends. In every issue, we offer positive stories and ideas, as well as sharing some of the hardest challenges and lowest points that people experience.

For many people, poetry is a powerful way to express and relate to a full range of emotions about dementia. We're very proud to publish the winners of our 2025 poetry competition (see pages 19–23). The work of these six poets was selected from hundreds of entries, each one of which was a privilege to read and consider – thank you to everyone who took part in this. That includes all those who entered their poems, and the people who joined our amazing shortlisting and judging panels.

We also share the main findings from the readership survey about our second co-produced special issue (see page 15). This shows us once more that involving people in planning and creating the magazine produces a better result for our readers, so we'll be exploring more ways to do this in future.

As ever, we learn a lot from your feedback and suggestions, so please continue to use the magazine contacts below to let us know what you think.

Danny Ratnaike, Magazine Editor

Need support? Call 0333 150 3456 or visit alzheimers.org.uk/getsupport

Dementia together is the Alzheimer's Society magazine for anyone affected by dementia. Contact us on **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk**, **020 7264 2667** or **020 3929 5117**, or write to us at Magazine Editor, Alzheimer's Society, Suite 2, 1st Floor East Wing, Plumer House, Tailyour Road, Plymouth PL6 5FS.

Sign up to get each new magazine by email or – if you're in the UK, Isle of Man, Channel Islands or Republic of Ireland – in print or on CD through the post. Please email **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or call **0330 333 0804** to subscribe or update your details.

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PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY

POSTCODE CARE TRUST

Funds raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery support the production of Dementia together magazine.

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Fundraising and general enquiries 0330 333 0804.
Alzheimer's Society is a registered charity in England and Wales (296645) and the Isle of Man (1128).

Contents

Directions

It will take a society to beat dementia.

That's the message behind our powerful new ads, which began screening at the start of September.

They open with a person who's been recently diagnosed with dementia saying, 'I'm going to need your help.'

And she's right. We all have a role to play in changing things for people with dementia. We need to bring together carers, researchers, volunteers, fundraisers, politicians, dementia advisers – everyone.

These ads are being seen and heard by millions on TV, radio, social media and elsewhere, and it's crucial that more of the general public understand their message. Just 8% know that dementia is the UK's biggest killer, and only a quarter are confident that they understand dementia and how it affects people.

Our recent survey of people affected by dementia is a good reminder of why this is so important. It underlined how little help most people get, and how much the quality of support and care needs to be improved.

At Alzheimer's Society, we understand everything it takes to beat dementia – supporting those who need it, campaigning to improve people's experiences and funding research to end the devastation of dementia.

Of course, you are a vital part of this picture. I'm glad to be meeting even more of you at Memory Walks this autumn!

Corinne Mills,
Interim CEO

News

Dementia Friends: A little understanding

We're excited to unveil a new look and feel for Dementia Friends that will help it to reach even more people.

Some things will look a little different, including the badge and action card you get when you become a Dementia Friend.

There's also a new guiding message, 'A little understanding makes a big difference,' to show that everyone can play a part in supporting people affected by dementia.

Since 2013, over 3.8 million people have become Dementia Friends by attending in-person sessions – run by Dementia Friends Ambassadors – and watching online videos.

This gives them the understanding to help change attitudes towards dementia and make a difference in their communities.

Find out more about becoming a Dementia Friend or Dementia Friends Ambassador at **dementiafriends.org.uk**

Join us for Elf Day

Photograph: iStock FluxFactory

Grab your festive hat and sweater or go full elf for Elf Day!

On 3 December, our supporters will dress up as merry elves to raise money and awareness for Alzheimer's Society at work, home or in your community.

So why not join them? If the date doesn't work for you, simply pick another that does.

Sign up to receive your free fundraising guide, packed with festive games, activities and ideas – visit **alzheimers.org.uk/elfday** or call **0330 333 0804**.

Memory Walk returns

Over 13,000 people in Wales, England and Northern Ireland have already taken part in Memory Walk 2025.

It's a chance to remember people we've lost, to come together for those living with dementia and to fundraise for a brighter future.

Congratulations to all our Memory Walkers – wear your medal with pride! Feeling inspired? There's still time to join our last events in October.

Find an event near you and sign up at **alzheimers.org.uk/memorywalk** or call **0300 330 5452**.

NI: real-life evidence

We brought people's real-life experiences of dementia to the third annual Queen's University Dementia Conference in Belfast recently. We raised the voices of people affected by dementia and presented compelling evidence about their realities.

We shared findings at the NI Assembly Committee for Health too, making the case to Members of the Legislative Assembly for policy reform and better services.

The Time for Dementia programme is also running in Northern Ireland for the first time – see page 37 for more.

Stand united in Wales

During the summer, we held the first-ever Welsh Dementia Conference to highlight the urgent need to make dementia a priority in Wales.

We brought together people affected by dementia, academics, politicians and others for a packed agenda at the Pierhead building in Cardiff Bay.

The conference, sponsored by Luke Fletcher, Member of the Senedd and Chair of the Cross-Party Group on Dementia, was a powerful way to show that we stand united in our fight against dementia.

Ministerial speech

Minister for Care Stephen Kinnock gave the keynote speech at our annual conference in September.

He spoke about how upcoming dementia policy changes in England are an opportunity to transform lives. He also talked with people affected by dementia and heard firsthand just how much change is needed.

The conference's focus was tackling health inequalities in dementia, with talks from professionals and decision-makers from around the UK.

Blood test clinical trials

Researchers investigating a simple blood test for Alzheimer's disease are now welcoming their first study volunteers.

The ADAPT study will see whether providing blood test results early, when a person's memory and thinking are first being assessed, helps to improve their diagnosis and care. Participants are being recruited through memory clinics across the UK.

Fiona Carragher, our Chief Policy and Research Officer, said, 'Too often, dementia is diagnosed late, limiting access to support, treatment, and opportunities to plan ahead. A timely and accurate diagnosis also enables participation in research, including clinical trials. For many families across the UK, getting that diagnosis remains a major challenge.

ADAPT is part of our Blood Biomarker Challenge, a multi-million-pound programme also supported by Alzheimer's Research UK and players of People's Postcode Lottery.

READ-OUT, the other major study in the challenge, began recruiting participants earlier this year. That trial is researching blood tests to diagnose a range of types of dementia.

'Blood tests could offer a faster and more accessible route to diagnosis,' adds Fiona. 'The Blood Biomarker Challenge is committed to building the evidence needed to bring these innovative tests into NHS care, delivering real benefits for people living with dementia and their families.'

Could you take part in dementia research? To find out more, call **0333 150 3456** and ask for our Research Participation team, or email **joindementiaresearch@alzheimers.org.uk**

Marie Curie partnership

In our new partnership with Marie Curie, we're investing £1 million in pioneering research to improve end of life dementia care.

Together, we're funding five innovative research projects. These look at how to improve care for people living with dementia and the family members, friends and carers who support them.

These projects are all informed by people's real-life experiences of dementia. They'll explore new resources and approaches to be used in end of life care, and ways to coordinate support across health and social care services.

Read more about our research at **alzheimers.org.uk/research**

Flying high

It's been an exciting and busy year for our partnership with British Airways.

As well as reaching the amazing fundraising milestone of £500,000, we were chosen as one of five BA Better World Community Fund partners, benefiting from passengers' onboard donations between May and December.

It doesn't end there – we're looking forward to welcoming BA partnership volunteers to our Carols at Christmas concerts at the Royal Albert Hall, where they'll be collecting donations from attendees.

Triumphant trekkers

Our Trek26 participants have been truly inspirational this year.

Over 16,000 trekkers donned their hiking boots across 12 events. So far, they've raised an incredible £7 million towards a world where dementia no longer devastates lives.

If you missed out or you'd like to come back for more, registrations for our 2026 series are now open.

Join us and walk 13 or 26 miles next summer, using the code SUNRISE to save 20% on your registration fee – visit **alzheimers.org.uk/trek26** or call **0300 330 5452**.

Tender portrayal

Society Ambassador Sir Jonathan Pryce CBE plays Stephen, a character with dementia, in the TV film adaptation of The Thursday Murder Club.

It's the third time Sir Jonathan has played a character with dementia, and he's been praised for his tender portrayal.

'While I tend not to base my portrayal on anyone in particular,' he says, 'I have lived through a loved one losing their memory. My beloved Aunt Mair had dementia at the end of her life.'

The film version of Richard Osman's bestselling book, set in a retirement village in Kent, is available to stream on Netflix.

Fee increase for LPAs

The fee to register a lasting power of attorney (LPA) in England and Wales is increasing from £82 to £92.

The new fee is for any LPA applications received by the Office of the Public Guardian from 17 November onwards.

This increase needs to be approved by Parliament, but it's unlikely to be rejected.

If you're applying, remember to check whether you're entitled to a fee exemption or reduction based on your financial circumstances.

See **alzheimers.org.uk/publications** or call **0300 303 5933** for our Lasting power of attorney (472) and, if you're in Northern Ireland, Enduring power of attorney and controllership (NI472) factsheets.

International insights

The world's biggest dementia research conference drew thousands of experts from around the globe to Toronto, Canada this summer.

We helped sponsor an event at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference 2025 to highlight innovations in advancing treatments, care and tech.

Partners that we've supported showcased their innovations, including Jelly Drops, Recreo VR and SmartSocks.

Other highlights included learning about the start of late-stage trials for a new drug, trontinemab, about the experiences of prescribing lecanemab and donanemab in countries where their use is approved, and about increased use of blood tests in the US to diagnose Alzheimer's disease.

We're already planning how to make the most of the 2026 event, which will be in London.

Gifts that make a difference

Our shop's Winter catalogue 2025 is packed with festive essentials, such as wrapping paper, decorations and cards. This includes Jill Kellie's winning design from our 2025 Christmas card design competition.

There are present ideas for people with dementia, such as easy-to-use technology, companion pets, games and puzzles.

It also has plenty of ideas for everyone in your life, from stationery and forget-me-not gifts to food hampers.

If you didn't get your catalogue with this magazine, please visit **shop.alzheimers.org.uk** or call **0333 366 0035**.

Flu jabs for winter

People with long-term conditions and older people, as well as their carers, should consider having the seasonal flu vaccination. It's free to many people.

Flu can be serious, and vaccines help stop it from being spread to more people. It's best to have your flu jab in autumn or early winter. If you had it last year, you'll still need the new one this year.

Speak to your GP, practice nurse or pharmacist. In England, you can book your jab using the NHS app.

Magazine podcast

Listen to people speak for themselves in our Dementia together podcast.

Every issue, we release a new episode drawn from interviews we've done for that magazine. It's wonderful to hear people tell their own stories, often including details that didn't appear in the written article.

Look out for the newest episode in early October at **alzheimers.org.uk/podcast**

You can also subscribe on your podcast app – search 'Alzheimer's Society' to find us.

Don't miss...

What can help if you find you're starting to experience problems with continence? See **page 16.**

Professor James Cole is finding out how personalised brain scans could benefit people with dementia. See **page 18.**

Read the amazing winning entries from our Poetry Competition 2025. See **page 19.**

People try out a new reminder clock that helps you stay connected to family and friends. See **page 28.**

How can you support a person with dementia who repeatedly pulls off their stoma bag? See **page 34.**

‘You can’t take it with you’

Coral Bayley in West Sussex has always been independent with a positive attitude. Heather Stephen meets a woman who is determined to live her best life despite dementia.

Stamp collecting has been a passion for Coral Bayley since she was 13 and she’s still collecting 57 years on.

‘I’ve got folders and folders,’ she says. ‘But they’re taking over the house, so I might take some of them to the local auction house and earn myself some money!’

Coral has travelled all over the world. First, because of her father’s job as an aeronautical engineer and later, as a sales and marketing consultant in the travel industry.

And, as she has picked up stamps in every country visited, there are quite a few in the collection!

Coral started life in Richmond, Surrey, with her parents and three brothers.

‘My dad was from Barbados and came to the UK with the Royal Air Force. He was playing in a cricket match in Cardiff when he met my mum. He bowled her over and the rest, they say, is history.’

Taste for travel

Coral got her first taste of travel at nine, when her dad bagged a job in Trinidad.

A few years later he transferred to Kenya. But by that time, all four children were in boarding school – Coral in Hastings and her brothers in Bristol.

‘We only saw each other at school holidays but we had great times, and I considered myself a lot better off than some girls who only went home once a year.’

Coral stayed at the convent school in Hastings until after A levels and started working in banking.

‘I enjoyed it, but I knew there was more I wanted to do,’ she says.

Moving around a lot as a child obviously gave Coral the travel bug because her next job was tourism marketing.

Extensive travel was part of the job, and Coral says the highlight was being fortunate enough to fly on Concorde.

‘My brothers all work in the travel industry but none have been on Concorde so I have one up on them,’ she jokes.

‘We were flying to Barbados and the captain invited me into the cockpit. I will never forget the nose dipping as we came into land on the island. And although it was minus something outside, if you put your hand on the glass it was red hot. That was how fast it was.

‘It was a fabulous opportunity and something I will always be grateful for.’

New challenge

After several years in promotion, Coral fancied a new challenge. She saw a position advertised with Border Force, which carries out immigration and customs checks at UK airports and ports.

She spent the next eight years checking and stamping passports at Heathrow Airport before switching to Gatwick, where she worked for 10 years.

‘I regret leaving Heathrow because it was a much more exciting place to work,’ she says.

Coral had another reason to regret the move, as she eventually had to deal with an overzealous manager.

‘The manager called me into her office and said I would have to leave, as I was making too many mistakes and kept forgetting things.

‘I didn’t think I had and should have contacted the union, but I left as I didn’t want to stay somewhere that didn’t want me.

‘It was a shame because it was a brilliant job and I had a good rapport with my colleagues, who I am still in touch with today.’

Coral was devastated but picked herself up and secured a marketing role with Japanese airline ANA, where she worked until she retired at 66.

> It upset me, but I felt better when I decided to take control and do something to help myself.

Quick read

Coral Bayley, in Horsham, found out she had dementia after being forced to leave her job with Border Force at 62.

After diagnosis with young-onset Alzheimer's, she was upset but eight years on, she has a full life, keeping busy and helping others.

Although Coral lives alone she is still independent and enjoys stamp collecting, jigsaws and crossword puzzles.

She also finds fulfilment through her local Dementia Voice group and the Time for Dementia programme.

Photographs: Nathan Clarke

Massive shock

Although Coral had a full working life, the Gatwick manager's words made her think. So at 64, she went to her GP and was assessed for dementia.

The diagnosis was Alzheimer's disease, which came as a massive shock.

'I had been forgetting things but I didn't think I had a problem,' she says.

'It upset me, but I felt better when I decided to take control and do something to help myself.'

One of the first things Coral did was to take part in a dementia drug trial. In more recent years, she has contributed to Alzheimer's Society groups, meeting others going through some of the same challenges.

> **Make sure your family knows what's going on, take your meds and keep up with your friends.**

Coral maintains a positive attitude through her Christian faith.

'I have never been resentful about having dementia and thought "why me?" because I believe everything happens for a reason and is part of God's plan,' she says.

And going to church twice a week, she has made lots of friends to go for coffee with and who keep her smiling no matter what.

'I'm quite happy with my own company but I still try to go out at least every other day because it's not good for you to be stuck at home all the time and I get exercise too.'

Although Coral is living well independently, her family thought it would be safer if she gave up her car two years ago. She found that really tough.

'Initially it was difficult because I was used to jumping in the car and heading off wherever I wanted,' she says.

'I was still working then too, so I had to get used to getting on public transport. But I got used to it and understood my brothers were acting out of love.'

New routine

On retirement Coral had to forge a whole new routine. However, she made sure it's just as busy and productive as her working life.

She keeps her brain ticking over with crossword puzzles and jigsaws, challenges her general knowledge on daytime quiz shows and loves making a difference through her Alzheimer's Society involvement.

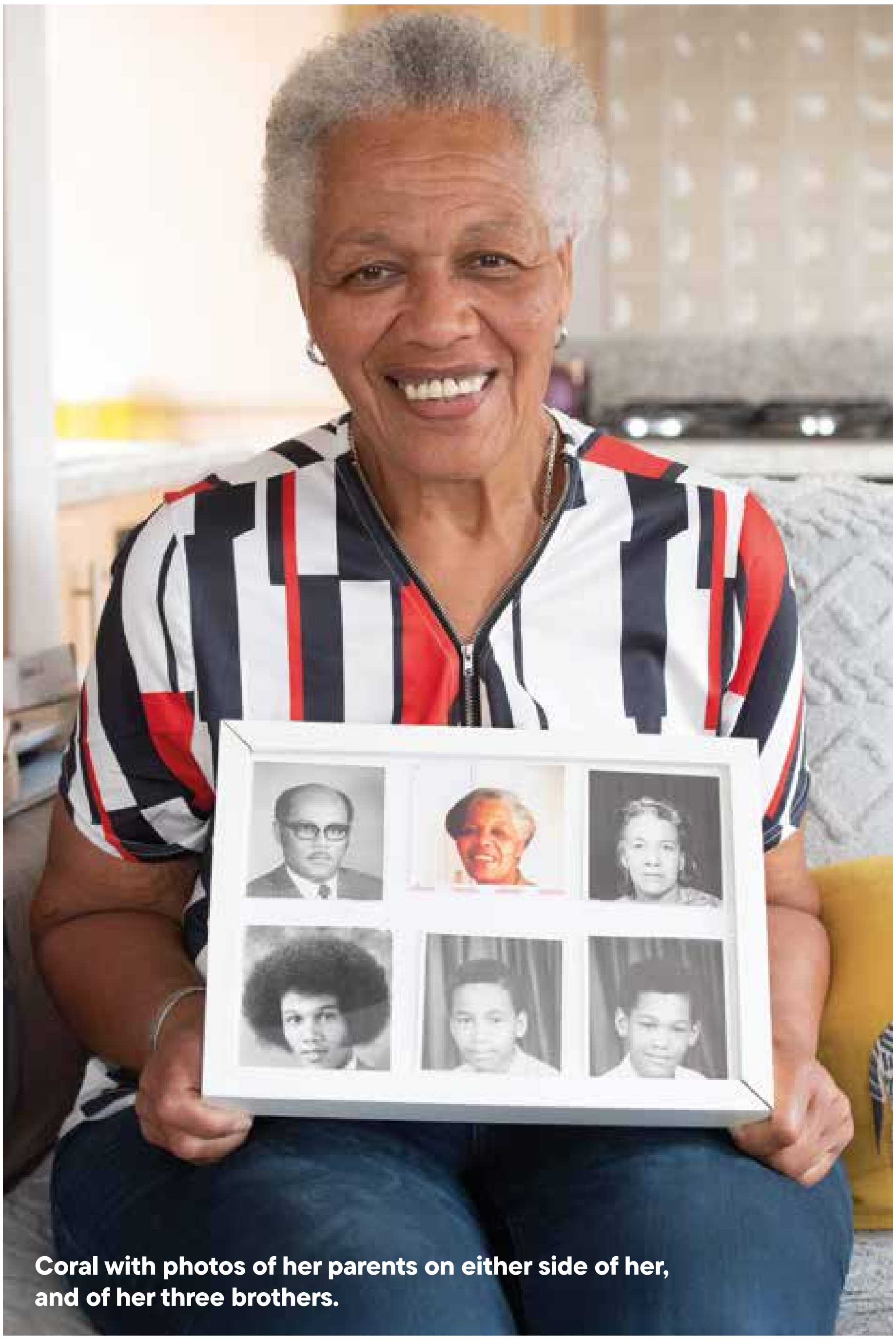
Once a month, Coral heads off to meetings with Horsham Rusty Brains – one of the Society's Dementia Voice local groups.

These groups bring together people with dementia to influence our and others' work, and to talk to schools and businesses. It also gives people the chance to meet others who understand what it's like to live with dementia.

'I am the youngest in the group but it's good to be open about something that people don't generally talk about,' she says.

Coral gets a lot from taking part in Time for Dementia too. Through this, people with dementia give healthcare students insight into the realities of living with the condition.

She logs onto Zoom chats every three months and says, 'I enjoy the chat and if I can help someone else that's great.'



Coral with photos of her parents on either side of her, and of her three brothers.

Still Coral

Coral's family, who live nearby, are very supportive.

'I wouldn't wish dementia on anybody. It is something that is going to get worse, and you don't know what the future will bring. But my family are always there for me.

'Dementia hasn't had a significant impact yet. I'm still Coral, I remember my friends and what I did last week, and my diary helps me keep track of important dates.'

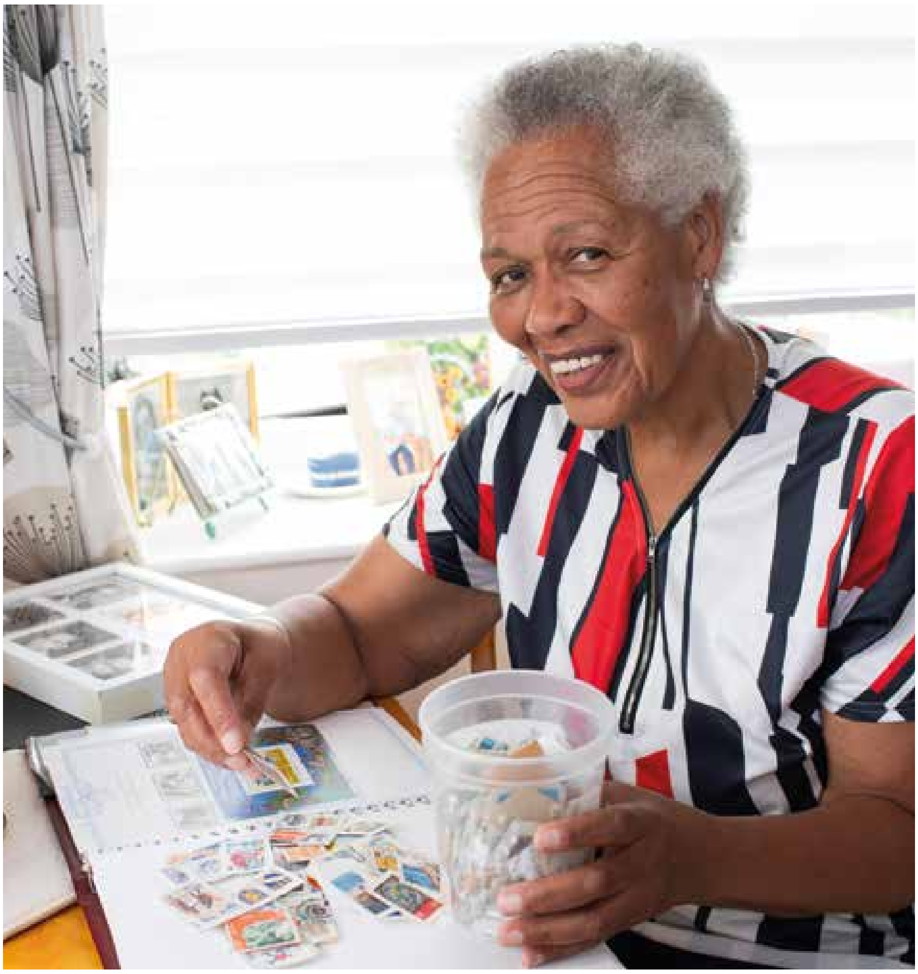
Coral advises others newly diagnosed.

'Make sure your family knows what's going on, take your meds and keep up with your friends.

'The diagnosis isn't the end of the world. The worst thing you can do is sit in your house looking at the four walls. Get out, do things and be positive, keep your brain going and you can get through this.'

So what would she do with any spoils from her stamps at the auction?

'I'm going on a cruise around the UK,' says Coral. 'You can't take it with you, and I've been everywhere else!'



See **alzheimers.org.uk/involvement** to find out about Dementia Voice local groups and other ways to use your lived experience.

Help improve future healthcare professionals' understanding through Time for Dementia – visit **alzheimers.org.uk/timefordementia** or call **07562 430204**.

Donate

Your donation helps us to support more people like Coral to remain as independent as possible. Donate online.

Share and inspire

Views, updates and ideas – for and by you.

Never done before: Festival organiser

Nigel Palmer, in Leicester, is part of a group who helped co-design a dementia festival:

'When most people meet me, they don't realise I have dementia, so it's important for me to speak out and be open. It's a common misconception that once you've got a diagnosis, that's it – you're left to see out your days sitting in a high-back chair.

'I've got fewer inhibitions since my diagnosis. I just don't seem to worry about getting involved in different activities. Sandra, my wife, and I stay busy around all our family commitments, including babysitting our grandkids.

'A lifeline for us was joining a local group called the Inn Crowd, a group of around 16–20 people, a mix of carers and people living with dementia.'

Festival idea

'Together, the Inn Crowd came up with the idea of the Forget-Me-Not Festival.

'We were thinking about good ways to raise awareness about dementia and the support that's available. We decided it would be a fantastic way to get the message across to our community.

'Once the seed was sown for the festival, we just watched it grow.

'I used to be a painter and decorator – I've never done any event organising – so everything about the festival was a new experience.

'There's so much to think about, and Sandra and I got involved at every stage. At the start, this meant helping to decide on the time and the date of the festival and on a venue. We visited a few places and, as a group, we chose an event space at Leicester City FC's ground.'

> **“I used to be a painter and decorator – I've never done any event organising – so everything about the festival was a new experience.”**

Hands-on involvement

'You name the task, we got involved. From selecting stall holders and helping with signage to promotional posters and website design. It was a real joint effort for the group and Hayleigh from Alzheimer's Society was an absolute star.

'When festival day arrived, I went through a range of emotions, including nerves and excitement.

'We volunteered to help, so we were there early to help sort out the finishing touches. It wasn't supposed to start till 11am but people started arriving early. Seeing the venue filling up was amazing.

'In fact, the whole day was amazing. I spoke on stage about my diagnosis and then we could relax and enjoy everything going on, including yoga, Singing for the Brain and Bollywood dancing.'

Community benefits

'The festival flew by. After all those initial nerves had gone, I didn't want it to end.

'One of our aims with the festival was to start conversations among people from Leicester's ethnic minority groups. We always said, if we could help one person, then the festival has done a brilliant job.

'We know that many people have benefited – Sandra and I have had personal feedback about the difference it's made.

'When I first got my diagnosis, it felt overwhelming. My first thought was that life was over.

'But staying active, trying new activities and being open about my diagnosis has led to some brilliant new experiences, such as helping Windsor Racecourse become more dementia-friendly and cutting the ribbon to start Leicester's Memory Walk.

'I'd encourage other people to do the same – you get so much support and meet so many lovely people on your journey.'

A taste of yesteryear

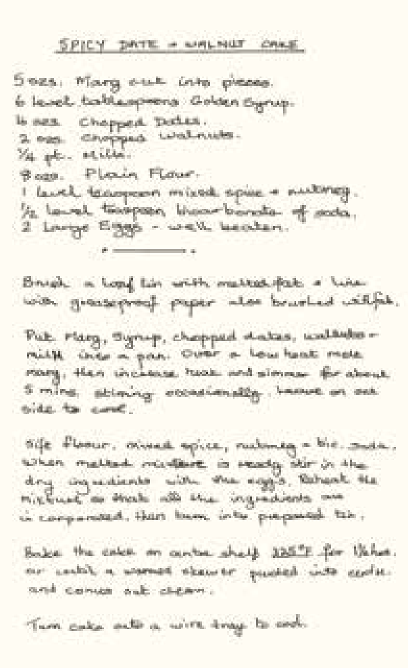
Pat Jones in Essex writes, ‘This recipe was one of my mother’s favourites, I had to copy it by hand from her. This recipe was also one of my husband’s favourites, and he remembered me cooking it in a large saucepan. I can remember cooking this in our first home, and that is 55 years ago.

‘I had to hunt in the garage to find this as it was in a box of my recipes, as I no longer cook because of my dementia.’

Spicy date and walnut cake

Margarine – 142g (5 ounces) cut into pieces, plus extra melted to brush tin and paper.
Golden syrup – 6 level tablespoons.
Chopped dates – 113g (4 ounces).
Chopped walnuts – 57g (2 ounces).
Milk – 142ml (¼ pint).
Plain flour – 227g (8 ounces).
Mixed spice and nutmeg – 1 level tablespoon.
Bicarbonate of soda – ½ level tablespoon.
Eggs – 2 large eggs, well beaten.

- Brush a loaf tin with melted margarine and line with greaseproof paper, also brushed with melted margarine.
- Preheat the oven to moderately slow (170°C, 150°C fan or 325°F).
- Put the margarine, syrup, dates, walnuts and milk into a pan. Over a low heat, melt the margarine. Then increase heat and simmer for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Leave on one side to cool.
- Sift the flour, mixed spice, nutmeg and bicarbonate of soda.
- When the melted mixture has cooled, stir in the dry ingredients and eggs. Reheat the mixture so that all the ingredients are incorporated, then turn into the prepared tin.
- Bake the cake on the middle shelf of the oven for 1½ hours, or until a warmed skewer pushed into its centre comes out clean.
- Turn the cake onto a wire tray to cool.



SPICY DATE + WALNUT CAKE

5 ozs. Marg cut into pieces.
6 level tablespoons Golden Syrup.
4 ozs. Chopped Dates.
2 ozs. Chopped walnuts.
¼ pt. Milk.
8 ozs. Plain Flour.
1 level teaspoon mixed spice + nutmeg.
½ level teaspoon bicarbonate of soda.
2 Large Eggs - well beaten.

Brush a loaf tin with melted fat + line with greaseproof paper also brushed with fat.

Put Marg, Syrup, chopped dates, walnuts + milk into a pan. Over a low heat melt marg, then increase heat and simmer for about 5 mins, stirring occasionally. Leave on one side to cool.

Sift flour, mixed spice, nutmeg + bic. soda. When melted mixture is ready stir in the dry ingredients with the eggs. Reheat the mixture so that all the ingredients are incorporated, then turn into prepared tin.

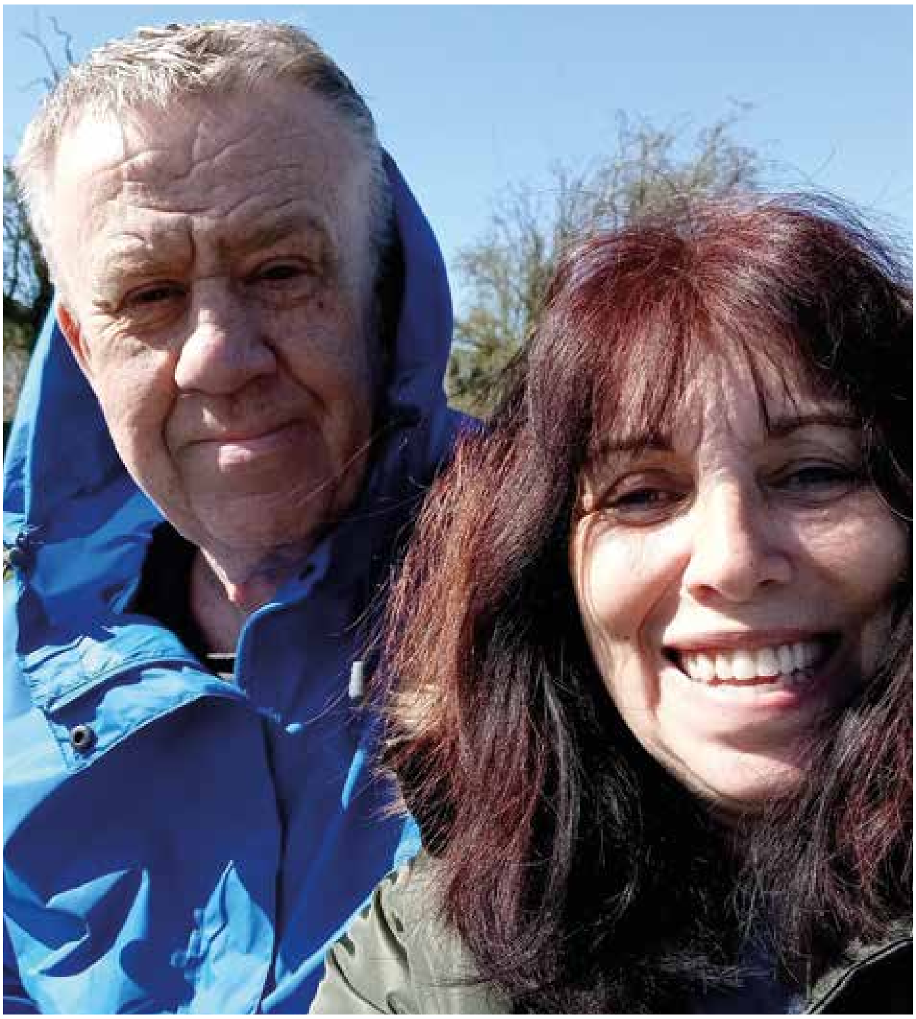
Bake the cake on centre shelf 325°F for 1½ hrs. or until a warmed skewer pushed into centre and comes out clean.

Turn cake onto a wire tray to cool.

Thank you to Pam Gray for testing the recipe and sharing pictures!
Her additional tip: try sprinkling demerara sugar on top before baking.

Onset, diagnosis and now

Patrick Moorhouse, in Milton Keynes, shares thoughts about life before he noticed his dementia symptoms, before diagnosis and since.



Who were you before onset?

‘Life was full and active, and I felt healthy.

‘I was a specialist psychiatric nurse and a research analyst. I’d been doing it for about 25 years and really enjoyed it. My research work meant I was on the road a lot.

‘When I wasn’t working, walking was my passion, particularly hill climbing.

‘I used to experience some challenging situations in my work. Walking was how I got my stress out.

‘My brother got me into it. He was a bit of an adventurer and started taking me on long walks from about the age of six.

‘I’ve climbed the biggest mountains in Britain – Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon).

‘I once walked from London to Milton Keynes along the Grand Union Canal just for a laugh. A few friends said, “You’ll never be able to do that in 24 hours,” and I did it in 23 hours.’

Who were you before diagnosis?

‘In 2021, I was out in a local park picking chestnuts with my grandson and I started to feel unwell.

‘Back at home, I collapsed. I can’t remember much after that.

‘Thank goodness, my wife Ronnie was with me. I’d had a stroke.

‘I spent weeks in hospital, then a rehabilitation unit for around two months.

‘Adjusting to my new life at home was a challenge for me and my family, and my recovery was a long, slow process.

‘My eyesight and cognitive senses weren’t what they were, but I started to build my mobility back up and do regular walks.

‘I thought, “I’m on my way to recovery now – before you know it, I’ll be going up mountains again.”

‘My family noticed I was forgetting things and seemed distant.

‘Ronnie spoke to the hospital and they referred me to a neurologist. He didn’t sugarcoat my diagnosis because of my medical background.’

Who are you now?

‘Life isn’t easy and it’s becoming more difficult to get out, but I am determined to challenge myself. Family and friends are important to me right now.

‘I want to maintain my passion for walking.

‘Last year, I came up with a special challenge to “visit” Britain’s national parks from home. With the help of a friend, I wrote postcards to all 15 and asked for a reply.

‘Staying in contact with the places I love, and the sense of progress hearing back from them, was fulfilling.

‘My latest challenge is to physically visit the 45 parks in Milton Keynes. I’ve got a couple of friends and my son to help, and a wheelchair on order.

‘I’d recommend this approach to other people living with dementia. Look at the things you used to do and adapt them to what you can do now.

‘In my job, I encouraged people not to lock away or cover up their mental health problems.

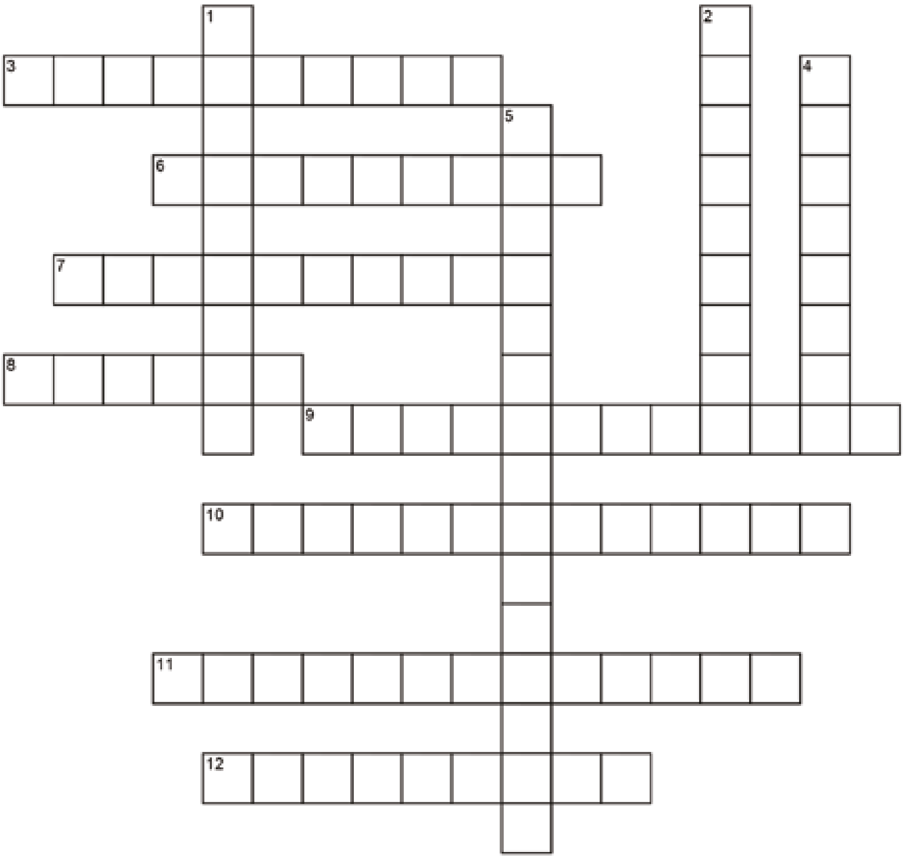
‘I take my own advice now.

‘I’m a great fan of boxers and I take inspiration from their mindset that you should never give up. I’ll keep on fighting.’

Anagramword: Assistive technology

Pete Middleton is back with a puzzle themed on equipment and devices that help us with everyday tasks.

Each clue begins with words that are an anagram of the answer, along with a clue to its meaning. How many can you solve?



ACROSS

3 Oh! Raw bidet that is used to scribble reminders on (10)
6 Rig reason to keep your pills in order (9)
7 Bits to bung make a phone easier to use (3,7)
8 Gifted a calming type of blanket (6)
9 Ha! A temporary use of smells to calm and relax (12)
10 Tall defectors alert loved ones on trips (4,9)
11 Tackling locks give us timely reminders (7,6)
12 Riders men use to jog a forgetful person (9)

DOWN

1 Brew as ale to describe portable tech bracelets etc (9)
2 Pressed in to give you the correct amount (9)
4 Gipsy ear will help with an awkward toothbrush or spoon (4,4)
5 Rat race plonkers will pinpoint your location (8,7)

It's better with you

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey in June/July's Dementia together magazine. It was our second co-produced special issue, and it's important for us to see how involving people in this way makes a difference to readers.

Back in 2023, you told us that our first special issue was even better at making you feel understood, connected and informed.

This year, planning and creating the special issue with the Young Dementia Thematic Group had just as strong an impact. More than 9 in 10 readers rated it positively, with over half saying it was 'excellent'.

The issue made 9 in 10 of you feel better informed about dementia, and that support is available. Articles prompted more than 8 in 10 to take some sort of action – most often to get more advice or support, or to do something differently to help with dementia day to day.

Asked for a favourite article, you most often picked the story Martina wrote about the lead-up to her diagnosis with posterior cortical atrophy (PCA) and living independently afterwards.

We'll continue to improve the magazine based on everything you've told us – we couldn't do it without you!

Share

Share your views, feedback and news – email **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2. We can consider contributions received by 4 November for the December/January issue (wording may be edited).

Toilet problems

What can help if you find you're starting to experience problems with continence?

Continence problems are more common than most of us realise. They affect many people, including those who are younger or in the early stages of dementia.

Accidents are inconvenient and can disrupt your day. But they could also be distressing, and affect how confident and independent you feel.

Continence problems may be embarrassing, frustrating and even isolating. It's not unusual for them to affect your sense of dignity.

Try not to face this alone. Talking about it might be difficult, but it can help you get the support you need.

There are ways to manage continence problems that could reduce the impact they have on your life.

First steps

Speak to your GP. It's important to check if your continence problems have a cause that can be dealt with. For example, a urinary tract infection (UTI), a bowel condition or the side effect of a medication.

Your GP can refer you to a continence adviser or community nurse for practical advice, and for help with getting useful products.

Day to day

Some clothing is specially designed to be easy to remove, to help deal with accidents. You could also try discreet pads or absorbent underwear.

Keeping a toilet diary can mean you spot useful patterns. Using reminders and keeping to a routine might also help.

If you're finding it difficult to get to the bathroom in time at home, could it help to clear clutter and improve lighting?

Before you're out and about, find out where accessible toilets will be. It's often useful to get a Radar Key and Just Can't Wait card.

Your tips

'Continence problems can affect people at all stages of dementia. People need to know we can talk about it – it doesn't take away from who you are as a person.

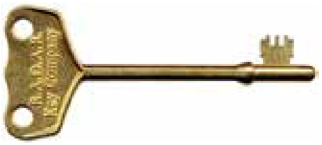
'What we're trying to live with, it's often about feelings of shame. But it's not shameful.' **Mick Lambert**

'Don't be shy, medical professionals are very helpful. I'm always open about my conditions, so that's no problem.

'Explain the worst scenario to professionals as resources are tight, but just in broad terms to others.

'I use pads that are like period pads.' **Martin Robertson**

- You can access locked National Key Scheme toilets with a Radar Key – £5.49 from **radarkey.org/order** or call **01395 265543**.
- A Just Can't Wait card from Bladder & Bowel UK can help to access more toilets – see **bbuk.org.uk** or call **0161 214 4591**.



For specially designed clothing and other helpful products, see **shop.alzheimers.org.uk** or call **0333 366 0035**.

For our Continence and using the toilet (502) factsheet, visit **alzheimers.org.uk/publications** or call **0300 303 5933**.

What I care about

Moira Owens, in Caernarfon, doesn't want anyone else to feel how she did after her husband's dementia diagnosis.

When my husband Idwal received his diagnosis of vascular dementia, I felt totally unsupported. I was numb.

I had all these questions running around my mind but, apart from being given a few leaflets, we were packed off without any support.

I thought, 'What am I going to do now?'

Fired up

I'm not a hard person, but I've got a lot of fight in me. I've had to deal with tough things in life and that's given me the oomph to speak out and get things done.

After the experience of Idwal's diagnosis, I didn't want to sit back. I want to change the experience for other people.

I don't want anyone to come out of an appointment feeling like I did – not knowing where to go and petrified of what was ahead.

I got involved with campaigning after Idwal started going to activities organised by a local organisation called Dementia Actif Gwynedd.

Their manager Emma mentioned that they were having a meeting with local councillors and asked if I wanted to get involved.

She knew I was comfortable speaking in public in Welsh. I used to work in student services at a local further education college, and it was something I was used to.

I agreed and went along to tell my story.

Out in the open

Since then, I've got involved with as many activities as I can.

These include helping to create a bilingual carers directory, so people understand what support is available for them.

I want to make a difference. If I can help in any way, I will. If something isn't right, I'll say. Like the time Idwal was discharged from hospital and I wasn't told – I made sure the staff knew this was unacceptable. Anything could have happened to him.

I've spoken on BBC Radio Cymru about my experiences and at Plaid Cymru and Welsh Labour party conferences.

I don't really feel nervous doing these events, I'm so focused on getting my story out and helping other people.

There's no point in giving people statistics and cold facts. I'm there to give them my personal story about what it's like caring for a person with dementia.

I want the people making decisions to understand our needs and make dementia a priority.

Be the change

We have to shout loud about dementia. It's not like when you've broken your arm or you've hurt your face – it's not obvious, you can't see it. It's hidden. I want leaders in Wales to sit up and listen.

My hope is that people will not be in the same place as me when Idwal was diagnosed. I don't want to see the partners, friends and family of people who are newly diagnosed left on their own.

If enough of us speak up, hopefully the system will improve eventually. Campaigning helps me but the main thing is that it helps other people, that's what I care about.

- Add your name to Wales Takes on Dementia at **alzheimers.org.uk/wales-petition**
- Visit **alzheimers.org.uk/campaigns** to join our campaigns in Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

Personalised brain scans

Finding out how to be more specific about what changes in a person's brain could mean for them.

Professor James Cole has always been fascinated by how the brain works and what happens when people develop brain diseases.

He uses high-tech imaging techniques to study the structure of the brain and how it works. James became Professor of Neuroimage Computing at University College London (UCL) in 2022.

'My research career has focused on analysing brain scans to better understand psychiatric and neurological conditions,' he says.

'Dementia is such a common and devastating condition but with such great research going on, I realised that I might be able to contribute.

'There's been a lot of progress in the field during the seven or eight years I've been studying dementia, which is heartening to see.'

Different approach

James and his team are taking a new approach to studying changes in the brain.

'We are focusing more on the individual patient rather than the average of a group of patients,' he says.

They use brain scans from tens of thousands of healthy people to produce 'growth charts'.

They can use these to compare a specific person's brain scans to what you'd expect in someone of their age and sex. So, any differences they find will be more meaningful.

'We can spot subtle brain changes and hopefully identify whether people are more likely to get dementia symptoms or whether their symptoms will get worse,' he adds.

Taking it further

Funding from the Society is helping James and his team take their work further.

'We are using it to build on our initial results that show our growth charts can detect the earliest changes to the brain associated with dementia,' he says.

'We want to show it can work in people from different ethnic backgrounds and could potentially change how we measure the effectiveness of treatments in clinical trials.'

Collaboration is key

James says teamwork is vital.

'I have a great team of colleagues at UCL, including those working on the Alzheimer's Society project.

'Most days involve meetings with my colleagues, who are working on dementia research or tackling other brain diseases. This includes PhD students I supervise, other staff at UCL and collaborators at institutes across the world.'

He's positive about the difference their work will make for people affected by dementia.

'I hope that our research will provide a new way to get information on people's brain health.

'This could be used to help personalise care and treatment for people with dementia or at risk of developing it.'

Your donation helps us to fund research into all forms of dementia, from prevention to breakthrough drug treatments. Donate online.

Words of meaning and love

We're incredibly proud to share the winners of our Poetry Competition 2025, and we thank all who got involved.

Thank you to everyone who took part in our eighth poetry competition, whether you entered your work or joined our shortlisting and judging panels.

For many of us, poetry is a powerful way to explore and share how dementia has affected our lives. As readers, it helps us identify with others' experiences and reflect on our own.

An amazing number – 212 – of you sent us 317 poems about dementia or people affected by the condition.

Every entry was read by two members of our shortlisting panel. They discussed their favourites before agreeing a shortlist of 10 in each of two categories.

As in previous competitions, poems were selected under 'A way with words' for using techniques such as rhythm, form and imagery to move us or make us think. Those chosen for 'From the heart' expressed a person's experiences in an authentic way.

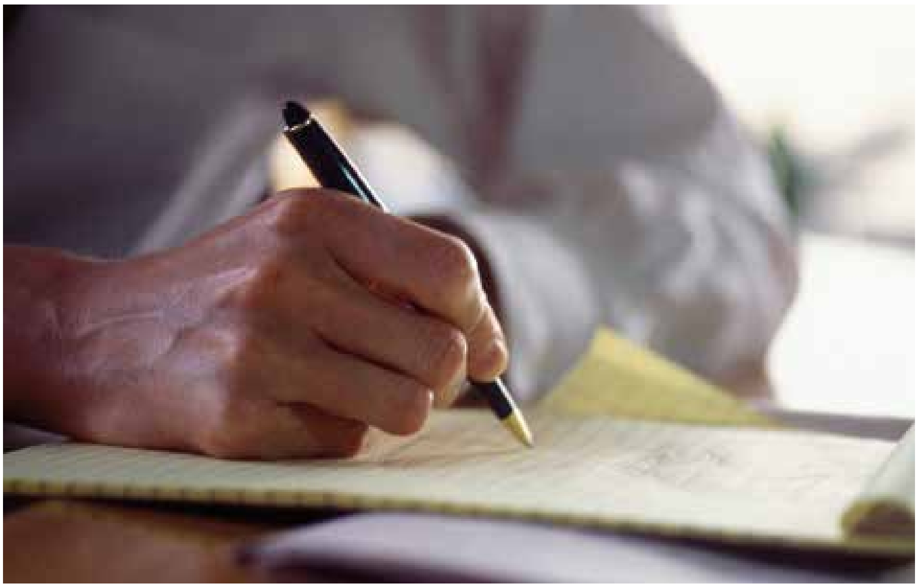
Our judging panel read and considered all shortlisted poems before agreeing winning and highly commended poems.

Our shortlisters

We invited four people who've published poetry drawing on personal experiences to take part in our shortlisting panel. They joined Helen Helmer, who leads our Publishing team and has been involved in all our poetry competitions.

Heidi Lee Cross in London, whose mum has dementia, wrote Milk Tulips: A book of poems, personal stories and survival tips for dementia caregivers.

Michelle 'Mother' Hubbard, in Nottingham, wrote D.A.D (Diagnosis Alzheimer's Dementia), published by Big White Shed, reflecting on her late father's life.



Following his wife's Alzheimer's diagnosis, Tony Ward in Sussex has raised funds for the Society through his book More Than Just Memories: New and Selected Poems 1959–2023.

Isle of Wight-based adam Shove founded Dark Thirty Poetry Publishing, editing their dementia-themed poetry collection Forgotten Fragments of Time.

Our judges

Danine Irwin is Head of Dementia Programmes and Support Services at Dementia Adventure, a UK-wide charity that helps people to enjoy the outdoors and connect with nature.

They assembled our panel of judges, including from Anita Dorfman House care home, at Jewish Care's Sandringham care campus.

Casey Jolly, at Jewish Care, creates meaningful activities for people with dementia and other conditions. Anna-Maria's brother has dementia, and she volunteers at his care home. Anita and Peter both live in the care home. Anita worked in the public sector before volunteering on retirement. Peter is a former social worker who worked mainly with older people.

Jackie King coordinates volunteers at Dementia Adventure. She lost her mum to Alzheimer's last year.

Kiran Kalsi writes poetry and has been a full-time carer for both parents. Her father had dementia and died last year. Hardeep Kalsi is former headteacher and lover of poetry, song and Sikh scripture. Carlene Byland's late husband John had Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. He died earlier this year.

Danine says, 'It has been an honour to take part in this competition and to bring together a panel of judges that included people living with dementia, those who had lost loved ones to dementia, caregivers supporting relatives, and professionals in the field.

'Although strangers at first, we soon became united by lived experience, empathy, understanding and a shared passion for giving voice to dementia through poetry.'

A way with words: first place

Is it Time to Go?
by Kathy Charles

Kathy says, 'I am really delighted to have won first place in the competition. I really didn't expect to.

'My dad is 77. He's been in different hospitals now since April, when he was admitted after wandering out of his house the night before. He's been in the same hospital now for quite a while.

'I don't think he knows me anymore but I am still familiar to him on some level.

'It's been a sad and difficult period, and he has changed quite a lot since I wrote the poem. He talks much less now but he's well looked after.'

Is it Time to Go? by Kathy Charles

Dad checks his watch to see who's due.
He asks where the car has been left tonight.
He wants to get home to see the dog,
Back to the place where the dog is waiting.

He asks where the car has been left tonight.
He's searching for the keys in his pockets.
Back to the place where the dog is waiting,
He checks by the window, the chair, the door.

He's searching for the keys in his pockets.
It's late, someone will have to drive in the dark.
He checks by the window, the chair, the door.
His mother, his sister, his wife – someone is waiting, frowning.

It's late, someone will have to drive in the dark.
He wants to get home to see the dog.
His mother, his sister, his wife – someone is waiting, frowning.
Dad checks his watch to see who's due.

Our judges commented, 'It really meant something. It has a very clever construction, technically it captures you.'

'"Is it time to go" – is that time to go home, or to die?'

'Beautifully written. It was quite repetitive, and I felt there was an urgency, a worried and confused mind.'

Other shortlisted poems

A way with words
- Contented Dementia by Jane Thomas
- Dementia Suite by Peter Wallis
- Elephants in Sunset and Memory Dresser by Glen Wilson
- Mr Jupiter by Anita Clark
- Winter redwings by Max Mulgrew
- Sunrise by Ross Grainger

From the heart
- The Great Forgetting by Julia Delmas
- For John by Jill Davis
- Kerfuffle by Eve Jackson
- Everything is laced with you by Hannah Owen
- The artisan by Gabby Meadows
- A Privilege by Abida Akram
- Glastonbury by Jeff Gallagher

A way with words: second place

At Sea
by Deborah Leslie

Deborah says, ‘I am thrilled that my poem has been chosen. My mum passed away in 2018.

‘She lived with vascular dementia and I’m sure she would approve of me sharing our story – she was always my biggest supporter. I miss her every day.’

At Sea by Deborah Leslie

In our favourite coffee shop,
she peers at the menu
like a map of uncharted lands,
her finger a weaving compass,
circling silent, shifting choices.

A lifelong lover of the bland and unbuttered,
she startles us both –
a tall glass of dandelion and burdock fizz
with a bold wedge of chocolate and beetroot cake,
ridiculous and strange, like an item misnamed.

“Are you sure?” I say gently.
She doesn’t answer – looks around unanchored,
hands smoothing the tablecloth,
pulling at invisible threads.

This faithful disciple of decorum,
now rests her elbows on the table,
licking her knife in quiet rebellion,
leaving half the sticky treat to me.
I watch her mind attempting to assemble
the script of what comes next.

After that, I start choosing for her,
the simple things, the familiar tastes
I think she loves.

We stop navigating the menu.
Stop going out.
Her world contracts to kettle, cup and care.

I sit adrift, sipping tea for one,
losing my mum
in small invisible increments.
Missing her before she is gone.

The judges said, ‘It’s all in the title. The person being written about irritated me and then I felt guilty. It evokes a paradoxical response.’

‘The language and the way it started off was like the last time I took my mum out for afternoon tea. Choosing things that you would never have picked, totally out of the norm.’

‘As well as a person living with dementia, even the caregiver is “all at sea”, none of us knows what will happen.’

A way with words: highly commended

Speak
by Elena Croitoru

Elena says, ‘I’m very grateful to the organisers and the judges for choosing this poem. Alzheimer’s Society is doing great work, so this means a lot to me.’

Speak by Elena Croitoru

I used to think it was only old age
consuming his body early

& making him swallow
his words, but one night

while we sat at the kitchen table,
he said he didn’t know who

he was anymore. That’s what I got
for marrying a running man—

one day he ran away from himself.
Then he forgot where he left

his father’s old overcoat though
I didn’t think anything of it.

Soon, more & more dishes broke
in his hands, the same hands

which carried our daughter as though
she was spun from spider silk.

Some say forgetting always starts
with words, even the oldest ones

like mother & father get buried
as memory collapses in on itself.

We are what we remember
& those who are good

at forgetting fall in love with life
over & over again, never exhausted.

Our judges said, ‘The imagery for this one was good, and it has good structure.’

‘I read them all out aloud to my daughter and my granddaughter, and we liked how it flowed.’

‘It is interesting how the writer speaks of the “running man” himself acknowledging that things are changed and that they no longer recognise themselves. This is brave and damning.’

From the heart: first place

Dementia Caring
by Robin Harris

Robin says, ‘What an unexpected surprise! I am a retired scientist, not a poet, but did write some poems many years back when working in Germany, under rather stressful personal conditions.

‘Following my wife’s death in 2024, I rapidly wrote and delivered her eulogy in Hexham Abbey, and then immediately started writing the poems.

‘They just flowed out from me speedily, nearly always with no further changes.

‘Reading them late at night tends to make me rather sad, not a good thing as I’m still grieving.’

Dementia Caring by Robin Harris

I will look after you in your confusion, I was desperate to look after you.
I did my very best, but it was not good enough.
I organised your morning, suppertime and evening pills.
I brought the glass of water to help you swallow them.
I bought the neat little wheelchair to get you around the house.
I pushed you everywhere, but I needed you to stand and walk a few steps.
I made your meals, cut up the difficult things, put everything on the table, even fed you.
I brought your drinks, juice, tea and coffee, occasional glass of wine.
I dressed and undressed you; which cardigan is it to be today darling?
I helped you to wash yourself, put toothpaste on the brush.
I washed your hair, dried and combed it, your straight white hair looked lovely.
I took you to the toilet, day and night; I organised your incontinence pad supply.
I took away the old and positioned the new pad every time!
I made your bed and helped you into it and out; I slept beside you to comfort you.
I arranged the physiotherapist visits, encouraged you to exercise, sitting and standing,
I gave up in despair so many many times.
We watched the two funny fishermen on TV; to bed earlier and earlier.
I played CDs of the wonderful slow Mozart, to calm your mind.
I saw your terrible choking and coughing get worse and worse.
Eating food, drinking and swallowing “EDS” became a problem.
I became so tired with lack of sleep, I could not cope.
You could not stand and walk, unaided, the hospital OT equipment was in vain.
I did not realise just how weak your damaged ischemic heart was.
In the end it was this combined with a coughing spasm; “Help Me”, you said.
I didn’t even realise that you were dying, it was so sudden.
I called 999 for the ambulance, it was here in less than four minutes.
How kind they were, but too late to help you. The police and undertaker came.
You were beautiful in death as you were in life.
Did I fail you, my darling wife? Please forgive me, I did my best.

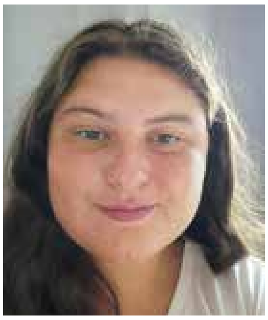
The judges said, ‘This poem made me cry and I haven’t cried in ages. As a carer you always feel you haven’t done enough.’

‘This poem will inspire people supporting others, that you are not alone feeling this.’

‘This is a wonderful poem, beautifully written.’

‘The thing about guilt is that you do feel guilty – however much you have given up and done for the person. There is always that small question about “what if?” and “should I?”’

From the heart: second place



Memory Like Wildflowers by Aliyah Hope

Memory Like Wildflowers by Aliyah Hope

sometimes the mind forgets
like wildflowers bending in the wind—
names slip, faces fade,
and it feels like losing pieces of yourself,
a slow unravelling you don't ask for.
but there's a light that doesn't quit,
a laugh that echoes in the quiet,
soft moments where love shows up
like sunlight breaking through the clouds.
even when the words won't come,
or the stories scatter in the breeze,
the heart remembers how to hold on—
to kindness, to touch, to the small things.
and maybe that's what's left:
not perfect memories,
but perfect love—
wild and messy and alive,
still growing in the cracks.

Our judges said, 'Sometimes in life, things are not perfect and yet love still prevails. Wild and messy is absolutely fine, things do not need to be "just so" to be wonderful.'

'Some gardens can be streamlined and beautiful, but there can also be deep and meaningful beauty in meadows full of wildflowers.'

We hope to hold our next poetry competition in a couple of years. In the meantime, there's also a Poems section in the Members' area of Dementia Support Forum – see **forum.alzheimers.org.uk**

From the heart: highly commended

You Want a Coffee? by Debbie Jones

Debbie says, 'I am thrilled to be having my poem published especially as it's a subject close to my heart. It is somewhat bittersweet though, as my lovely dad will be so proud of me but the rendition of our daily routine reflects mixed emotions of frustration, humour and sadness.'

You Want a Coffee? by Debbie Jones

Two steaming mugs sit between us.
'It's a lovely day' I say, opening the blinds.

'It's far too bright – and it's glaring
Right into my eyes.' I rise and close the blinds.

'You want a coffee?' He asks.
'I've got one here thanks Dad.'
I say, raising my mug.

'You gonna pop your specs on Dad?'
'I need a new pair.' I stare, 'but these are new.'

He shakes his head at me and laughs.
'They're ancient, like me!' I see, he thinks I'm wrong.

'You want a coffee?' He asks.
'I've got one here thanks Dad.'

'You turned the router off again,
Your doorbell's offline – it's fine.' I flick the switch.

'You've switched your landline off as well.'
I half laugh, half sigh, as I plug it back in.

'You want a coffee?' He asks.
'I've got one.'

'Now, have you had your tablets Dad?'
'Yes... No... let me think.' I wink, and reach to check.

'Here's your cornflakes Dad – with sugar.'
I lift an eyebrow, and now, he laughs with me.

'You want a coffee?' He asks.
Wrapping him up in a hug
'I'll make us another' I say.

The judges said, 'In this poem, you can just feel and see a daughter supporting her dad, and from a learning aspect this is about learning how to be patient and accepting, taking the cue to ignore it when a person living with dementia continually repeats themselves.'

Common cause

A partnership of insurance professionals and firms is driving change for people affected by dementia. Antonia Kanczula finds out more.

Quick read

Since 2017, Insurance United Against Dementia (IUAD) has brought insurance professionals together to raise awareness and funds.

Together they've raised almost £11 million for pioneering research and support for people affected by dementia.

Over 140 insurance firms have been involved in this award-winning partnership so far.

Over 18,000 people in the industry have also become Dementia Friends, with better understanding about the condition.

When people come together to fight dementia, they can achieve incredible things.

Insurance United Against Dementia (IUAD) – a partnership of insurance professionals and firms – is a good example of this.

The initial idea came from a group of people working in insurance whose lives had all been touched by dementia.

Powered by their collective experiences, and shared frustration about underfunding in dementia research, they first contacted the Society about supporting our work in 2017.

'When I approached Alzheimer's Society it was due to a long-standing memory of losing my nan – a beautiful woman who was destroyed by dementia,' says Chris Wallace from insurer QBE, founding Chair of IUAD.

'I wanted to give something back. We saw the potential to bring an industry together which could tackle this huge issue on a large scale.'

Bold ambitions

There was a sense of energy about the campaign from the off, explains Jade Secker, Fundraising Development Manager at the Society.

'The campaign set bold ambitions to raise an initial £10 million, while also generating more understanding about dementia and signposting vital services throughout the industry.'

Over eight busy years since its launch, IUAD has worked towards these goals in a range of ways.

Every November, firms come together for Insurance Day for Dementia. This is a focus for them to pledge their support by raising funds, volunteering and other activities. Throughout the year, fundraising happens in lots of other creative ways too, explains Jade.

'Companies organise fundraising initiatives and challenge-based activities, as well as official charity of the year partnerships.

'We also receive support from trusts and foundations, which donate to dedicated projects, and from IUAD Partners, who are individuals who want to make personal contributions.'

Another key priority for IUAD is to tackle stigma and misconceptions through Dementia Friends.

Pioneering research

Just one year after launch, IUAD was already addressing the lack of investment in dementia research. In 2018, it helped support the first projects and researchers at the UK Dementia Research Institute.

To date, it's helped support over 150 researchers and 120 research grants.

As well as funding vital studies, this is helping to build a real sense of optimism in dementia research.

Richard Oakley, our Associate Director of Research and Innovation, says, 'For too long, dementia has been seen as an unstoppable force, something we just have to accept.

'But that's changing. Right now, thanks to pioneering research across the sector, we are closer than ever to rewriting the future.

'Thanks to the incredible support of campaigns like IUAD, the tide really is turning.'

Supporting people

IUAD has also helped Alzheimer's Society to support people affected by dementia.

During the pandemic, as our telephone and online services struggled to meet growing demand, an emergency fundraising appeal by IUAD led to 16 new advisers joining our Dementia Support Line.

Funding also helped launch our


Dave and his mum

Companion Calls telephone service in 2020. Regular calls from volunteers offer critical comfort and friendship to people with dementia and carers.

Britt Greenfield leads one of the teams that support Companion Call volunteers. She says the thousands of calls made have had a massive impact.

'It's a simple but effective way to bring conversation and friendship into the lives of people who really need it, whose lives are quite heavy and need some uplifting.'

Better understanding

Over 18,000 people in the insurance industry have now taken part in Dementia Friends sessions. This means they have better understanding of dementia.

IUAD Ambassador Sharon Brett-Richards, from insurance firm WTW-Willis, says the day-to-day impact of this can be subtle but significant.

'It's helped shift how colleagues view the condition and those affected – many are now more empathetic and supportive.'

With greater openness and awareness, many firms have improved their policies for employees, including setting up carers' networks.

It's also benefiting their customers. Kris Bahari, from insurer Sedgwick International UK, says Dementia Friends has affected ways of working at the firm.

They recall customers living with dementia whose home needed big internal repairs. To avoid the stress of moving out, the team found a way for them to stay during the work.

'Through Dementia Friends, we were able to consider the solution differently,' says Kris.

'For other customers, we've created wall charts with photos of every contractor working on the property and "mood boards" so they can visualise who is visiting and what's happening next in their homes.'

Personal experiences

IUAD was recognised at the 2024 and 2025 British Insurance Awards, the 'Oscars' of the insurance industry.

But it continues to be fuelled by raw personal experiences of dementia. Dave Carey, from Ecclesiastical, is a member of the IUAD Board and has been involved with the campaign for eight years.

He reached out to Alzheimer's Society when his mum was diagnosed with dementia.

'I got involved with IUAD after benefiting from the wonderful people at Alzheimer's Society.

'The Society's calm, knowledgeable and incredibly empathetic advisers helped to clear the fog, give us some comfort and enable us to regain some degree of control. It really was a lifeline at the time.

'It's been a privilege to support the charity that connects the industry I've worked in all my life, to raise awareness, provide support to the many who are affected and ultimately find a cure.'

Earlier this year, IUAD reached its amazing initial £10 million fundraising target. Jade says there's plenty of ambition to achieve even more.

'Now is a pivotal time for dementia and, with collective action, the industry can play a crucial part in changing its course.

'The world of insurance is rising to the challenge and is focused on reaching an overall £20 million target to fund vital services, research projects, and innovations – improving lives today and inspiring hope for the future.'

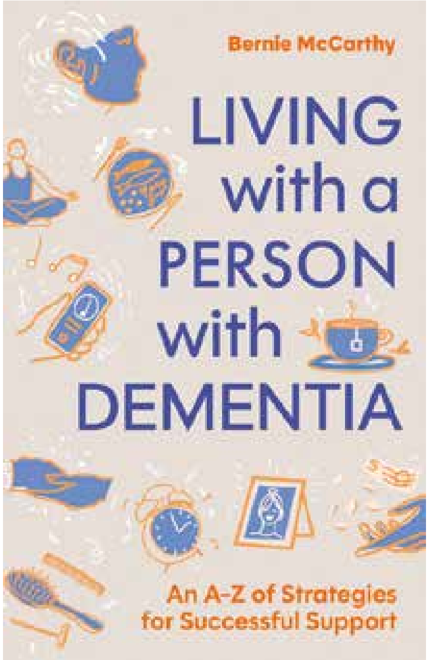
Find out how you can become a Dementia Friend at **dementiafriends.org.uk**

To learn about Companion Call volunteering, email **volunteering@alzheimers.org.uk** or call **0300 222 5706**.

For more about Insurance United Against Dementia, see **alzheimers.org.uk/IUAD**

Book group:
Living with a person with dementia

We read a book that aims to help carers to understand dementia and to deal with issues that come up.



Living with a Person with Dementia: An A-Z of Strategies for Successful Support by Bernie McCarthy (Jessica Kingsley, 2025), 224 pages, £14.99, ISBN: 9781839973826. Also available as an ebook.

Author Bernie McCarthy is a clinical psychologist, based in Australia, with over 25 years' experience working with people with dementia and their carers. He's passionate about person-centred dementia care and this book is about sharing his experience and insights with a wider audience.

Living with a Person with Dementia is split into two parts. The first is about emotions and relationships, exploring the journeys taken by people with dementia and those caring for them. The second part is more practical, with an alphabetical reference of common issues and situations.

By your side

Our reviewers agree that the book is a great go-to for carers.

It's not a book to be read cover to cover, says Patricia.

'I have dipped into the parts which I found interesting and relevant, as a long-time carer of my husband who has mixed dementia and is now in a residential care home.'

AC from Rutland says, 'The advice is well presented, easy to find and offers some sensible solutions to common problems.

'A good book to have at your side when you feel in need of support.'

Several reviewers highlighted the author's analogy comparing carers to the Sherpa guides who support climbers in the Himalayas.

'I liked the analogy,' says Kym in London. 'It's a way of visualising our role as guiding and supporting our loved ones.'

Emotions and behaviours

For Toto2 in East Sussex, the first part of the book stands out because of its honesty.

'It shows you how each scenario could play out, from emotions, sleep disturbances and how the relationship between the person with dementia and the carer changes over time.'

'It explains dementia in the brutal and no-nonsense way that carers face numerous times a day, with very helpful tips, tricks and distraction when needed.'

Carol R says, 'It provides suggestions and guidance on why different emotions and behaviours can occur in someone with dementia and how a carer can support a person without being confrontational or imposing.

'The aim is to continue a positive relationship without undermining an individual's confidence and dignity.'

For Kym, it is the information 'particularly around child brain development and early attachments' that's most enlightening.

Both Miriam in Ireland and Harbir enjoyed the author's relationship compass tool, showing the different ways carers can relate to a person with dementia.

'Approaches to navigation are many, needing a "compass" with many points and positions so that you can maintain the wellbeing of the person with dementia and the carer,' adds Harbir.

Useful advice

The second part of the book is much more of a directory, explaining terms that have been italicised in the first.

Our reviewers found it useful and practical, and Miriam says you can navigate the book easily.

'The author provides a quick-fire, accessible means for caregivers to seek and find relevant information in a timely manner.'

Carol R adds, 'Terms and issues are presented in an easy-to-read format and can be used as a quick reference. For example, why things happen and how you can manage a situation.'

Toto2 agrees, 'The A–Z symptoms layout was a really good, well thought out idea and allowed me to go to each section easily.

‘The symptoms are explained in a “no-nonsense” way and in terms that make sense without “jargon” that we do not understand.’

Academic aspects

Although the author has great passion for person-centred care, several of our reviewers say the book is dry and technical in places.

Kym says that part one is particularly academic.

‘This is fine for me as I am a teacher and have qualifications in child development, but I feel that some of the language and concepts may be a little too academic for many people to engage with.’

Patricia says it could be a challenge for an exhausted carer to take useful advice from the book, especially given dementia is so unpredictable.

‘I would not have had the energy, time or motivation to seek out this book or read it.

‘Its words of wisdom and information are not necessarily going to be relevant in the split moment when a carer has to react, cope, manage and make decisions.

‘I have needed immediate knowledge and support to manage the trauma, exhaustion, heartbreak and total bewilderment that dementia brings.’

Kym also says that, because the book tries to speak to everyone, it ends up losing specific relevance.

‘I sensed that the author tried to include advice that would be applicable worldwide.

‘I would prefer a book that applies to the systems and policies of the place where I live.’

Mixed audience

Our reviewers have mixed views on who the book would be best for. Miriam thinks it could have wide appeal.

‘This book offers much support, encouragement, hope and compassion.

‘It is an extremely valuable resource for family members, caregivers, members of multidisciplinary care teams and all who seek to understand more about improving quality of life for those living with dementia.’

Miriam also thinks that people with dementia could benefit.

Meanwhile, Patricia thinks it’s best for people interested in dementia but not necessarily affected by it.

‘I see it almost as a “text” book, useful to anyone who is starting out on the road to find out about dementia or care, not necessarily as a carer.’

Toto2 has a different view, thinking it could be a part of carer’s essential ‘toolkit’.

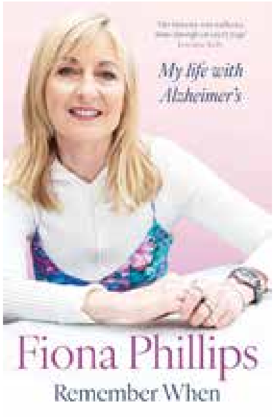
‘I will carry this with me at all times, as it is a true gem of information that is both invaluable and helpful.

‘It’s brutally honest, but dementia is brutal.

‘It may make you see dementia in a different way and you will definitely have a better understanding of what your loved one is going through.

‘It will show you that you can survive this awful journey with some clever and helpful advice.’

Next time



For our next book group, we invite you to read Remember When: My life with Alzheimer’s by Fiona Phillips (Macmillan, 2025), 336 pages, £22.00, ISBN: 9781035074877. Also available as an ebook and audiobook, paperback due out next year.

Tell us what you think of this compelling memoir from a well-known TV presenter who was diagnosed with young-onset Alzheimer’s at age 61.

Please email **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2 by the end of 3 November so we can share your comments in an upcoming magazine.

Book giveaway

We have five copies of Remember When to give away – email **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2 by the end of 14 October quoting ‘Remember’ for a chance to win (see page 39 for terms and conditions).

Smart reminder device

People affected by dementia try out a new reminder clock that also helps you stay connected with family and friends.

Staying on top of tasks and events, such as taking medication and health appointments, is important when you have dementia.

People use many ways to make this easier, from wall planners and sticky notes to voice-controlled speakers. It's all about working out what's best for you.

Regular reminder clocks, which prompt you to do daily tasks, are a popular option. The new Idem smart clock also helps you stay connected with friends and family.

We visited Peterborough's Dementia Resource Centre to find out what people affected by dementia thought about it.

Staying organised

People with dementia come to the centre for groups, activities, one-to-one support and its warm, welcoming atmosphere.

We asked them what they currently use to keep track of important tasks.

Many said they use the Rosebud reminder clock. Hilda told us she loves hers and added, 'My family have helped me set it up and programmed in messages.'

Norma agrees and says she got one because she's 'always losing her paper diaries'.

Several people also use voice-controlled technology, including Alexa, which family members helped to install.

'My daughter's set up speakers all around the house,' said Alan.

'Once the reminders are set up, they're repeated three times.

'This includes every tablet and medicine I have to take, when I have to make a phone call and so on – all the things that will help me lead a normal life.'

The group talked about the wider benefits of assistive technology. They said they've learned to embrace it, often with lots of support.

Howard told us about the devices his wife had fitted in their home so she knows if he goes out on his own.

'We did it after I got lost leaving the house and someone had to bring me home. It gives my wife peace of mind.'

Howard added that these were fitted by the council for free – a great reminder to check what's available from your local services.

More than a clock

The Idem smart clock is the size of a tablet device, with a large and easy-to-read screen. This shows the time, date and day of the week.

It can be loaded with reminders and notes, which a friend, family member or carer can control through an app on their mobile. They can also send you photos and greetings.

If you have several people supporting your care, there's no limit to the number of people you can allow to access the app.

As the person using the clock, you don't have to worry about doing anything or setting it up.

It simply needs to stay plugged in – you just tap the screen to say you've heard or seen each reminder. If you don't, whoever uses the app to update your clock will be notified.

A few group members were bemused by the product's name – 'Why is it called a clock when it does much more?' said Alan.

But they liked the idea that they wouldn't need to programme it themselves.

'I like that, because I can't work anything digital – that's why I have a normal watch,' said Graham.

'It could help if you're living on your own, to help you stay independent,' added Doug.

David would like his daughters to have another way to stay involved with his care because he hardly uses his mobile phone.

'They could use this to check up on me and remind me of things I need to do.'

Feeling connected

The Idem can be connected to wifi for free or you can pay to use a SIM card, like a mobile phone.

You can adjust the brightness according to your preferences and time of day. It talks – you can activate a read-aloud feature for messages and reminders and for the time.

It chimes on the hour, but you can turn these off. It comes with five language options – English, Spanish, Italian, Arabic and French – and more are coming.

But of all the features, group members were most excited about the Idem helping people to stay in touch with others.

They loved the idea of receiving live personal messages and photos, such as birthday greetings.

'That sounds great. Wouldn't it be great if all the messages were positive?' added Hilda.

Because most of our group already had systems that worked for them, they felt the Idem would be best for someone looking for a new device.

Some thought it needs to do more to warrant its price. However, they also recognised that keeping devices simple is also vital. 'I'd like it more if talked like an Alexa and allowed you to have video calls,' said Graham.

Chris underlined the importance of involving people with dementia when developing devices.

'It's really important that we are part of the design process.

Reassurance for carers

We showed the Idem to carers at the Dementia Resource Centre too.

They liked that you could control the device through a phone app. They also appreciated being able to tell if reminders and message had been seen or if the clock was disconnected.

'Is it an easy app to use?' asked June. 'I usually get my grandkids and daughters to help with my tech.'

The carers handed round a mobile phone with the app to have a look.

Sarah liked that you could have several people contributing – useful for family members and friends spread out around the country.

She also asked the number of reminders you can upload and how many are displayed at any one time. Jodi confirmed that you can upload unlimited reminders but only two are visible at any one time to prevent overload.

'We use at lot of paper reminders at the moment!' added Sarah.

Unlike the group of people with dementia, the carers thought the price was reasonable for something that would give so much peace of mind.

'Reassuring' was the word that kept coming up while the group of carers chatted about the Idem.

Visit **shop.alzheimers.org.uk** or call **0333 366 0035** for this and other helpful products (prices exclude VAT):

- Idem smart clock – £200
- Rosebud reminder clock – £78.24

You can buy the Idem smart clock and Rosebud reminder clock VAT free if for use by a person with dementia or other conditions.

To save 20% on these and many other specially designed products, tick the box stating you're eligible for VAT relief at checkout.

For our Using technology to help with everyday life (437) factsheet, see **alzheimers.org.uk/publications** or call **0300 303 5933**.

Seize the day

Sally Beckett, in Birmingham, has supported three close family members with Alzheimer's. Margaret Rooke meets a woman who's learned the value of living life fully.

Everyone who supports Alzheimer's Society has their own reasons for doing so.

For Sally Beckett, there are three – and all of them are deeply embedded in her family.

Sally's late mother Joan, her mother's twin sister and her own sister have all had Alzheimer's diagnoses.

'I always think that something good should always come out of something bad,' says Sally, a mother of four from Birmingham.

'When I do things to make a difference to people's lives, that makes me feel better,' she explains.

'Everybody needs someone that they can rely on if they're in trouble and to know that they're not alone. That's my philosophy in life.'

Intense duties

Sally, who's 74, had moved her mum into her own home after Joan's condition made it impossible for her to keep living alone.

'I wasn't brought up with rich parents, but I had a good childhood and a happy childhood,' she says.

'When it's your mum, I think you can feel an automatic sense of duty to care for her. So, when the time came, I nursed my mum 24/7 for four years.'

She knows that intense caring duties can be tough.

'You lose a bit of time from your own life, but I would never turn the clock back and not do it. I still feel relief that I did my best. Mum lived

Quick read

For Sally Beckett in Birmingham, Alzheimer's disease has affected three close family members.

Sally's parents gave her a happy childhood, and she felt a strong sense of duty to care for her late mum, Joan.

Joan's twin sister – who died soon after her – and Sally's own sister were also diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

Despite the challenges, Sally has learned to enjoy life to the full, so that she doesn't have regrets.

> **When I do things to make a difference to people's lives, that makes me feel better.**

two years longer than her life expectancy.

'At one point the hospital had written her off, saying she had no gag reflex and couldn't eat or drink, and I proved them wrong. Then I told them I was taking her home. They said, "How can you do that?" and I replied, "The same way we came in," and I put her in the car.'

Get backup

Sally's message to other carers is to reach out for help if you need to.

'If you find caring too traumatic or difficult, then you need backup.

'I had to have carers helping me with Mum when she wasn't weight-bearing. I needed professional equipment because you can't lift people on your own.'

Sally remembers some precious times with her mum at the home she shares with her husband.

'I remember her sitting in her wheelchair, watching me decorate the lounge. I used to stop and give her a cup of coffee at 11, and then stop and make dinner, then tea in the afternoon.

'I worked as a podiatrist and a reflexologist at home. Sometimes she sat in my surgery and had a bit of a chat with the patients, with a nice cup of tea and a piece of cake, so she wasn't bored.

'If I had spare time, we took her out for a drive or to somewhere nice or maybe her favourite place.'

There were difficult moments.

'It was very upsetting when her best friend from her time working at the Cadbury's factory came to see her. She'd known Nancy for 72 years.

'I said, "Mum, look who's here. It's Nancy," and she said, "It can't be Nancy. I'm not stupid. Nancy had black hair." I said, "This is her natural colour now. She's got older."

'People with dementia don't know they're upsetting people. When Mum became aggressive with Nancy, I asked the doctor for some calming medication and that really helped.'

After this, Joan met up with her twin Margery, whose Alzheimer's was more advanced.

'Mum was really, really looking forward to seeing her but her sister looked at Mum and said to me, "Who is this lady? Do I know her?" Another deeply sad moment.'

At other times her mum felt great comfort. Sally showed her one of her childhood dolls, and her mum started caring for it, like a baby.

After Joan died at 87, Margery became very ill. Sally travelled to her nursing home in Yorkshire and stayed with her until she died. She didn't like to think of a family member dying alone.

Shift in attention

Sally's attention has now shifted to her own sister Wendy, who also has Alzheimer's.

'Now I feel guilty because I don't spend as much time with her as I could. I volunteer at a school, but I'm thinking of dropping one of those days.

'This is the time when I ought to be taking some of the load from her husband. That's what my conscience is telling me.'

Sally's time as a carer has taught her so much.

'I try to treat people as they were, not as what they've become. People want to be a part of life, loved, and not sidelined.

'When you have Alzheimer's, people do tend to swerve conversations away and talk to a partner or carer or anybody else. I try never to do that. I talked to Mum with the same kindness as I always did.

'From what I've seen with Alzheimer's, when your memory is bad, you don't realise this because you're in a little world of oblivion.

'The worst thing for anyone is to lose their independence, and if they were totally aware of what was going on around them, they would feel 10 times worse. Instead, it's those who are around you who have the worries, and day-to-day life is harder for them.'

Concern to relief

With so much dementia in her family, Sally has her own personal concerns about the condition.

'I still manage to laugh when I put my purse in the fridge or forget names – even my own children's names.

'Sometimes I'm midway in conversation, and I stop and think, "What am I talking about?" or "What was I going to say?"'

Her concerns became so great she asked her GP to refer her for a brain scan and blood test.

'When I was waiting for the consultation in the hospital, I picked up a copy of Dementia together magazine on a table. It rings bells when you read about other people's experiences, when you've been a carer yourself. It's a relief to know someone else has experienced what you have.

'It was also a relief to learn my test results were normal.'

Joy and faith

Her experiences with Alzheimer's have taught Sally a huge lesson, she says.

'They have shown me I should enjoy life to the full, so I never have any regrets.

'I'm fit and well and healthy. I could walk out of the door now, cross the road, go to the bus stop and get run over. We are all terminal, but I don't fill myself with doom and gloom.

'Fortunately, I have my faith. I know there's something after life, not the end but merely a new chapter.'

An advert she saw for Alzheimer's Society's Trek 26 Northumberland chimed with her enthusiasm for life.

'I adore walking, nature and the great outdoors. I believe it makes a significant improvement to your physical and mental wellbeing.'

She decided to sign up for the 26-mile walk.

'It was well organised. They had breakfast for everyone in the morning before the start, and they had intermediate stops for toilet breaks, lunch and water.

'They've people enroute who are guiding you and passing on information to the people in charge if it's needed. It was a lovely atmosphere.

'Most of all, I was pleased to walk in memory of my mum, her twin sister and for my sister who is going through it at the moment.'

The walk fitted perfectly with the way Sally lives her life.

'This was part of my philosophy – to be positive, to live in a way that will benefit you and everyone else.

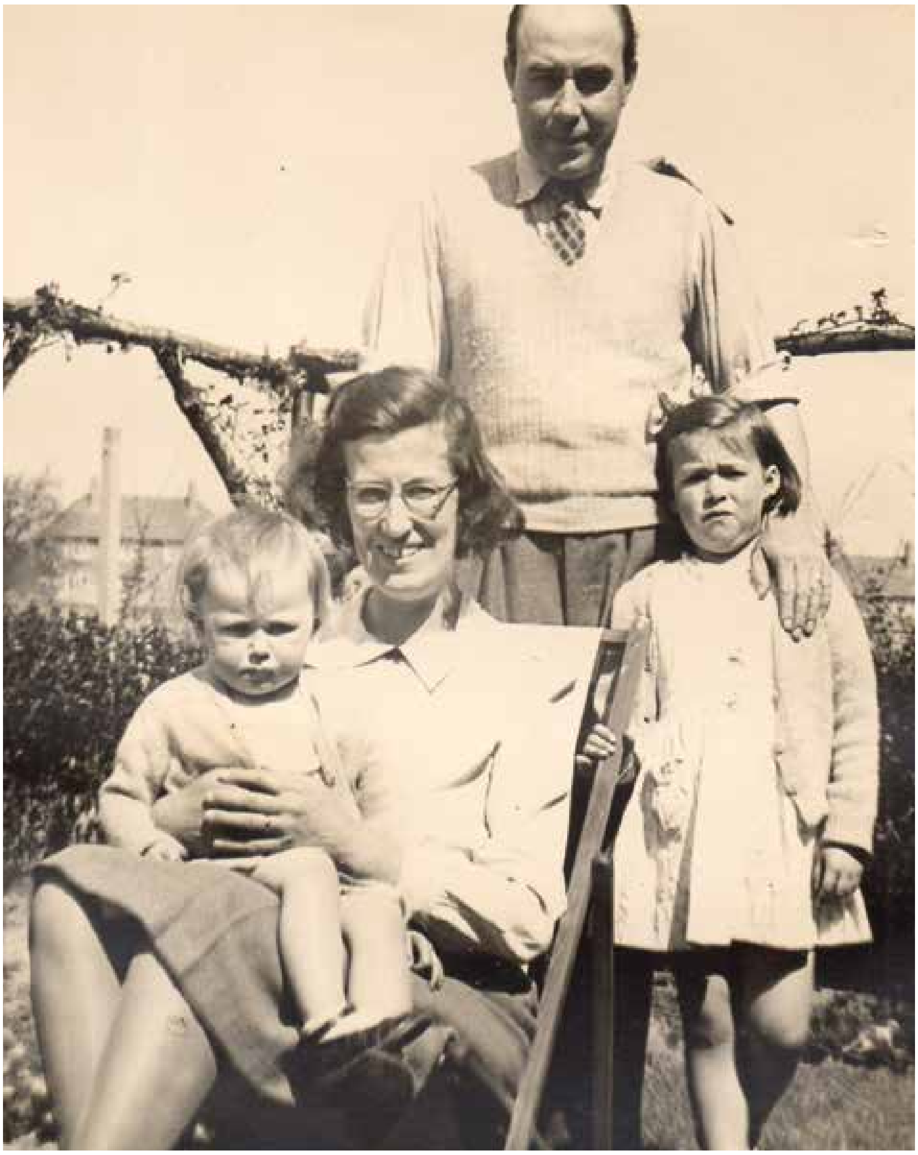
'Life is for living and making a difference to other people's lives,' she stresses.

'Carpe diem (seize the day) – enjoy every second, every moment of each day.'

> **I try to treat people as they were, not as what they've become. People want to be a part of life, loved, and not sidelined.**

Visit **alzheimers.org.uk/publications** or call **0300 303 5933** for our booklets:

- Caring for a person with dementia: A practical guide (600).
- Dementia: Reducing your risk (35).



Find out how you can challenge yourself by taking on one of our many fundraising events – see **alzheimers.org.uk/events** or call **0300 222 5808**.

? Ask an expert

‘My dad has dementia and lives at home. He also has a stoma bag but repeatedly pulls it off – what can we do?’

Pulling off a stoma bag

Photograph: istockphoto/Jennifer Fontan

For Colostomy UK and Dementia UK’s booklet Caring for a person with a stoma and dementia, see **colostomyuk.org/information** or call **0800 328 4257.**

Visit **alzheimers.org.uk/publications** or call **0300 303 5933** for our Changes in behaviour (525) factsheet.

Living with a stoma has its challenges – even more so if the person has dementia. If they don’t recognise why they have a stoma bag, it’s not uncommon for them to try to pull it off.

This puts them at risk of damaging their stoma and getting an infection. It also means going through more bags and other supplies.

What is a stoma?

A stoma is an opening made in a person’s tummy. It allows their poo or pee to be collected in a bag on the outside of their body.

Someone may need a stoma if they have certain conditions. These include bowel cancer, Crohn’s disease and diverticulitis.

Comfort and routine

Try to figure out why your dad might be pulling off his bag.

Could it be causing pain or discomfort? Are you using the right bag and is it fitted properly? Is his skin irritated?

Keep the area around the stoma clean and dry. Avoid creams or soaps that might irritate his skin or affect how well the bag sticks to his body.

A common reason for someone to fiddle with their stoma bag is that it’s become full and heavy.

Keeping a diary could reveal patterns that help you know when to change the bag. Talk to a stoma care nurse or community nurse about how and when to do changes.

Feeling distressed by a bag change could make your dad more likely to focus on the bag afterwards. Make changes as comfortable as possible for him, speaking and acting in a reassuring way.

Try to establish a consistent routine in a quiet and familiar setting. Is there something more pleasant that could occupy his attention during a bag change?

Think about triggers

Look for any ‘triggers’ that prompt your dad to try to remove his bag.

Does it happen at certain times of day, while he’s in a particular room or doing something specific? Does he do it more if he is anxious, stressed or bored?

Sometimes you can remove a trigger. If not, you might be able to reduce its impact by helping him focus on something else.

Talk about his hobbies or interests when he starts reaching for the bag. Turn on a favourite TV or radio programme, or offer him a book or photos to look through.

Make it less noticeable

There might be ways to make it less easy for your dad to notice the stoma bag or to try pulling it off.

Could he wear net pants or high-waisted trousers, or can you tuck his top into his underwear?

Specialist clothing may help to make the bag less noticeable and accessible. This could prevent him from reaching for it. It could also give you a better chance of gently distracting him if he does reach for it.

Speak to his doctor or a stoma care nurse about ways to make the bag less noticeable or harder to take out.

Your answers

Readers share advice for other carers about being ready for sudden changes and things going wrong.

Being prepared

‘I have a WhatsApp group of friends who live down the road and round the corner. They have agreed to be part of it.

‘If something happens, like my son forgets to pick my husband up from his daycare or I get delayed at work, I ask for help through the WhatsApp group.

‘I have only needed it once. It’s for emergencies. A friend replied within the minute and was able to avert the crisis.’ **Working Wife**

‘Sheffield Carers Centre advised an emergency care plan, for which they provided a blank form and prompt sheet. It made me think of many important things that I hadn’t before.

‘Included in it is a print-out of a “Patient Summary” from the GP, which I renew after every new diagnosis or change of medication (free on request from the surgery). It is a list of all medical conditions and current medication which obviates a lot of painstaking list writing.

‘It also includes emergency respite care provided by our favoured care home, but unfortunately the home can’t guarantee having a respite room available if it were needed in emergency.’ **JMabb**

‘If the person you care for still has capacity, make sure they have both powers of attorney in place. My mother-in-law, who has Alzheimer’s, never did it and it has caused the family several problems.

‘She’s 94 and in a care home. Latest issue was when she needed new dentures. One of her sons arranged to take her to a recommended dentist, but the dentist wouldn’t see her as she doesn’t have capacity and no one has power of attorney! Luckily, my dentist was willing to see her.

‘My husband has vascular dementia. We both have powers of attorney in place.’ **starrynight**

‘Ensure you gain a second opinion if concerned about radical, sudden changes in their dementia behaviour which necessitates a further assessment. Seek local authority, social services or GP action on how to achieve this important outcome.

‘Safeguarding is vitally important, both for your loved one and yourself. Report immediately any imminent danger to the mental health team.

‘Recognise from the onset that you matter! Always seek advice and help when needed.’ **Gill**

‘I think having a “go bag” is an essential. I always had one ready in case my husband had to be taken to hospital.

‘I had a list of his medications printed out and kept that up to date.

‘I filled in a Herbert Protocol in case he went missing.’ **Izzy**

‘I’ve got a “message in a bottle” which I got from the Lions. It’s a plastic bottle containing all my other half’s details, including NHS number, GP, medication, my contact details and also son’s contact details, among other things. The bottle is kept in the fridge and there is a notice on the inside of the front door saying that my other half has one.

‘If something happens to me, then police, paramedics etc will be able to find my other half’s details. I also carry prominently in my purse a card saying that I am a carer and someone depends on me.’ **canary**

Visit **forum.alzheimers.org.uk** to read more and join our Dementia Support Forum.

Next time

Do you have any advice on helping a person dress, or about planning to travel with a relative or friend who has dementia?

See page 38 for more details, and email **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2 by the end of 3 November.

Noticeboard

Your space for messages, posts, updates, opportunities, ideas and more.

Letters

No contact lens support

My husband Roy, who was 95, died last year of this terrible illness, Alzheimer's.

He had been diagnosed 3½ years earlier and was living in a care home.

Many years earlier he had suffered from Fuchs' endothelial dystrophy which, after an operation in Moorfields, was prescribed contact lenses enabling him to see well. To our horror, we were told by care home staff these were not permitted, due to untrained staff.

His sight was now very poor. A local ophthalmologist prescribed a pair of strong lens spectacles, which enabled him to read large letters only. Despite help from RNIB, nothing seemed to work and he remained like that – almost sightless.

Anonymous reader, Kent

It's shocking to hear that your late husband couldn't get such important support due to a lack of care home staff training.

Training for care staff and better care for people with dementia is a key focus for our campaigns – see **alzheimers.org.uk/campaigns**

Our booklet Supporting a person with dementia in a care home (691) includes advice on helping staff understand a person's needs as well as speaking up for them – visit **alzheimers.org.uk/publications** or call **0300 303 5933**.

Memories of summer flowers

Last year, an artist came to our memory café and worked with the attendees on some felt needlepoint, creating vases of flowers.

She put all the displays we created into a banner. This was featured recently in Swindon's Threads textile festival.

Doesn't it look marvellous? My favourite one is the one in the middle, minus a vase. I asked its creator why there was no vase. They said they preferred hanging baskets!

Karen Owen, Swindon

Tell your MP

We must have proper adult social care in this country asap, especially for people on their own with Alzheimer's and dementia patients to be taken care of, with this disease happening to many people – young and elderly.

Please inform all your MPs by email or letters. Addresses one can get from your local library or Citizens Advice for all contacts, or even local councils.

I urge you all to please try.

Victor Rones

Share

Share your views, feedback and news – email **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2. We can consider contributions received by 4 November for the December/January issue (wording may be edited).

Are you ready for winter?

Winter can be a difficult time, but there are steps we can take to keep safe and warm. One thing that makes a massive difference is to prepare before the cold weather sets in.

Check your gas boiler now – is it working safely and efficiently? If you wait until it's cold, you risk being left without heat when you really need it (and trying to book an engineer at their busiest time).

Sign up to the Priority Services Register so you get quick and easy help if there's an emergency or planned works. It could mean you also get a free gas safety check and more.

Are you entitled to financial help? As well as national schemes like Winter Fuel Payment, Cold Weather Payment and Warm Home Discount, see if local grants are available in your area – call our Dementia Support Line on **0333 150 3456**.

Winter checklist

- Sign up to the Priority Services Register – see **thepsr.co.uk** or call our Dementia Support Line on **0333 150 3456**.
- Book a gas safety check or Fire Brigade home safety check visit.
- Install and test a carbon monoxide alarm.
- Install a locking cooker valve.
- Check what financial support you can get.
- Use draught excluders and close curtains at dusk.
- Set your heating to 18–21°C and install radiator reflectors.
- Consider using a heated blanket or hot water bottle.
- Keep emergency supplies, like a torch and blanket, nearby.

Speak to us if you have concerns about damp or staying warm and safe in the winter – call the Dementia Support Line on **0333 150 3456**.

For leaflets packed with tips on energy efficiency, the Priority Services Register and carbon monoxide safety, see **alzheimers.org.uk/gdn-advice**

Time for Dementia: now in NI

A programme that's creating a new generation of healthcare professionals with a deeper understanding of dementia has expanded into Northern Ireland.

Through Time for Dementia, healthcare students have regular contact with people affected by dementia who volunteer to take part.

Over two years, in-person or online visits give students insight into the impact of dementia on people's everyday lives.

The programme is now running in Northern Ireland for the first time, thanks to a partnership with Ulster University and the support of an anonymous donor.

Lauren Wonnacott, Project Manager at the Society, said, 'This programme transforms how students understand dementia care by witnessing the reality of daily life, the challenges and the incredible resilience of families.

'By the time they qualify, they will be equipped with genuine empathy and understanding that will benefit every person with dementia they care for.'

Find opportunities to get involved in Time for Dementia in your area – see **alzheimers.org.uk/timefordementia** or call **07562 430204**.

Taletrove: your family newsletter

Taletrove helps older family members – including people with dementia – to stay connected through a regular newsletter sent by post.

You can share your photos, messages and updates by text, WhatsApp or email, and Taletrove turns these into a personalised newsletter.

Sam Jaques, Co-Founder, says, 'Many families now use Taletrove as a gentle memory aid for relatives living with dementia.

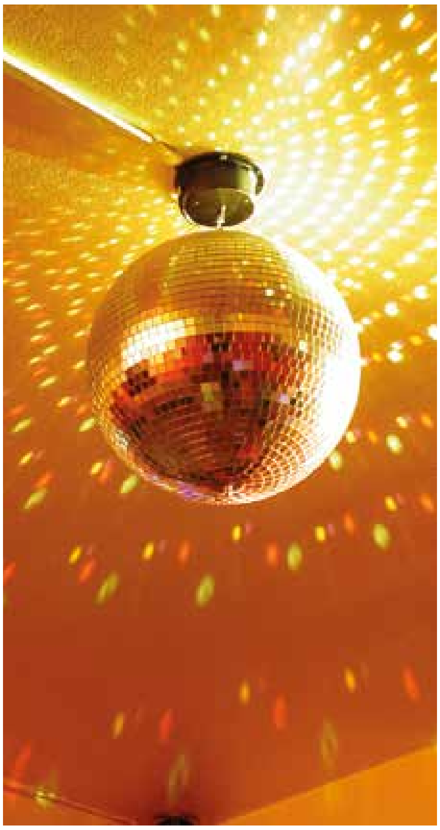
'The newsletters allow people to revisit names, faces and stories at their own pace, helping them feel connected even when phone calls or technology can be overwhelming.'

Taletrove costs £7 per month for a monthly newsletter, with 50% off to try your first month. You can pay less for less frequent newsletters, or if you pay annually.

We have a special 10% discount for our readers – visit **taletrove.co.uk** and use the code ASUK15 before 30 November.

Coming up

What's in store for you in Dementia together magazine, and how you can contribute.



We've got a host of inspiring stories and helpful ideas lined up for coming issues.

We'll be meeting people who are enjoying discos for revellers with dementia and their carers, family and friends. Having seen their Spotify playlist, we're ready for anything from twisting again to getting into the groove…

In the lead-up to Christmas and the festive season, a group in Sussex will let us know what they think of exciting gift ideas from our online shop.

And our book reviewers will be discussing Fiona Phillips' bestselling memoir Remember when. If you're reading it, see page 27 to see how you can join in (and for a chance to win a copy).

We'll also share advice about dental and mouth care for people who've been diagnosed with dementia. What steps can you take now to prevent problems later on?

Your ideas

Please email us at **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2.

Dressing and travelling tips

We'd like to hear advice for carers on two subjects before 4 November:

Do you have any advice about travelling with a family member or friend who has dementia?
Are there things worth talking to travel or accommodation providers about in advance? Have you done things that helped the person with dementia prepare for travelling? Are there things you've taken with you that have been helpful?

Do you have any advice about supporting a family member or friend with dementia to get dressed or undressed?
Are there things you've said or done to help the person feel more comfortable when being helped with clothing? Are there ways of taking clothes on or off that make it easier for you and them? Are there particular kinds of adapted clothes, products or equipment that have been helpful?

Tastes of yesteryear

Has Pat's mum's date and walnut cake (see page 13) made you think of a favourite treat or meal from your earlier life?

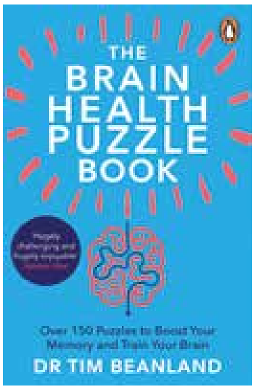
We'd love to hear about a treasured recipe handed down to you, or something you often used to make for family or friends that conjures up memories.

More puzzles!

See page 15 for Pete Middleton's latest anagramword. Solve clues for words relating to assistive technology – equipment and devices that are designed to help with everyday tasks.

We're already hungry for Pete's next anagramword, which will take favourite foods as a theme.

In the meantime, have you tried our monthly Brain Workout puzzle packs? They include word, number and logic puzzles with a mix of difficulty levels – sign up with a monthly gift at **alzheimers.org.uk/brainworkout**



For people looking to improve their memory, sharpen their focus or reduce their risk of dementia, how about The Brain Health Puzzle Book? It features 150 puzzles, plus a seven-day programme and tips to keep your mind active and engaged. £10.99 from our online shop – visit **shop.alzheimers.org.uk** or call **0333 366 0035**.

Competitions

Idem smart clock

We have an Idem smart clock (see pages 28–29) for one lucky winner drawn from correct entries.

Q: How can family and friends keep in touch with someone through a Idem smart clock?

A. If they speak to their reflection in a large framed mirror, whatever they say will appear on the clock.

B. They must arrange smart clocks on the ground to spell out messages, then send photos of these in the post.

C. They should use the app to send reminders, notes and photos, which then appear on the clock.

Forget-me-not and snowflake bauble

We have a handmade ceramic Forget-me-not and snowflake bauble for three winners drawn from correct entries.

Q: Decorating Christmas trees was originally a Central European custom – what popularised it in Britain and elsewhere?

A. William Gladstone made buying Christmas baubles compulsory for everyone in Wales.

B. A newspaper published a picture of Queen Victoria's Christmas tree, hung with baubles.

C. Mary Seacole gave Christmas baubles to soldiers injured in the Crimean War.

Send us your competition answers with your name and address by end of 4 November – email **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2.

Book givewaway

See page 27 for a chance to win a copy of Remember When: My life with Alzheimer's by Fiona Phillips.

August/September winners and answers

Rosa mugs and trays

K Adams in Nottinghamshire won a Rosa mug and tray set, while S Merrick in Derbyshire and M Julian in Greater London each won a two-handled mug. Answer: Rosa mugs and trays are available in cat, dog or lilac designs.

Memory Walk goodies

A Palmer in Norfolk and an anonymous reader in Scotland each won a Memory Walk beanie hat, while S Brown in Renfrewshire, M Hutton in Coleraine, C Nott in Hertfordshire, Elaine in Lancashire and M Bannon in Northamptonshire each won a fabric wristband. Answer: This year's 12 Memory Walk events across England, Wales and Northern Ireland take place during September and October 2025.

Book giveaway

C Riddington in Surrey, G Cook in Herefordshire, E Thorn in Greater London, A Cowan in Rutland and L Bryan in North Yorkshire each won a copy of Living with a Person with Dementia, by Bernie McCarthy.

Terms and conditions: Competitions are free to enter and open to residents, aged 16 and over, of the UK, Republic of Ireland, Isle of Man and Channel Islands. Winners will be drawn randomly from entries received by midnight on the end date and results are final. Winners will be notified soon after and announced in the following issue. Prizes are subject to availability, and will be sent by Alzheimer's Society or our supplier.

Visit our Shop

A fabulous range of Christmas essentials such as cards and wrapping paper, gifts and games as well as helpful products for people living with dementia.

Call **0333 366 0035** (local rate) to ask for a copy of the catalogue, or shop online at **shop.alzheimers.org.uk**

Last postal date for standard delivery is 15 December.

100%

of our profits help people living with dementia

Alzheimer's Society

It will take a society to beat dementia