February/March 2026

Dementia together

Alzheimer's Society

In this issue

Finding your own way, sharing the load, pet care and much more

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Welcome

A very warm welcome to another Dementia together – our magazine for people who are dealing with dementia in their day-to-day lives. We're sharing another selection of stories and ideas that we hope will inspire and inform.

This issue, we hear from a range of people with dementia, including Chris (see page 8). He brings a lifetime's experience of forging his own path to the challenges of living with young-onset Alzheimer's.

We also feature many people caring for a partner, family member or friend, such as Nupur (see page 30). She draws on her practical skills to help support her parents with her dad's vascular dementia.

There are ideas and tips on planning for a pet's care, supporting someone living in a care home who smokes, helping a relative or friend with dressing, and more.

As ever, your feedback and suggestions help us to make the magazine as useful and relevant as possible. See page 38 for ways to share your ideas, comments and experiences, or 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 people dealing with dementia day to day. 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.

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Directions

In my first few months at Alzheimer's Society, I am struck by the number of people who have said that this is a very exciting time to have taken on the role.

The world has woken up to the fact that, after little movement around dementia for a long time, we stand on the brink of real change. There will still be bumps in the road, but the direction of travel is now very clear.

The record number of people calling our Dementia Support Line underlines how much need there is. But there is also a real sense of hope that we are reaching the tipping point for dementia – similar to the one that came for cancer some decades ago.

2026 is shaping up to be a really significant year. We are expecting results from more research that will transform how dementia is diagnosed and treated in future. Our research nurse programme will be expanding across the UK, playing a vital role in setting up clinical trials and supporting people affected by dementia from a wider range of backgrounds to take part in them.

We say that it will take a society to beat dementia. We can't do it on our own. Powerful partnerships – including with media organisations like Mail Metro – help us galvanise others to make this a priority.

Every milestone we hit is possible because of people like you – those we support and who campaign, volunteer, donate and fundraise. I hope that, like me, you feel optimistic about what we can achieve together this year and beyond

Michelle Dyson,
Chief Executive

News

Three more existing drugs to try repurposing

A Society-funded study has identified three existing medications that might be repurposed to treat or prevent Alzheimer's disease.

University of Exeter researchers found that the Zostavax shingles vaccine, sildenafil (Viagra) and a motor neurone disease treatment called riluzole are the most promising drugs to investigate further.

Developing new drugs from scratch can take 10 to 15 years and cost billions of pounds, with no guarantee they will work. Repurposing medicines already approved for other conditions is quicker, safer and more cost-effective.

The study reviewed 80 existing drugs to identify which might have the greatest potential to treat or prevent Alzheimer's. An international panel of experts from universities, hospitals and pharmaceutical companies, as well as people affected by dementia, agreed three 'priority candidates'.

Of these, the shingles vaccine was found to be most promising, particularly as it requires just one or two doses and has a strong safety record. Previous studies show people who had the jab could be 16% less likely to develop dementia.

It's been recommended that these drugs now be tested in clinical trials to further understand their benefit for people with Alzheimer's or at risk of developing it.

Fiona Carragher, our Chief Policy and Research Officer, said, 'Years ago, we saw aspirin being repurposed from being a painkiller to helping people reduce their risk of heart attack or stroke.

'This is what we want to see in the field of dementia, and why we believe drug repurposing is one of the most exciting frontiers in dementia research.'

Find out more about the research we fund and how you could get involved – see **alzheimers.org.uk/research**

Take on Trek26

Join us this summer on a 13- or 26-mile Trek26 challenge and help fight dementia. There are 13 breathtaking locations across the UK, including new events on the stunning Norfolk and Northern Ireland coastlines.

Sign up before the end of March and use the code TOGETHER26 for 20% off registration – visit alzheimers.org.uk/Trek26Together or 0300 222 5808.

Social care changes

Hundreds of you joined us in sharing the importance of dementia training for care workers, in our work to influence a new fair pay agreement.

The Adult Social Care Fair Pay Agreement, the biggest update to the sector for decades, will set minimum pay as well as other terms and conditions.

Only a third of care workers currently have dementia training, so this is an opportunity to widen access and ensure more people with dementia receive quality care.

Wales strategy

The public are being asked to help shape a new Dementia Strategy for Wales.

It will cover the next decade and a wide range of areas, including diagnosis, treatment and care.

Our team has been working hard to ensure dementia remains at the top of the Welsh Government's priority list.

We supported people with lived experience to help develop priorities for the strategy. The latest consultation, open until 3 April, will now fine-tune it.

To take part, find 'Draft dementia strategy for Wales 2026 to 2036' at **gov.wales/consultations**

NI agenda

We're working to push dementia up the agenda for Northern Ireland's government in 2026.

We're leading a series of meetings with MPs and MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly), the new CEO of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and the Department for Communities policy team.

We'll also be running all-party meetings on dementia and carers, and taking part in budget consultations to make sure dementia stays a top priority.

Join us as a campaigner and help us challenge and change the issues faced by people living with dementia – visit alzheimers.org.uk/campaign

Is your ambition for 2026 sky-high?

Know someone who wants to challenge themselves in 2026?

You can't get much more exhilarating than a fundraising skydive for Alzheimer's Society.

Push your limits, experience the thrill of jumping from 10,000 feet and make a difference for people affected by dementia.

Every skydive helps fund vital dementia research and support for families across the UK.

Join one of our organised events or plan your own – visit alzheimers.org.uk/skydives or call 0300 222 5808.

Flower show: Microbes and Minds

We're delighted to be partnering with garden designer Tina Worboys at the prestigious RHS Chelsea Flower Show, running 19–23 May.

Inspired by rural orchards, our Microbes and Minds garden will be a tranquil space for people affected by dementia.

The garden will highlight the need for more dementia research, showcasing an emerging area of science – the link between our gut health and our brain health.

After the show, the garden will be relocated to a Hallmark Luxury Care Home. This is a beautiful and long-lasting legacy for the garden, which will live on through the enjoyment of residents, loved ones and people living with dementia.

Record-breaking insurance day

Our eighth Insurance Day for Dementia, on 27 November, was our biggest ever.

Part of our award-winning Insurance United Against Dementia campaign, the day brings together insurance firms and professionals to donate, raise awareness and fundraise for Alzheimer's Society.

We're thrilled that 152 firms took part – more than double those involved in 2024. Together they raised over £430,000 to fight dementia. Thank you to everyone involved!

Step up to the oche

skynesher

Darts for Dementia is a new and fun way for companies, clubs, groups and individuals to get together and raise funds for Alzheimer's Society.

It's easy to get involved and you can host your event anywhere – at a pub, social club, workplace or even online.

Every £500 raised funds 20 Companion Calls, helping ease isolation for those caring for someone with dementia.

Register for your free digital guide packed with ideas to make your darts fundraiser a big success.

Visit alzheimers.org.uk/dartsfordementia or please call 0330 333 0804.

Omaze partnership

Did you catch our recent Omaze partnership adverts featuring Sir Jonathan Pryce, the actor and Society Ambassador?

The Omaze London House Draw ran in December and January, with a stunning house worth £5 million plus £250,000 in cash as prize. Through the draw, we will receive £1 million to fund our vital support services for people affected by dementia.

Omaze has separately awarded us a £3.5 million grant paid over four years for our pioneering Doctoral Training Centres to drive research breakthroughs of the future.

Alcohol-related brain damage

We've updated our online and print advice on alcohol-related brain damage (ARBD). Although ARBD is not a type of dementia, its symptoms can be similar.

Our advice covers how ARBD is diagnosed, types of the condition and where to go for specialist support.

Find out more and download our What is alcohol-related brain damage (ARBD)? factsheet at alzheimers.org.uk/arbd

Damehood for Meera

Congratulations to our Ambassador Meera Syal, who was awarded a damehood for services to literature, drama and charity in the King's New Year Honours List.

Meera first became an Alzheimer's Society ambassador in 2013, following the support she received when her father was diagnosed with dementia.

Our CEO Michelle Dyson says, 'Over the years her determination to stand alongside everyone affected by dementia has only grown stronger.

'Voices like Meera's are vital in raising awareness, breaking down stigma and ensuring dementia remains firmly in the public consciousness.'

Listen up: magazine podcast

Hear from people who feature in our articles in the Dementia together podcast.

We release a new episode with each issue of the magazine, bringing articles to life in people's own voices.

The last episode featured Kate and Nick from Dementia Disco, a charity that organises uplifting music events for people affected by dementia. A new episode will be out in early February.

Listen at alzheimers.org.uk/podcast or subscribe on your podcast app – search 'Alzheimer's Society' to find us.

Let's Dance

Let's Dance, the national campaign founded by Society Ambassador Angela Rippon CBE, holds its National Day of Dance on 8 March.

Angela says, 'In 2025, Let's Dance saw hundreds of events take place, from Aberdeen to Cornwall, from ballet to bhangra.

'This year, we want to focus on the benefits of dancing for everyone living with long-term health conditions, including dementia.

'So let's get out there and (as we say on Strictly) keep dancing!'

Find a National Day of Dance event or class near you at lets-dance.org.uk

Alex Daniels aj-esq.co.uk

New Carol Jennings Fellow

We're pleased to announce that our new Carol Jennings Fellow is Ian Harrison at UCL (University College London).

Ian was inspired to become a dementia researcher after experiencing dementia in his own family.

He is studying the natural systems that get rid of waste substances from our brains. The aim is to see whether boosting this could reduce the build-up of harmful proteins in Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's Society and the Jennings family launched the fellowship in memory of Carol's tireless campaign work.

Read about another Carol Jennings Fellow, Chris Hardy, on page 20.

Don't miss…

Ellen wants more openness about dementia to break down stigma improve support. **See page 17.**

Chris is exploring the connection between hearing problems and dementia. **See page 20.**

A monthly hub in Nottinghamshire provides a practical and supportive one-stop service. **See page 22.**

People affected by dementia try out gadgets to help sleeping and waking. **See page 28.**

How can you support a person with dementia living in a care home who smokes? **See page 34.**

Rebel soundtrack

Chris Green, in Worcestershire, has never let others stop him finding his own way in life. Margaret Rooke meets a man bringing the same spirit to life with dementia.

Chris Green struggles with his memory because of Alzheimer's and learning difficulties, but he has never forgotten when he fell in love with music.

That feeling is as clear today as it was when, as a schoolboy, he heard a teacher play a few lines from pop group Simply Red. His fascination was instant.

'I thought, "Who is this band?"' says Chris, now 54.

Quick read

Chris Green, in Worcestershire, continues to create music and challenge assumptions while living with dementia.

Chris, 54, felt validated by his Alzheimer's diagnosis – it's helped to make his experiences more real to other people.

Heart surgery as a baby left him with learning difficulties, making regular routes through education and work a struggle.

Having found his own ways to contribute and flourish, he now brings his talent and spirit to dementia and community groups.

'I read up on them and found out the lead singer, Mick Hucknall, had come out of a punk band. I thought, "Oh, that's interesting."'

In that moment, he realised there was a whole world of music ready for him to learn about and explore.

Ever since, music has played a central role in his life, carrying him through when times were tough.

Underlying talent

Chris has faced a lot of rejection, but the soundtrack to his years has kept him confident of his underlying talent.

It's led to him working as a DJ. He mixes, edits and creates tapes that have entertained community centres, dementia cafés, support groups and many more.

When he thinks about his musical taste, Chris has spotted a pattern: he never follows the crowd but looks for those who rebel, in the way he has always done.

'With the Wailers, everyone goes on about Bob Marley, but I was more of a Peter Tosh fan,' he says. 'I always drive towards people who are a bit more militant.'

This is the kind of music Chris relates to because of the struggles in his own life.

His learning difficulties and dementia are not always apparent to people when he first meets them, often leading to confusion, misunderstandings and fallings out.

Complex surgery

Chris was born with a heart condition and had complex, pioneering surgery at just three months. The risks included the possibility that he might stop breathing soon after being operated on.

This is what happened to Chris, and that's when his brain damage occurred. Due to this, he found school difficult, but some teachers supported him, including his English teacher who was the one who played the Simply Red track that had such an impact.

After school, Chris progressed to training courses and the job market.

'The system didn't work,' he says, looking back.

'I have dyslexia, colour blindness and memory problems. What takes people five to 10 minutes will take me an hour. I would get sent for jobs but, when I mentioned disability, the interview would be over.'

Chris says he also has problems reading body language and understanding social boundaries, and that has upset people. When he finally gained an official diagnosis of learning difficulties this helped explain his behaviour to others.

'Before this people thought, "Chris is difficult," not, "Chris has difficulties,"' says his mum, Cathie.

'So people would judge him, which was very difficult.'

However, despite the diagnosis, he still struggled to find long-term work.

Instead, he started travelling, with the help and support of his family, and volunteering, including taking stints tidying up at the Glastonbury Festival.

Feeling validated

A few years ago, Cathie noticed Chris's memory was getting worse. Their GP, a great support, suggested memory tests and these led to a CT scan.

Next came an Alzheimer's diagnosis. Chris says that, maybe surprisingly, this didn't feel like as much of a gut punch as people might expect.

> **With the help of music, I've found it easier to switch off from my problems. I've been isolated, but music has given me opportunities.**

'The symptoms for dementia are the same as for my learning disability,' he explains.

In fact his diagnosis of dementia was a time when he felt validated.

'People still didn't believe I had any problems, but I made the point to them that the letter states what I'd been saying all along and people hadn't believed me. Now perhaps they can accept that I've got difficulties.'

However he believes professionals struggle to help people who have both dementia and learning difficulties. When one charity organiser told him he needed to make his own way across a town he didn't know – on buses he hadn't heard of – to join a group, he was dumbfounded.

'What I have is a different experience to most people with dementia,' he says. 'We're not all the same, so I'm having to explain a lot to people.'

His appearance sometimes adds to others' confusion.

'I really do like to defy norms,' says Chris. 'I had dreadlocks until recently and people really did get freaked out by me.

'I like to be shocking. No one expects someone with dreadlocks to have dementia.'

Creative about life

Chris's life experiences have taught him to make the most of his time.

'You learn to be very creative about your life and what you can do,' says Chris.

'With the help of music, I've found it easier to switch off from my problems. I've been isolated, but music has given me opportunities. I've always just been fascinated by it.'

He's also had positive life experiences in his campaigning activities.

'I was involved with the Twyford Down demos, the M11 link road campaign and the poll tax protests.

'They were really good. It was the camaraderie and the way we all kind of got on.

'No one ever said to me did I have a learning problem or that I was a bit weird. It was, "Let's just go for it."'

Chris talks about his love of gardening as well, and he hopes to take over a local allotment with the right support.

'I will grow veg. I'd rather grow it myself and eat it because I know what's in it, where it's coming from, and it's got no chemicals in.'

Support to thrive

Chris recently moved from West Midlands to Worcestershire to be close to Cathie, so she can help him with meals and everyday tasks.

This has given Chris the support he needs to nurture a softer side, shown in his relationship with his daughter, who's 21, and in his volunteering. He likes being part of something and being accepted by a team.

'I've had enough of trying to prove myself. That's been my attitude since I hit 50.

'I know that with music I can switch off from everyday life and go into another world. I have my perky moments.'

When he takes music into his dementia world, Chris says he's helping to spread the word that dementia doesn't only mean people in their 70s, 80s and older. His mix tapes are fun, full of great tunes, and personalised with voiceovers for the group they're for.

Chris recalls one dementia group deciding to bring music into their meetings, and the other members were suggesting Dean Martin songs and other names from a bygone age.

Chris intervened by rewriting The Clash song Should I Stay or Should I Go for the group. His lyrics began with 'Darling you've got to let me know… where I put my shoes. Some days I'm all confused…'

He sang it and played it to them. It was an instant hit.

'Everyone was in stitches,' he says.

Good at it

For the future Chris wants to keep working with music and remixing. He wants to keep spreading his message that dementia includes rebels like him who have taken part in protests and who live fulfilling lives in a different way.

Life feels settled now he's living close to his mum. He's volunteering for a local community centre with a friend, and it's going well.

The centre organiser has just bought a PA kit, and Chris plays the music at events for her. She is giving him opportunities in an environment where they accept him for who he is, says Cathie.

'We held a Mistletoe Festival at the centre just before Christmas, and I was doing the music,' says Chris.

'Afterwards we went into the pub for a drink and people kept saying, "That was the best Mistletoe Festival ever. You've upped it with the music." They were saying, "That's down to Chris because he's good at it."

'I'm not used to people giving me compliments, so it's a bit weird.'

Weird maybe, but welcome. With his catchy tunes, special effects and great local support, Chris has come into his own.

> **I know that with music I can switch off from everyday life and go into another world. I have my perky moments.**

For our Understanding young-onset dementia (688) booklet, see **alzheimers.org.uk/PublicationsTogether** or call **0300 303 5933**.

Our six Easy Read booklets use simple words and images to help you understand dementia. To access these, please visit **alzheimers.org.uk/easyread** or call **0300 303 5933**.

Your experience

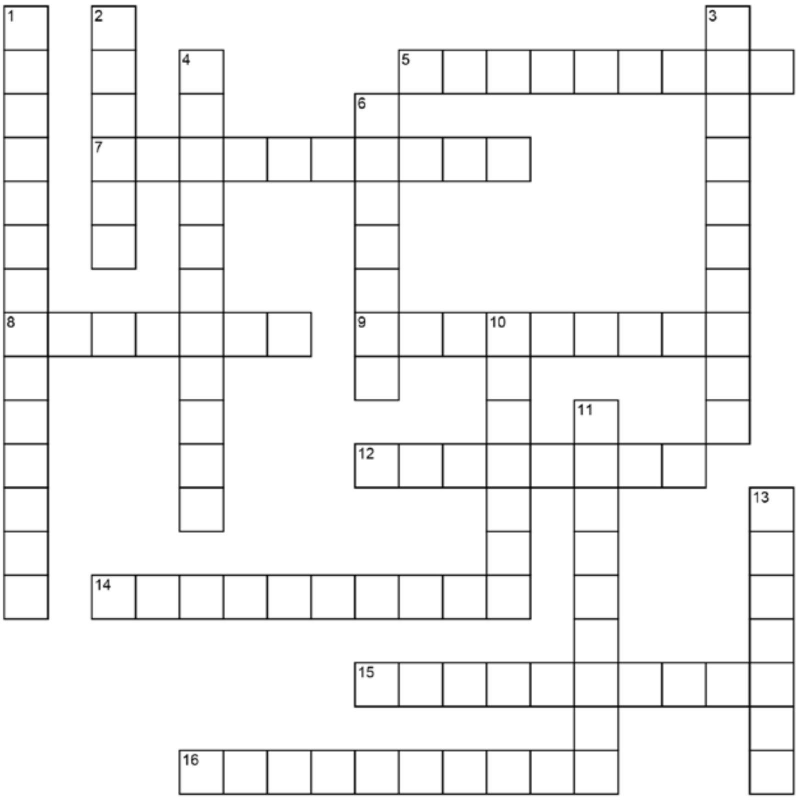
Find out about Dementia Voice local groups and other ways to use your lived experience to help share our and others' work. see **alzheimers.org.uk/involvement**

Share and inspire

Views, updates and ideas – for and by you.

Anagramword: All about books

It's National Storytelling Week from 2–8 February, and Pete Middleton's latest puzzle takes books as its theme. Each clue begins with words that are an anagram of the answer, along with a clue to its meaning. How many can you solve? (answers will be in next issue – see page 39 for the answers to last issue's puzzle)



ACROSS

5 A hard doll transforms into a children's author (5,4)
7 This car oil provides a genre of novel (10)
8 Any fast may end up as a work of fiction (7)
9 A river ant provides a written account (9)
12 Reactive, but able to use one's imagination (8)
14 Every tape I mix provides a gum-shoe (7,3)
15 Quasi creep in the style of Don Quixote? (10)
16 A sporty lie told through letters or diaries (10)

DOWN

1 Concise nice fit for stories that are out of this world (7,7)
2 Go itch to create this dark, mysterious type of story (6)
3 Trace crash to people who appear in stories (10)
4 Into aspirin when a great idea hits you? (11)
6 Sick end for a famous Victorian storyteller? (7)
10 No cream for this genre of bodice-ripper? (7)
11 Cosy drive leads to a voyage of... (9)
13 New rest becomes a cowboy story (7)

New adventures for 2026

A specialist charity has announced an expanded range of supported holidays for people with dementia and their companions.

This year, Dementia Adventure is offering five-day breaks in 11 locations across Britain, from the Scottish Highlands to the Isle of Wight.

As well as activities, travel, meals and accommodation as part of a small group, Dementia Adventure holidays provide 24-hour dementia-trained support and a photobook of memories afterward.

The charity's Holiday Support Fund could help pay for your holiday, depending on your circumstances.

Prices for five-day all-inclusive holidays, starting from £2,925, are lower than last year.

Dementia Adventure also offers Green Letter Days – more regular days out and activities at home.

Fiona Petit, Dementia Adventure's Chief Executive, says, 'For many individuals living with dementia, holidays may seem out of reach, but with the right planning and support they needn't be.

'We specialise in creating joyful holidays that bring back the possibility of travel and adventure. The opportunity to relax and enjoy the great outdoors can be priceless.'

Call 01245 237548 or visit dementiaadventure.org to find out more, including to discuss options for financial support.

Never done before: Broadcasting

John Blundell in the West Midlands broadcasts about his experience of living with dementia:

My wife Jann thinks that I had early dementia symptoms years ago. I had brain fog, but my doctors put it down to stress and depression.

I was eventually diagnosed with young-onset vascular dementia in 2025, at the age of 59.

My doctor was fantastic and helpful but my diagnosis knocked me for six, it was totally devastating. I'd seen my dad live with dementia for 12 years.

Living for today

It took us a while to get our heads round my diagnosis and tell all the family.

In that time, I retreated into myself. One day, Jann just said, 'Look, we've got to stop thinking about the future and live for today.'

And it spurred me into action. I had a choice to either feel sorry for myself, curl up and go downhill quicker. Or I could take control and make something out of this.

Then the idea just came to me. I'd start doing a video diary of my experiences.

Speaking out

Before my diagnosis, I'd worked as a steelworker all my life. Broadcasting is a completely new experience.

But I'm comfortable speaking in public. I'm a practising Spiritualist and I used to do demonstrations of mediumship in front of big audiences.

I'm also used to communicating with people who have dementia. I used to go with my dad to his dementia club and sit with everyone, you know, try to get into their world.

> **“Broadcasting has helped me get my lust for life back. I've got something to strive for. I've been learning my skills as I go along, through trial and error.”**

I decided I'd talk about my day-to-day experience of dementia. I thought if I could make a difference through speaking out, it'd be fantastic.

Uploading my first monthly video diary to Facebook was daunting, but straight away people were responding and messaging.

New horizons

My mum always used to say, 'Carry out random acts of kindness every day!' And that's what I try to do, help people.

When you get a diagnosis, you feel so lonely, as if you're the only one going through it.

Doing my videos helps me as well as other people. I like the feeling I get from supporting others. The feedback is so uplifting.

Broadcasting has helped me get my lust for life back. I've got something to strive for. I've been learning my skills as I go along, through trial and error.

Don't get me wrong, I still have down days.

But I try to make the most of every day because you just don't know what tomorrow brings.

I stay sociable – I'm a member of two dementia clubs and I love them, we have a good laugh.

My videos have also led to new opportunities. I was invited onto Black Country Radio and now have a regular spot talking about dementia.

I want to continue to use my voice to dispel myths about dementia, show that you can be active. You've got life ahead of you still.

Without a doubt, I'd encourage other people with a dementia diagnosis to try new things. It keeps your brain ticking over.

Onset, diagnosis and now

Philip Rogers, in North Wales, shares thoughts about life before his dementia symptoms, before diagnosis and since.

Who were you before onset?

My first job was as a coal miner, then when all the mines closed down I joined the army.

I was in the Royal Engineers until I was 55. I loved it and eventually worked my way up to the rank of major.

I travelled everywhere – Gibraltar, Canada, US, north Africa, Northern Ireland, Germany. I don't tell many people, but I received an MBE for my military career and I met the Queen several times.

When I left the army, I helped out my sister and brother-in-law, who ran a hotel in North Wales. It was a very different life, but it was just a question of being friendly with people.

Outside of work, I loved climbing and being outdoors.

I'm very practical – I built my own house.

When I say 'built a house', I took over a dilapidated shed with great views and turned it into a beautiful stone cottage. It was a great experience. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Who were you before diagnosis?

My dad had dementia and my brother Chris too – sadly he died during the Covid pandemic.

It was my wife Gail who first noticed my early symptoms, such as a lack of concentration and a habit of leaving things without finishing them. I was always a bit of a forgetful person anyway, but she insisted I get checked out.

The first diagnosis I received was mild cognitive impairment. They told us to go back if my symptoms got worse and so we did a few months later. Gail had noticed I was forgetting the answers to questions that I'd already asked.

After all the tests, I was diagnosed with dementia.

In a way it was a shock, but in another I was expecting it.

Gail and I decided to approach it as just another thing to deal with – we'd take each day as it comes.

Who are you now?

I'm still an optimistic person – I always have been.

Gail's my rock.

We try to do as much as we can together, including the weekly shop. Although I got in the wrong car at the supermarket recently!

Gail encourages me to carry on with the things I love doing, including gardening. Only now, she will often stand in the background and oversee.

I still enjoy being outdoors and we go walking together.

We still have a busy social life, including going ballroom dancing once a week. We've been doing it a long time and will continue as long as we can.

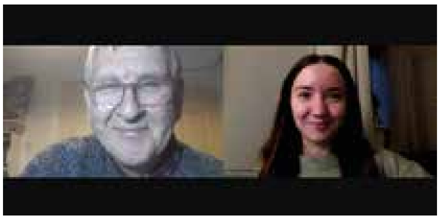
I used to play snooker with my mates, but now we meet for coffee, to chat and play cards. It's important to me that we keep getting together.

I still feel positive about life. My father made it to nearly 80. My brother made it to 83. I am already 88, so I feel lucky to have lived the life I have.

I am sad for Gail because she's been through a lot in life and is now caring for me. But the truth is that this is happening and we have to deal with it.

We're not looking ahead much further than enjoying the present moment as much as we can.

Bringing life to mentorship



A Society Ambassador who has dementia has been mentoring an apprentice through a pioneering new project.

Keith Oliver, a former headteacher, spent 18 months working with Rhian Shearing, an Involvement Assistant Apprentice at Alzheimer's Society.

Keith was keen to take on the mentor role, saying, 'This is a good way of using what skills, enthusiasm and knowledge I've got left for other people as well as myself.'

Listen and reflect

Building an open, trusting relationship, Rhian and Keith shared, listened and reflected together in regular sessions.

These covered areas ranging from work–life balance and how to have supportive conversations, to signposting for help with specific tasks.

Rhian says, 'It's been a really good opportunity for me to take some of the problems I'm having in my day-to-day and learn from Keith, as well as to challenge my own assumptions and perspectives.

'It will stay with me long term in my career. A lot of the learning that I've done with Keith has really changed how I approach things.'

Keith adds, 'She's gained a really deep knowledge of what life is like for me – I'm very confident that Rhian will have taken from that knowledge and that experience.'

Set to grow

Ray Cumpstey, whose wife has dementia, mentored a second apprentice, Basil Barron, in the same project. Ray and Keith won a Society award for their work to develop this approach, while Rhian and Basil both secured jobs to go onto.

And the project is set to grow, as Keith explains.

'The team have recruited three more mentors, and Ray and I are part of the process of helping to support and train them initially.

'I hope people reading this article will think, "Well, perhaps I could do that!"'

Could you use your first-hand experience of dementia to help shape our work? Find out more at alzheimers.org.uk/involvement

Murmuration: nine original songs

People affected by dementia in East and West Sussex have released a nine-track CD of their own original music.

Murmuration was written and performed by groups of people living with dementia and carers in Cooksbridge, near Lewes, and Burgess Hill, run by the charity Raise Your Voice. Musicians Emily Barden and Sam Glazer facilitated the creative process alongside Raise Your Voice's Jane Houghton. Royal Academy of Music students also took part and joined the groups to record the songs, which were arranged by Nancy Cooley at the charity.

Hazel Gaydon, Events Manager for Raise Your Voice, says, 'The public perception of people diagnosed with dementia is that everything is finished.

'But we've found musical creativity can trigger original words and tunes based on present and future thinking.

'For someone feeling increasingly closed in by dementia to suddenly understand that there is still a world outside is a moment of beautiful clarity.'

Raise Your Voice has been developed with Alzheimer's Society's support, and the Murmuration recording project was funded by Arts Council England.

Visit **raiseyourvoice.org.uk** to find out more, and find Murmuration on Spotify, Apple Music and Amazon Music.

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 3 March for the April/May issue (wording may be edited).

Caring for pets

How can you plan for your pet's care after you've been diagnosed with dementia?

Anyone who has had a pet understands how they become loved family members.

Pets are also good for us. They offer companionship, purpose and activity. They can help us stay connected to other people. These benefits are even more valuable if you have dementia.

Having dementia symptoms might make you worry about your pet's care. Planning ahead can give you peace of mind and help prevent later problems.

Routine and reminders

A routine makes it easier to do tasks such as feeding, walking and letting your pet in or out.

People find different kinds of reminders helpful. These could be notes or signs left where you'll see them at the right time, or reminders on your phone or another device.

Are there useful prompts for when you need to do something? For example, do you check your cat's food after your breakfast, or walk your dog after listening to the news?

Help from others

Act on any signs that you might need help with pet care. Perhaps you or someone else notices something you've missed. Maybe you feel more tired after walks or there's a change in your pet's behaviour or appearance.

Are there family members, friends or neighbours who could do specific tasks?

Blue Cross offers advice about pet sitters, walkers and care for a day or longer.

Planning ahead

The idea of not being able to care for your pet can be scary. Thinking ahead and getting help means they can continue to be safe and well.

The Cinnamon Trust can help to plan and find day-to-day, temporary or lifelong support.

Your tips

'As with all the challenges that have faced me since my Alzheimer's diagnosis, when I discovered I could only bring one of my two dogs with me to my new assisted living apartment, I used a "solution-focused" approach.

'This means asking: what is the problem, what might the solution look like, and what steps would I have to take to get from "Problem Island" to "Solution Island"?

'Although one of my dogs was very large, she had already been trained to be a Pets as Therapy dog, which I was taking into a local school.

'It made sense to keep her with me and re-home the smaller but more nervous dog. As she was homed with someone I know, I could still get to see her.

'I discussed all my decisions with my children, who helped by listening and advising when required, as well as pitching in with practical help.

'If it can be managed, having a pet to care for can be a real motivator.

'Having a dog gives me a reason to get up every day, helps me to establish and stick to a routine, and to have some exercise and fresh air every day, whatever the weather. Having a dog often encourages people to smile and say hello.

'Before dementia progresses to a stage where pets might not be cared for, put together a plan for what will happen to them. Doing this early on could bring peace of mind to all concerned.' **Sue Beeson, Worcestershire**

For advice and information from Blue Cross, see **bluecross.org.uk** or call **0300 790 9903**.

The Cinnamon Trust can help with day-to-day, temporary or lifelong support – visit **cinnamon.org.uk** or call **01736 757 900**.

People affected by dementia share ideas and advice on our Dementia Support Forum – visit **alzheimers.org.uk/ForumTogether**

Opinion:
Out in the open

Ellen Turner in Somerset, 68, says more openness about dementia can help break down stigma and pave the way for better support.

I noticed that I was forgetting things – what I'd gone upstairs for, leaving the gas hob on, plugging in an iron and walking off.

My mum had dementia and, to be honest, I felt I was walking the same steps that she had.

But my GP said I was far too young for dementia and, after testing my blood, she put me on supplements for low folic acid.

I went back when there was no change. Finally, I had a scan and tests, but I had to wait another year before I got my diagnosis.

When I was told it was vascular dementia, it was a shock but deep down, I also expected it.

Finding support

What I didn't expect was that things hadn't moved on since Mum's diagnosis.

My GP didn't signpost me anywhere. There was no 'OK, this is what you've got and this is the help you can get' type of advice.

I felt totally abandoned, unsure what to do next. I was winging it.

That was until I found support, including my dementia adviser Jo Robinson.

She came out to our house and sat with Malcolm, my husband, and me and went through anything, A–Z. She was brilliant and still is, always going above and beyond.

I started going to a support group every week. There are about 50 to 60 people there and I can't imagine life without them.

Campaigning spirit

Although I'd been involved with fundraising and written letters about dementia to magazines and papers, I hadn't done any campaign work.

But when I got a call from Alzheimer's Society to attend an event with the Department of Health and Social Care, I jumped at the chance.

It would be an opportunity to give my point of view as the government develops a new framework for dementia care.

As well as having dementia and experiencing it in my family, I used to be a nurse, so I have lots of perspectives.

Speaking out

There were about 30 people with lived experience of dementia at the event.

We talked about lots of different topics, starting with diagnosis. I voiced all the things that are important to me.

I spoke about how I believe GPs need to take a greater role in diagnosis and signposting people to help.

I talked about how society needs to be better educated on dementia, starting from school. About the massive loss of independence after diagnosis and about how many of us with dementia have other health issues going on – there's a bigger picture.

I also spoke about the need to care better for our carers.

I can't tell you how I felt at the end of the day. It meant so much to express myself and be listened to.

Everyone was supportive and I wasn't afraid to say anything.

I felt like I was speaking on behalf of Mum, for everyone in my support group and anyone without a voice.

Change is needed

When you compare the experience of getting a dementia diagnosis to a cancer diagnosis, it's poles apart.

Quite simply there's not enough being done to support people with dementia.

Things have to improve. Key to this is tackling the stigma around dementia and breaking down myths.

At the moment, people are frightened to get a diagnosis. There's also lots of discrimination towards people living with dementia.

When I was first diagnosed, I kept it quiet and was careful with who I eventually told.

People with dementia should be treated with respect like anyone else.

I feel motivated to keep speaking out.

Join us as a campaigner and help us challenge and change the issues faced by people living with dementia – visit **alzheimers.org.uk/campaign**

Volunteering is a privilege

Emily Wilson, in County Antrim, talks about her journey into volunteering and receiving an honour for her work.

I hate saying the word 'late' when I'm talking about my husband Jim, although he's no longer here.

He was diagnosed with dementia with Lewy bodies in 2014. It took 13 years to get to that point – it was a long and hard journey.

When I couldn't cope and needed advice, Alzheimer's Society were my go-to people.

I wanted to say thank you for the support I received and to raise awareness about dementia. I also didn't want anyone to go through what we had.

Volunteering was an obvious way I could give back.

After dabbling for a while, I officially became a Society volunteer in 2016, a few months after retiring from work as Jim's needs grew.

Mixed emotions

Since then, my volunteering has snowballed. I'll volunteer wherever I'm needed. I love it, it's my reason for life. Whatever you throw at me, from public speaking and fundraising, training to event organising, I will do it.

This is Jim's legacy, I'm honouring him. It's my way of trying to make sense of what happened to him and our family.

It triggers a range of emotions – comfort, joy, positivity and then there are days I could cry. When you see what people are experiencing, it brings back what we went through.

But if I can help somebody else by listening to them, that means everything. It's a privilege.

And, you know, sometimes you can have such fun.

I've got my whole family involved, including my grandchildren.

They really love to pitch in with fundraising and they've helped with bake sales, supermarket bag packs and an annual festive film event at our local cinema.

My youngest daughter ran a marathon for the Society and my son-in-law even did a skydive!

Highlights and recognition

Through my work with the Society, I got the opportunity to research young-onset dementia at Ulster University in 2019.

It wasn't easy. I had to drop out of the first year because my sister and Jim died within less than four weeks of each other.

But studying was also a huge achievement. I didn't pass my 11+ exams, so I'd gone through life battling feelings of failure.

I've presented at a dementia conference at Queen's University Belfast and published an article in an academic journal, so those feelings have long gone.

It's been quite a year. In summer 2025, shortly after graduation, I heard I was getting a British Empire Medal in recognition of my volunteering.

At first, I ignored the letter. I thought I'd been scammed. I only believed it when the King's Birthday Honours list was published.

Going to Hillsborough Castle to receive it was surreal, I just couldn't believe it had happened to me.

Not finished yet

I've always got something on volunteering-wise. I've just been involved in organising a gala at Stormont, Northern Ireland's government buildings, to raise awareness of young-onset dementia.

We're only here for a short time, so I am determined to keep going.

In particular, I want to encourage more people to volunteer – I always say you get more out of it than you put in it.

I was mentored by an amazing volunteer called Betty, whose husband was living with dementia. A big part of my role is to pass on what Betty taught me, and my experience and knowledge, to the next generation.

Volunteers learn from each other and we're here to support each other. The connections you make can blossom into wonderful friendships.

Find out about different volunteering opportunities at **alzheimers.org.uk/volunteer**

Safe space

Alongside a dedicated team of volunteers, Diane Harfitt in Cardiff runs a thriving and growing fundraising café.

In 2019, I returned from my role as a kindergarten teacher in Hong Kong to look after my parents.

Mam had dementia and, during the pandemic, her health rapidly declined. She was a social butterfly who loved chatting with her neighbours.

When we could go out for walks, we visited Rumney Hill Gardens, somewhere I'd visited as a child.

Here we found out about a volunteer-run garden project and café and immediately signed up to help.

Over time, I was asked to take over running the café.

It was a huge responsibility, so I wasn't completely sure it was the right time for me. But when Dad passed away, it gave both Mam and me a focus and a real sense of purpose.

Finding purpose

Mam was a great strength to me and, when she passed away in 2023, my mental health went into decline.

Talking with a friend Lynn, a volunteer at the café, helped me realise I needed a focus and purpose in life. So I re-opened the café with a new name – The Olive Tree.

Olive was Mam's name, so it was fitting to honour her and also celebrate the natural world and growth, hence the 'Tree'.

Before moving to Hong Kong I worked in a hotel, so running a café wasn't an entirely new experience.

It started small, but it's thriving and growing into a wonderful community space, with all profits going to Alzheimer's Society.

Peaceful place

The café is a peaceful haven, located at the entrance to Rumney Hill Gardens. It has a short pathway lined with colourful flowers and shrubs.

It's been described as 'grandma's front room' inside. It's small and quaint, full of pictures, books and vintage teapots that help customers reminisce about the past.

We have four tables inside and a further three outside in the warmer weather. There's also a bench, kindly donated by the council, inscribed with Mam's name.

It's a wonderful place for people to sit, relax and reflect. We're also dog friendly and always have plenty of treats to share!

Behind the café, we're fortunate to have a 'secret garden' with a memory tree. Anyone can come here to plant flowers, shrubs or trees in memory of their loved ones.

We have raised over £6,500 so far for Alzheimer's Society, selling drinks, cakes and snacks, local honey and crafts made by volunteers and supporters. We also hold summer craft fairs.

Helping others

I'm lucky to have a fantastic team of volunteers. They have all been affected by dementia in one way or another, and have experienced grief and loss.

We're excited about our plans for the future. We aim to open more days, develop the secret garden and plan more community fundraising activities.

At the start of this journey, my mental health was fragile and the responsibility was daunting. At times, I questioned whether I had the strength to continue.

Gradually, I realised that being around people helped me and, at the same time, I was helping them too! I am regaining my energy – I've completed the Memory Walk in Cardiff and I'm thinking about taking part in Trek26 too.

I love being at the café, it's a brilliant way to support others and raise awareness about dementia too.

It's great that people from both the local community and beyond come here to relax, have tea and cake and chat.

A customer recently told me, 'It's a safe space,' and that's really magic!

Get a free fundraising pack to help organise your own fundraising – visit **alzheimers.org.uk/fundraising-support** or call **0330 333 0804**.

Hearing and dementia

Can finding out more about how hearing problems and dementia are linked unlock new tests and treatments?

Researchers know there's a link between hearing problems and dementia, but we need to understand more about what this link means.

Chris Hardy is exploring the connection between them.

Based at University College London's Dementia Research Centre, he's researching a process he calls 'brain hearing'.

'We hear with our ears, but we also hear with our brains,' says Chris.

'On a daily basis, our brains work incredibly hard to focus on what one person is saying against a cacophony of background noise.'

Exciting possibilities

Chris is looking at whether testing how a person's brain processes what they hear could detect dementia before they develop other symptoms.

'My research has shown that people with different forms of dementia have problems with brain hearing, and we're now exploring if there might be a window of opportunity to test it.'

He hopes this will eventually complement existing tests, as well as help develop new therapies.

'This would allow us to identify people who might benefit from new dementia drugs.

'It might also inform the design of new smart hearing aids or brain hearing training that could really make a difference to people living with dementia.'

The kindest person

Something that drives Chris on in this pioneering work is his passion to make a difference.

'I chose to do my PhD in neurodegenerative disease because my grandmother sadly had Alzheimer's disease.

'She was the kindest person I have ever known, and I'd like to think she'd be proud of me now.'

Chris was the second researcher selected for the Carol Jennings Fellowship, named after the late dementia campaigner and Society Vice-President. He says working with people who have different forms of dementia is a daily inspiration.

'I think people who give up their time and their energy to take part in our research are incredibly brave and it's always a genuine honour to meet them and learn from and about them.

'But at the same time that can be quite emotionally challenging – particularly if it's a participant who I've known for a little while.'

Pride and gratitude

Chris is passionate about supporting the next generation of researchers and describes his working days as busy and varied.

He says it's an honour to be funded by the Society.

'The support goes beyond just the financial side of things. For instance, I have been assigned a team of volunteers with personal experience of dementia who I meet with on a regular basis to give updates on my progress.

'It's incredibly motivating to know that the funding to support this research has come from people who have given their all to fundraise for the Society while doing incredible things.'

Donate

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

Donate online or call 0330 333 0804.

Every sample matters

Researchers are looking for a wider range of people to help find which blood tests will transform how dementia is diagnosed.

'Don't underestimate the amount we still have to learn,' says Professor Liz Coulthard, who leads the READ-OUT trial at the Bristol Brain Centre, Southmead Hospital.

This UK-wide study is finding out which simple blood tests will make it easier for anyone to get an accurate diagnosis of dementia.

'Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are caused by really complex diseases,' says Liz, a consultant neurologist.

'So, each blood sample actually contributes a huge amount to learning how different people are affected.'

READ-OUT is especially keen to involve more people from Black and Asian communities, as well as from all kinds of socioeconomic backgrounds.

Professor Vanessa Raymont (pictured) is one of the trial's national leads. She underlines the impact of taking part.

'Both my parents died with dementia. I hope that the kind of experience they had will change quite drastically in the next few years.

'If we can show that these tests help us make a more accurate diagnosis, we should have a framework that we can roll out across the NHS.

'This is a chance for people to get involved with something that could actually change memory clinics very soon.'

Simple tests

READ-OUT is part of the multimillion-pound Blood Biomarker Challenge. It's finding out how blood tests could be used across the NHS to transform how people are diagnosed with dementia.

Vanessa, a consultant psychiatrist and Associate Professor at the University of Oxford, has worked in many memory clinics.

'They're not necessarily in places where you have access to scans or are able to do complex tests,' she says.

Vanessa says simple blood tests could be a 'gamechanger', but we need to know which tests work best for different people.

'We have to make sure this works for everybody in every clinic.'

READ-OUT involves over-45s who have a memory problem that's being investigated or monitored. They have blood tests, answer questions and share their medical records.

To include more people, Liz's team has reached out to Chinese, South Asian and African Caribbean groups in and around Bristol. They've also worked with local media.

'When we've advertised the study, we've had lots of people phoning in who want to take part,' she says.

'These are small steps to try and improve diversity but we hope that, added together, they will have an impact.'

Determined to help

Paul Cliffe, in Dorset, volunteered for READ-OUT because he knows the importance of an accurate diagnosis.

Paul, 64, has young-onset Alzheimer's disease. He says he always felt he was a 'prime candidate' because of his father's dementia.

'I can remember my father being like this and we all said, "Oh well, that's just me Dad, you know."'

He's determined to help improve other people's experiences of dementia.

'If I can contribute in some way and help someone else going through this, that's what I want to do.'

Paul has his sights set on research resulting in better treatments for everyone.

'The thought that, one day, there could be the "golden bullet" – that would be fantastic. It won't be in my time but I've got two boys, and perhaps it will be for them and others.

'I would encourage anyone thinking of taking part – don't delay, get involved!'

Take part in dementia research

Find out what studies are looking for people like you, whether or not you have dementia, email **joindementiaresearch@alzheimers.org.uk**

Confidence to cope

A monthly hub in Nottinghamshire provides a practical and supportive one-stop service for people affected by dementia. Heather Stephen finds out how this approach is growing.

Quick read

Bassetlaw's monthly dementia peer support hub brings a range of help and advice together in one place.

Set up two years ago by Alzheimer's Society in Nottinghamshire, it's hoped to expand to other parts of the county.

As well as a place to meet others affected by dementia, the hub gives people access to a range of local support.

Ella, whose husband Steve has dementia, says going to the hub gives her confidence to cope as things change.

'When someone in your family is diagnosed with dementia, you may not know what they need or who to talk to,' says Sharon Grocock.

This was why Sharon set up a monthly dementia peer support hub in Bassetlaw two years ago. She's one of two Alzheimer's Society community development coordinators in Nottinghamshire.

Originally a six-month pilot, the hub is growing strong with plans to expand.

Held at Kilton Golf Club, people with dementia and carers meet helpful contacts at the hub like social services, the police, fire service and social prescribers.

Importantly, they also meet people in similar situations.

One-stop service

Sharon set up similar hubs in a previous mental health role and saw how beneficial they could be.

She's thankful for the support of volunteer Sandra Jackson, who organises activities for people with dementia at the hub.

'People can be referred or drop in,' says Sharon, 'and the hub gives them a one-stop wraparound service where they feel safe, get the information they need and can chat to other carers.'

The hub has been such a hit that quarterly rural support hubs are now being run. She has also just been involved in the launch of a hub to address the needs of carers.

'Feedback has been amazing,' she says. 'And it is so rewarding when people tell us, "I wish I'd known about you sooner."'

Practical help

Tom Carter, Local Services Manager at the Society, says a key advantage of the hub is that people can find all the practical help and advice they need under one roof.

'Services don't just hand out leaflets and phone numbers, you can actually sign up to things like the Herbert Protocol with the police, which helps find missing people with dementia more quickly.

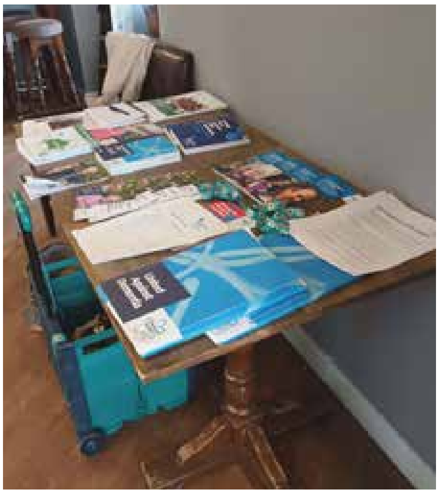
'Another example would be the chance to join fire service safety schemes, which keep people safe.'

He says there are usually six or seven services present at each hub.

'It helps people know what is out there and they can get practical help straightaway.

'Meeting people face to face is much better than being a name on an email and once people get that support they don't feel so alone.'

Tom says the hub has been so successful talks are taking place to roll it out to other areas of the county. Some may tailor them towards specific groups such as the African Caribbean community.



Find support near you at **alzheimers.org.uk/dementiadirectory** or call **0333 150 3456** for personalised advice.

Simpler and quicker

Nikki Warren-Metcalfe, care coordinator for Kingfisher GP practice in Retford, has referred patients to the hub since the start.

'When people are newly diagnosed, they feel lost and don't know what to do,' says Nikki.

'But if they come to the hub, it is a simpler and quicker way to see what services are out there.

'For instance, they might have to wait weeks to get on the waiting list to speak to a social worker from adult services, whereas they can just walk into the hub and speak to one there and then.'

Friendship and support

Ella Wild has been going to the hub for two years with her husband Steve, who has dementia.

The couple, from Shire Oaks, initially went for information and help with paperwork. But they are still going nearly every month for friendship and support.

'Everyone is so friendly and you can stay for as little or long as you like,' she says. 'We can do activities like making Christmas cards or cross stitch and it is good to meet people in the same situation.'

> **Meeting people face to face is much better than being a name on an email and once people get that support they don't feel so alone.**

Ella says a dementia awareness course run by the hub was helpful preparation for the years ahead.

The social benefits are great for both of them.

'Steve would sit and watch TV all day if he could, but coming to things like this gets him out of the house and talking to other people. I get even more out of it and have made so many friends.

'Getting a dementia diagnosis is frightening. But coming to the hub gives me confidence I will know what to do as things change and I can cope with it.'

Our 10 helpsheets summarise our most popular information, each covering a single topic about dementia. See **alzheimers.org.uk/PublicationsTogether** or call **0300 303 5933**.

Layers of love

Through the Filo Project, paid hosts open their homes for the day to groups of older people with dementia and other conditions. Heather Stephen reports on an approach that's flourishing.

Quick read

The Filo Project offers activity and friendship for groups of older people, including those with dementia, in hosts' own homes.

The groups are aimed at people with cognitive impairment or dementia, with paid, trained hosts.

Founded in 2014, the Filo Project now has 100 groups in South West England and East Lancashire.

It has helped over 5,000 people, benefiting family carers as well as the people attending groups.

'When we were looking for a name for our not-for-profit dementia care service, we came up with the Filo Project,' says Libby Price.

'Like the pastry there are so many layers to memory, and the Greek word "filo" means love and care, so it seemed to fit.'

Libby and co-founder Liz Dennis set up the Filo Project 11 years ago. The idea was sparked when Libby met Liz at the home-based dementia groups she ran.

Liz spent six months shadowing Libby's groups in Devon while working on her PhD about the benefits of music for people with dementia.

'The charity that ran these groups decided to stop them, but we could see the value and that's where the idea for the project came from,' says Libby.

'When you have dementia you may not have the same friendships. But coming to the groups, people can keep social connections and many say it feels like family.'

Flourish and thrive

The Filo Project is a community interest company – a kind of registered social enterprise. This means that any profits are reinvested to help more people.

From two groups the project has blossomed to 100 in Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Dorset and East Lancashire. Over 5,000 people have benefited from its unique approach.

The project's hosts are paid, trained and supported to welcome a group of people with cognitive impairment or dementia into their own homes up to three times a week.

Groups include up to five people and sessions last for six hours. They normally start with coffee or tea and a chat, followed by activities, games and lunch. Clients can be any age, but most are in their 80s or 90s. Hosts collect and return clients each day, which is particularly helpful in rural areas.

Janet Lyth began hosting in Cornwall a couple of years ago after looking for a rewarding use of her time in retirement.

'My daughter is an area co-ordinator for the Filo Project and it sounded like a win-win, as it helps people with dementia and their families.'

Janet says the advantage of home-based groups is the size.

'It means it's not too noisy and people can talk to each other.

'It is nice for people to share their stories. There is a lot of laughter and, when they are at the group, they are not someone with Alzheimer's – just someone who is there to have a nice time.'

Personal impact

Libby says the value of groups like this is underestimated. They keep people well for longer, reducing hospital admissions and having great personal impact.

Hannah Maule-Ffinch.

‘People write to us to say what a huge difference the groups have made. At a time when people feel very alone, they feel held. Symptoms alleviate and exhausted carers get a real chance to recharge.’

Host Merle Weiner worked in the care industry for 20 years before joining the Filo Project five years ago and found the approach refreshing.

‘What we do is very person-centred,’ she says. ‘I am an assessor for Filo and find out as much as we can about people to place them in the right group.

‘Sometimes I run five different activities at once. The most important thing is that people feel safe and comfortable. They are with friends and enjoy their day.’

The project recently launched free telephone support for carers of current clients. It’s also setting up a paid service that’s open to all, offering dementia wellbeing advice.

Libby and Liz are thinking about how they can offer more to people in the early stages of cognitive decline.

‘Some people may not be ready for dementia services,’ explains Libby, ‘but they still need social connection and early doors support is crucial.’

Lifesaver

For the past year, Michael Staunton has experienced the benefits of Filo’s approach first-hand. He describes the groups as a lifesaver.

‘My wife Avril goes twice a week and comes back from her Filo day exhilarated,’ says Michael, from Bridgwater in Somerset.

‘It is positive for her, and it is great for me because it gives me time to get on with all the admin and voluntary work, which I would struggle to do otherwise.

‘The hosts are the most lovely people and are so concerned for me and Avril.

‘They’ve really taught me what love is.’

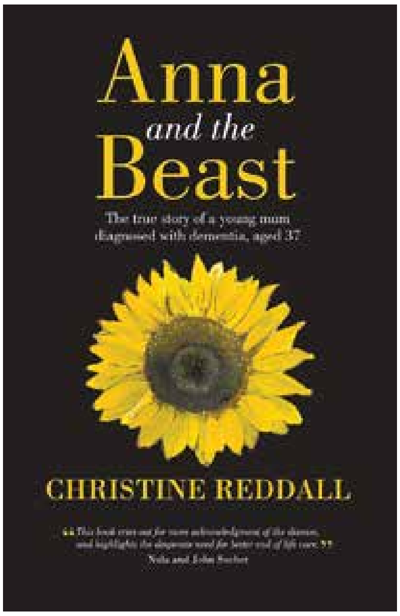
Steve Reeves

To find out more about the Filo Project, please see **thefiloproject.co.uk** or call **0333 939 8225**.

For our factsheets 462 Respite care in England, W462 (for Wales) and NI462 (for Northern Ireland), visit **alzheimers.org.uk/PublicationsTogether** or call **0300 303 5933**.

Book group:
Anna and the Beast

We read a moving book from a woman whose daughter was diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia at the age of 37.



Anna and the Beast, by Christine Reddall (Goldcrest, 2021), 330 pages, £10.99, ISBN: 9781913719043. Also available as an ebook.

For our What is frontotemporal dementia (FTD)? (404) factsheet, please see **alzheimers.org.uk/PublicationsTogether** or call **0300 303 5933**.

Christine Reddall's preface to Anna and the Beast begins, 'Well, here we go. Where to start? This is the book I have been meaning to write for quite a long time…'

As a reader, you don't need long to appreciate why she has so much to reflect on, why it's so difficult to share, and why it's so important that she does.

Anna, Christine's daughter, was 37 when they found out she had frontotemporal dementia (FTD). A nurse like her mother, Anna had two young sons. She died in 2017, aged 42.

Anna and the Beast is Christine's account of her daughter's diagnosis and its devastating impact. It also honours Anna's life, and the second part of the book includes tributes from many who knew her.

The right words

'I have just finished reading this book,' says Angela in Bristol. 'Well what can I say, it says everything I could have written myself but couldn't find the right words.'

'I read through Anna's life story in about two days,' says Amar in Hertfordshire. 'I was so touched, it was amazing. I couldn't put it down.'

Carly in Anglesey describes reading the book as 'an emotional and deeply moving experience'.

'Christine brings a tender humour to the darkest moments,' she says, 'creating light in an otherwise heavy narrative, while also fostering a profound sense of camaraderie, empathy and connection to her journey with dementia.'

Resonant story

FTD is a less common type of dementia that's mostly diagnosed in people under 65. It has also been called frontal lobe dementia or Pick's disease.

People with FTD often do not have memory problems until later on. Anna had behavioural variant FTD, where the first symptoms include changes in personality and behaviour.

Although all types of dementia can affect different people in various ways, similarities between the book and Amar's experiences of her husband's FTD stopped her in her tracks.

'Things like turning the plugs off,' she says. 'The blender can be going, and he turns the plug off. The grass is being cut and the extension is plugged into the kitchen, and he turns it off. There was so much to identify with.

'And the things they had to go through to get it diagnosed!'

Not alone

Carly agrees, 'The parallels to my own experience with my mother's Pick's disease made the story particularly relatable, offering a sense of comfort and reassurance that I was not alone.'

Angela says, 'I finally found a book that made me feel that I'm not going mad.

'It resonated so much with the pain and frustration in getting support and services for my partner, due to the nature of this type of dementia.

'It is so misunderstood, especially in people a lot younger, and the way it presents can delay in getting an accurate diagnosis.'

Insightful and helpful

'The book is written clearly and is highly digestible,' says Carly, 'exploring themes of anticipatory grief with honesty and depth.

'Christine's approach is unapologetically raw, guiding the reader through the stages of grief with an honesty that is both heavy and authentic.

'The tribute page to Anna was especially touching, offering a personal insight into who she was as a person.'

Amar says, 'It was hard for me to read other people's comments – the friends, the doctor, everyone. And my heart, I really felt for Christine.

'My mum died when I was 25 and I remember my dad sitting myself and my sisters down after the funeral to say, "Look, this is a rite of passage. This is normal, to send your parents off."

'But it's so hard for parents to send their kids off – that resonated throughout the whole book for me. As a parent, you should not have to bury your children. Of course it happens, but it's not right.'

Angela was impressed by how much helpful information was threaded throughout.

'The book contains so much information and resources,' she says, 'and it is very clearly laid out, with not too much information all together but laid out so you can understand what's being written.'

Reread and recommend

Carly says, 'I would wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone navigating the journey of dementia, whether as a family member or a loved one.

'As a therapist, I would also suggest it to clients who are on a caregiver journey, as it provides understanding, validation and emotional resonance.

'What stands out most is Christine's emotional honesty, her experiences are palpable, making the book powerful, relatable and profoundly human.

'Anna and the Beast is a heartfelt and moving account that offers connection, insight and solace for anyone affected by dementia.'

'I will definitely read the book again,' says Angela. 'I have already recommended this book to other people involved in supporting people with FTD, and they have already started reading it.'

Amar notes that people at different points of their journey with dementia could find some bits harder to read – particularly about the end of Anna's life and the tributes from friends and family.

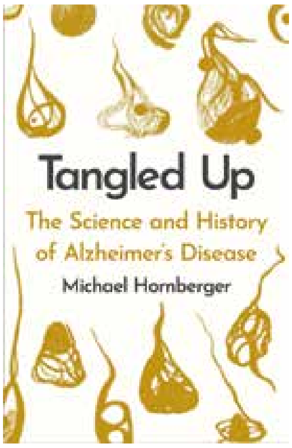
'I don't really want to see what's happening much further down the road. I think that was why I struggled with the second half of it,' she says. 'I had to take a few deep breaths a few times and put it down and come back to it.

'Maybe earlier on I wouldn't have wanted to read it, but I'm glad I did now.'

Amar intends to offer her copy to her adult children and a couple of friends.

'I'll show it to them and see if they want to read it. Although my name's going to go on the inside, so it makes its way back to me!'

Next time



For our next book group, we invite you to read Tangled Up, by Michael Hornberger (Canbury, 2025), 252 pages, £22.00, ISBN: 9781914487422. Also available as an ebook.

Tell us what you think of this 'whistle-stop tour' of Alzheimer's – written by a neuroscientist – from its origins and diagnosis to reducing risk.

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

Book giveaway

We have 10 copies of Tangled Up to give away – email **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2 by 16 February quoting 'Tangled' for a chance to win (see page 39 for terms and conditions).

Nighttimes and mornings

People affected by dementia try out gadgets designed to help sleeping and waking.

When you're living with dementia, you may find that your sleep is affected. This can leave you – and people you live with – feeling less awake during the day.

Finding ways to wind down before bed, stay safe during the night and feel refreshed in the morning are important.

Some devices are designed to help with these times. We took a selection to a group of people affected by dementia in Hereford to get their opinions.

Sensor lights

Motion sensor lights turn on automatically when they detect movement in the dark. Group members agreed these are important in helping to prevent trips and falls.

'I always take our rechargeable motion sensor lights away with us because they're good for unfamiliar spaces,' said Brenda.

Sue added, 'We even have a motion sensor light that attaches to our toilet bowl.'

The group looked at the Plug-in sensor light. As well as coming on when it detects motion, this light can also be removed and used as a torch.

Everyone agreed that it's well made, easy to set up and good value.

'The torch is also really easy to get out,' said Sue.

'The only improvement I could see is maybe the button to turn the torch could be another colour and bigger, so it's more obvious,' added Mike.

The 'Get up in the night' sensor light is about 25 cm (10 inches) long and designed for places such as stairs and skirting boards.

'And maybe for cupboards too,' said Brenda. 'You could even use them in an aesthetic way to light up features in your house.'

This light was very popular with the group because of its shape and versatility. The current model uses batteries, but the group looked at a new rechargeable model, which will be available in 2026.

Mike said, 'I like them a lot and could see us buying lots of these.'

Drifting off

The Soothing sounds night light is meant to sit by your bed. It has 20 sounds designed to help you drift off to sleep, including nature sounds, classical music and white noise.

Group members liked some of these, like the restful rainforest sounds.

However, they thought sounds of running water and a crackling fire might trigger panic in some people. The white noises didn't go down well either.

'We're not babies,' said Brenda.

The group liked that the light is portable and easy to use – especially important when you're sleepy. They wondered if it could be a little bigger though.

'It could get lost easily and kicked under a bed,' said Sarah, a dementia adviser.

Chris commented, 'I wouldn't be able to hear it without my hearing aids – but there again, I tend to go straight to sleep anyway.'

Waking up

Group members chatted about what they currently use to wake up in the mornings. Brenda and Chris have specially designed clocks, while others use their phones.

Despite already having ways that work for them, they were all positive about the Wake & shake alarm clock.

You can personalise the light and volume of this clock easily, but it also has a vibrating sensor to place under your pillow. This is useful if you are deaf or have hearing loss, or simply need something extra to wake you.

'It might be a good idea to place the sensor under your sheet, rather than your pillow,' said Brenda.

'We have a sensor pad for our fire alarm and this is what our local fire service recommended we do. That's because a sheet is fitted and less likely to move.'

Win see page 39

Getting up

A former GP designed the Bide fall prevention device to be placed beside a person's bed.

When this detects that they're getting out of bed, it lights up and plays a reassuring message recorded by someone they know. This reminds them to take care as they get up and move around.

The group got a demonstration of how to record messages and use Bide. As with most assistive devices, how useful it is will depend on the person involved.

'For example,' said Sue, 'it could be great for someone who's living alone and gets disorientated in the mornings.'

For some people, Mike noted, 'It could also cause confusion if someone hears a familiar voice on a recording and thinks they're there.'

Group members agreed that it's important to find the right place for the device, so it's not repeatedly set off if someone's moving in bed but not actually getting up.

'It's expensive,' said Mike. 'But if it could prevent a nasty fall, it's obviously priceless.'

> **“It could be great for someone who's living alone and gets disorientated in the mornings.”**

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

- Plug-in sensor light – £14.99.
- 'Get up in the night' sensor light (battery-powered or new rechargeable version) – £16.99.
- Soothing sounds night light – £33.99.
- Wake & shake alarm clock – £59.99 (or £49.99 with VAT relief – see below).
- Bide fall prevention device – £199.99 (or £166.66 with VAT relief – see below).

You can buy the Wake and shake alarm clock and Bide fall prevention device VAT free if they're 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 Making your home dementia friendly (819) booklet, see **alzheimers.org.uk/PublicationsTogether** or call **0300 303 5933**.

Share the load

Since her dad's dementia diagnosis, Nupur, in London, says there have been challenges but also new perspectives and hope. She talks to Antonia Kanczula about drawing on her experiences.

Although she witnessed her grandfather living with Alzheimer's disease during her teens, Nupur admits she was 'naive' about the huge impact of dementia.

'I'd describe life since Dad's diagnosis in 2024 as nothing short of a steep learning curve.'

It's hard to say when her dad Bulu, a retired radiology consultant, first showed dementia symptoms.

But Nupur was aware that both he and her mum Protima, now both in their 80s, had aged noticeably during the Covid pandemic.

'I live in London and, during my recent visits to Nottinghamshire to see my parents, I noticed he was getting forgetful.

'I was having to repeat things again and again, but his hearing wasn't great, so I wasn't sure if it was down to this.

'I was also worried about his spatial awareness when he was driving.

'When he was driving me, I was always on edge. At the supermarket I'd be saying, "Let's find the widest space to park!"'

After voicing her concerns with her mum, a former GP, Nupur encouraged him to see his doctor.

'And that's when our journey started,' she continues.

'After a second appointment, he

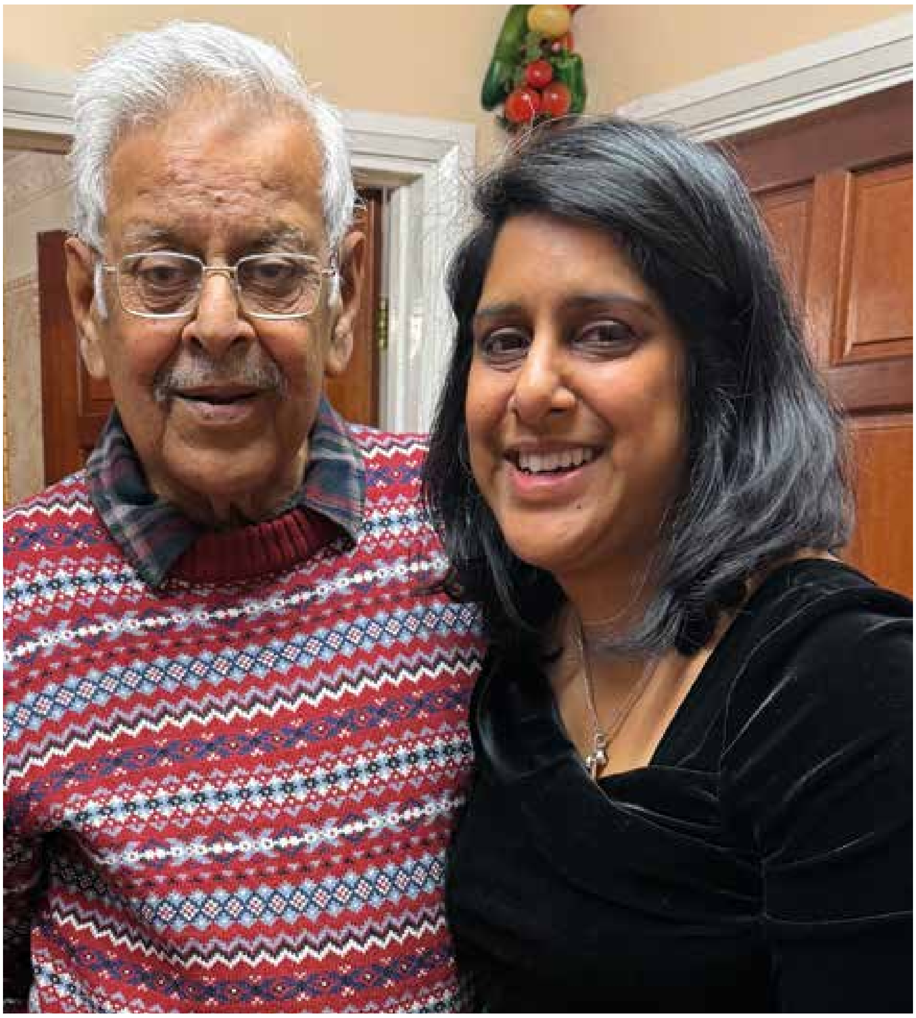
Quick read

Nupur, in London, has had a steep learning curve since her dad Bulu was diagnosed with vascular dementia in 2024.

Nupur's parents live in Nottinghamshire and she visits regularly, drawing on her accountancy training to help with financial and legal matters.

As an only child, she has felt immense pressure and is navigating changes in her own identity.

But she has found approaches that work for her and wants to use her experiences to educate people.



> **I think Dad medically understood his diagnosis, but then he'd forget and be insistent that there was nothing wrong with him and he was totally OK.**

was referred onto a local memory clinic and from there for scans.'

Bulu's scan showed multiple bleeds on his brain and he received a diagnosis of vascular dementia in November 2024.

Nupur recalls it being a shock but tinged with relief for her and her mum.

They also felt a 'sense of luck' that they'd been able to get a relatively quick diagnosis.

'I think Dad medically understood his diagnosis, but then he'd forget and be insistent that there was nothing wrong with him and he was totally OK.'

Role models

Nupur describes her parents as energetic, dedicated and hard working.

'Dad came to UK from India in 1966 and Mum in 1972, then they married in 1975. I'm their only child.

'They both had a tough time initially coming over and faced lots of prejudice and barriers while they were trying to establish their medical careers.

'But Dad was always strong-willed and he enjoyed socialising and meeting others. Mum was quieter and fully focused on becoming a GP, eventually running a practice by herself.'

Nupur says they always wanted the best for her and encouraged her independence. She also embraced their passion for travel.

'When I was younger, we went to the US, Canada, India, the Far East and around Europe, so I was very blessed.'

'Mum had hopes and dreams of more travel after she retired in 2015. So there is some frustration that she's not been able to do this. As well as looking after Dad, she has health concerns of her own.'

In fact, it was during a family trip to India shortly after Bulu's diagnosis that Nupur says she had a 'stark realisation' about his dementia.

'He'd always been so strong and physically fit, but Dad was disorientated and so vulnerable during the trip.

'He just kept asking me over and over again where we were, what we're doing. The heat also really affected him and he became dehydrated and weak.'

Practical approach

Back in the UK, Nupur, who describes herself 'incredibly practical', was focused on getting her mum and dad's financial and legal affairs in order.

Having trained as an accountant, Nupur assumed this was something she could confidently manage.

Although they'd not talked openly about money as a family, her parents had previously set up wills and powers of attorney.

But things didn't pan out as smoothly as Nupur anticipated.

'One of the first obstacles was removing Mum and Dad from each other's power of attorney, to have me registered.'

Then Nupur had a year-long battle contacting banks and utility companies to be able to manage her dad's finances.

In turn, this has triggered unexpected emotions.

'It's tricky trying to support Dad's independence but also being mindful of his dementia.

'I give him a small amount of cash, but he has a habit of mislaying it. This has led to him feeling frustrated.'

Her other focus has been streamlining the 'mountains' of paperwork that her dad has accumulated over the decades.

'For years I'd asked him to tackle the piles that have built up in a spare room and the garage.

'This is something I'm now doing and it's such a mammoth task.

'You name it, he kept it, from bills and bank statements going back years to flyers and magazines, including the free ones you get in supermarkets.'

Juggling act

Finding what dementia care works best for Bulu has also been a learning process.

'I think that is something lots of families affected by dementia will be familiar with. Because care is not a one-rule-fits-everybody situation.'

Alongside support from their local community hospital, Nupur says advice from Alzheimer's Society has been invaluable.

'Our dementia adviser Rachel Briggs is absolutely a tour de force, particularly in terms of explaining what benefits my parents are eligible for.'

The family have support at home from a carer, Kirsty, who Bulu gets on well with.

Nupur says that as she and her mum have developed a routine around Bulu's dementia, they have opened up to other people.

Support from her parents' community and friends has been heart-warming and unexpected at times, she explains.

'My dad's car was his pride and joy and, when he could no longer drive it, it was sat on the drive like a permanent reminder of his loss.

'But an ex-colleague of my dad's, who's recently retired, got it fixed and now takes Mum and Dad out in it regularly.

'It's just brilliant that it's gone to somebody Dad knows and they can still enjoy it.

'Having some wider support like this has been invaluable as I don't have siblings or any other family to share the load with.'

Support network

Nupur has found ways to encourage her mum to rest and recuperate from her caring responsibilities.

'Obviously, a person with dementia needs lots of help, but carers get forgotten. They are working 24/7 in a very physically and mentally tiring, largely thankless position.'

After dealing with strong feelings of overwhelm and a loss of identity, Nupur says she's also 'turned a corner' with her own personal wellbeing too.

'In the space of two years, I felt like I'd lost my identity as a highly qualified professional and become a full-time project manager for my parents.'

Counselling has helped her process what's she been through.

'My counsellor helped me put my situation into perspective and put some strategies into place.

'For example, when I come back to London, I try and do some nice things for myself.

'And I'm very lucky that my husband is supportive. Having a strong support network is key.'

Educating others

Nupur, who retrained as a financial coach, also wants to channel her experiences into helping others.

She's passionate about encouraging open conversations about dementia. She'd also like to use her finance skills to educate people about topics such as wills, powers of attorney and inheritance tax.

'I want to use my finance background to guide others on how they can start conversations about finances and about the type of care they want and how they want to be cared for when they're older.

'As a society we need to get better at having these open conversations, especially with people living longer. It's never too early to start talking.'

Always hope

Throughout the range of emotions Nupur's experienced since her dad's diagnosis, there's a thread of hope.

'It is so sad seeing him getting confused, being forgetful and lost.

'But he's at home, still in familiar surroundings and generally is in good humour and is happy.

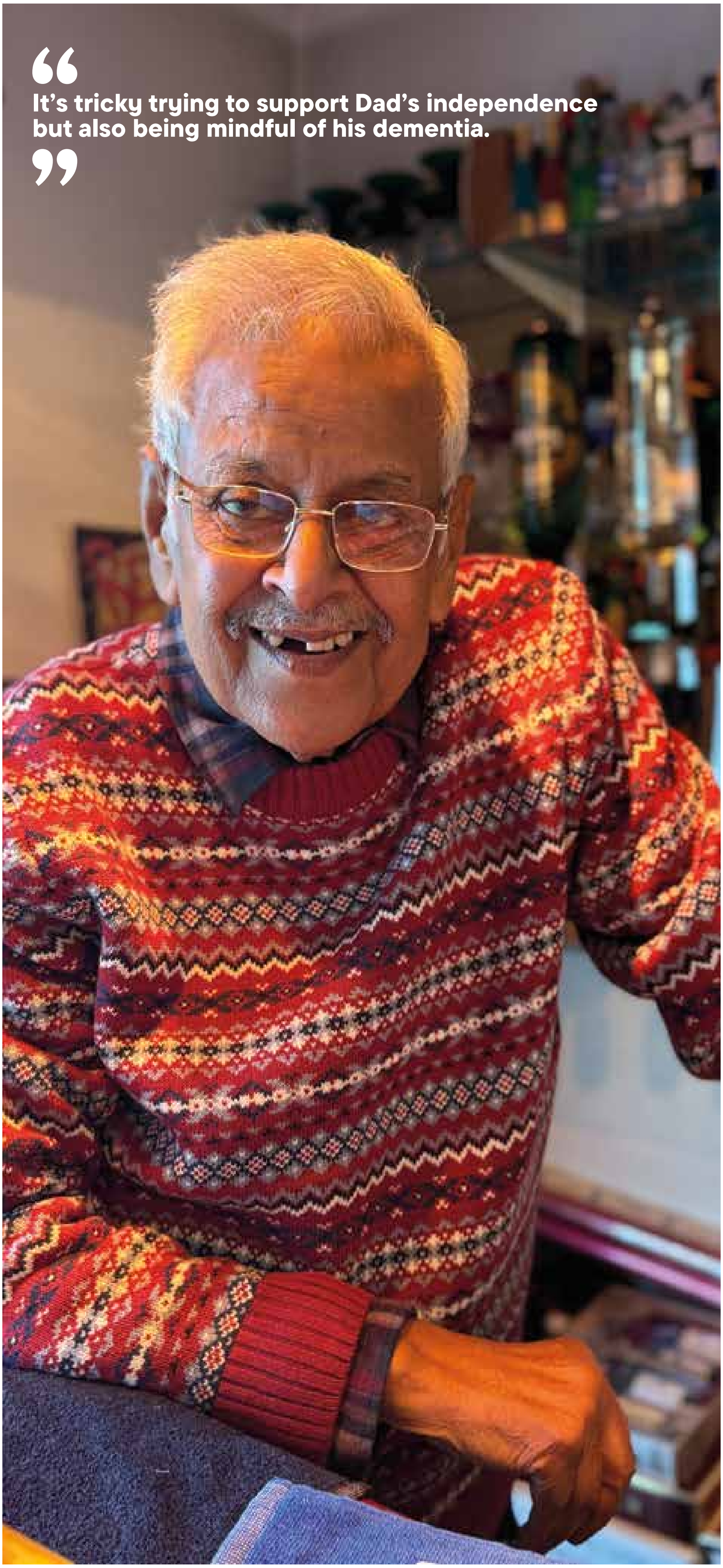
'We are very fortunate that Dad, who used to be quite hot-headed, is mostly a very gentle person now.'

Alongside her practical caring responsibilities, and tackling those mounds of paperwork, she makes sure she spends 'fulfilling' quality time with her parents.

It's hard to carve out this time but she encourages others in her situation to make it a priority.

'I turn 50 in a few months, and although I feel like I'm not in a place I expected to be at this age, I also feel lucky.

'I'm lucky that my parents are still around and I can still enjoy time with them.'



> **It's tricky trying to support Dad's independence but also being mindful of his dementia.**

Call our Dementia Support Line on **0333 150 3456** for personalised advice. To speak in Welsh, call **03300 947 400**.

To talk in other languages, call **0333 150 3456**, say the English word for your language and end the call. An interpreter will then call you back.

You can contact our dementia advisers using British Sign Language through SignVideo – see **alzheimers.org.uk/accessible-options**

If you have a textphone or an adapted computer, you can use Relay UK to call our English-speaking support line on **18001 0333 150 3456**.

For our booklet Planning ahead (1510) see **alzheimers.org.uk/PublicationsTogether** or call **0300 303 5933**.

‘My aunt has dementia and her care home staff keep asking her not to smoke cigarettes in her room. What can we do to help support her?’

Smoking in a care home

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Work with the care home to support your aunt with smoking restrictions.

The aim should be to respect her choices while ensuring her and other people’s safety.

Law and policies

There are good reasons to restrict indoor smoking. The care home needs to protect people from passive smoking and fire risks.

But the care home is also your aunt’s home, and she should be able to continue to smoke if she wants to. Because of this, care homes are partially exempt from indoor smoking bans.

Care homes do not have to provide areas where residents may smoke, but they can if they choose. This might be a person’s bedroom or a dedicated, ventilated smoking room.

Of course, your aunt’s dementia means it may be difficult for her to remember and follow the rules.

Talk to the care home

Start a conversation with care home staff. Helpful questions to ask them include:

- What is the care home’s smoking policy?
- Where are the designated smoking areas? A person’s bedroom, a specific smoking room, an outdoor smoking area or shelter, or somewhere else?
- How do they support residents who struggle to follow the rules?

Agree an approach with care home staff as a part of your aunt’s care plan. Review this with them so that it adapts as her needs change.

Involve your aunt in decisions wherever that is possible and try to be positive about it with her. Focus on safety, comfort and her having places where she can smoke.

Times and cues

Having a routine for when your aunt has a cigarette could help her keep it to places where smoking is OK. For example, would she usually smoke after a meal or while spending time in the garden?

Are there visual cues that will help her to recall where she can smoke? This could be a sign near her chair, or something else where she’s likely to see it at the right moment.

When you, staff or other visitors need to remind her, use gentle language and a calm tone.

If there are changes to where or when she smokes, try to make these gradual to help avoid distress.

Reducing risks

If there are concerns about safety, there may be ways to reduce risk.

Could she use a fire-safe ashtray instead of an ordinary one, and a lighter instead of matches?

Would it help to have specific times when your aunt can smoke with someone there with her?

Could staff hold onto her cigarettes and lighters? Then they could give them to her at agreed times and in a place where she can smoke.

If smoking becomes too much of a risk, ask your GP about alternatives. Nicotine patches or lozenges can ease cravings.

She may also need supervision with e-cigarettes, as these still carry fire and safety risks if misused.

Our Supporting a person with dementia in a care home (691) booklet includes advice on helping with the person’s care and speaking up in their interest – visit **alzheimers.org.uk/PublicationsTogether** or call **0300 303 5933**.

Readers share advice about helping a relative or friend with dementia to get dressed and undressed.

Help with dressing

'Keep it simple and ideally offer a very limited choice of what to wear.

'Laying out her clothes sequentially on the bed and helping her to get dressed gives her reassurance and I can ensure that she is wearing clean and appropriate clothes.

'When a recommendation of what to wear is not to her liking, I can suggest an alternative or I can use persuasion, for example when she wants to wear a light coat on a winter's day.' **Francisco**

'When I'm undressing my wife, I keep reminding her that we've been married for nearly 40 years and I love her very much.

'I show her what we're going to put on. Most of the time, this does the trick and she'll let me do what I need to do.

'But sometimes she'll just say "no". So I just back off just for a minute or two, then try again, which works very well.' **Gren**

'If they like a particular item, just buy loads of them or similar in the same colour, even if you have to get them off eBay or Vinted.' **Helen Price**

'Keep their clothes simple but in their favourite colours and styles.

'Primark are now selling adaptive sports-type clothing for those with special needs. That may be the next option.' **Alisongs**

'I feel it is important to try and keep someone's identity and independence for as long as you can. Clothing is part of someone's identity.

'Dad always liked to look smart – jeans and a shirt, usually white. He still likes to wear those things.

'Knowing your person is a huge asset in your caring toolkit.' **Angel55**

'With my husband, routine is most important. When we visited my daughter, although he commented on being in the wrong place, I kept the routine more or less the same and it worked very well.

'We recently moved house and he needed more help, but he has got used to the routine and is able to dress himself again if things are kept simple.' **Sue741215**

'We switched to elasticated waist trousers, but my husband doesn't like jogging bottoms, preferring "proper" trousers, chino-style. It was difficult to find them fully elasticated but, eventually I found them from Cotton Traders and Sainsbury's online.' **Scoutkim**

'My other half can put his clothes on but has trouble getting them on in the right order and sometimes puts things on back to front.

'The best thing is to get him to choose what he wants to wear and then hand him the clothes in the right order, prompting him to put them on the right way round.' **canary**

'To make it easier for me to help my wife, I only select pull-over tops and elastic waist pants. No need to fumble with buttons, snaps or zippers. She has Skechers "slip-in" shoes, which have a stiff heel.

'When dressing her, I sit her on the edge of the bed.

'Since I use her transport chair to move her between the living room and bedroom, at the end of the day I leave her sitting in the chair for the most part when undressing her.' **Kbp74520**

'My mother-in-law only wants to wear "soft" clothes, so we got rid of all the pairs of jeans she had, as well as more formal (but stiffer) attire. Now she lives in leggings, jogging bottoms, cotton tops and fleeces.' **MillaZ**

Next time

Do you have any advice on planning to travel with a relative or friend who has dementia? Email **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2 by 3 March.

Noticeboard

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

Letters

Tameside disco

I saw last issue's article about people enjoying discos. We'd love to get a shout out for our monthly Dementia Friendly Social Disco in Tameside.

As a former carer for my father and current dementia activist and campaigner, I now organise social music groups for people affected by dementia and raise awareness of the power of music.

People living with dementia can come together with family and friends for a few hours and enjoy music that has a personal connection to them. They choose the music, I prepare the playlist and we all dance, sing and eat cake!

It's two hours of fun, laughter and enjoyment, where people can 'get on down', 'cut a rug', 'shake a leg' or just gently sway or tap their feet to the music.

For more information contact me on 07855 636596.

Marion Coleman

Yeovil stars

I'm sending a photo of Yeovil Memory Café, celebrating Elf Day and congratulating volunteers Viv Butcher for another fabulous fundraising cake day, raising so far £1,900 for the Society. Viv has now raised over £20,000 with her cakes and crafts!

Also congratulating volunteers Jan Speak for her 15-year anniversary and Rita Brown for her 10-year anniversary as volunteers with Yeovil Memory Café, a massive thank you!

We were joined today by Year 4 children singing carols from Birchfield school, Yeovil, led by their wonderful teacher also pictured here, Mr Garbon.

Also pictured is Rex Mallinson winner of the best dressed Elf and regular member of the café.

The volunteers I have are amazing and I wanted to thank them.

Julie Woan, Dementia Adviser

LIFT: music through gestures

An innovative new app that creates music from a person's gestures is supporting Alzheimer's Society at the same time.

There are two versions of the LIFT app, which was designed for people with cognitive or physical impairments. LIFT Music is for organisations and professionals, while LIFT at Home is for carers and families.

With the app running on your device, movements you make in front of it create music in real time. It was developed with music therapists and piloted in groups for people with dementia, as well as in brain injury support groups and schools.

LIFT is available from the Apple App Store for iPads and iPhones, and an Android version is expected soon. There's a free month's trial before the £27 monthly subscription, £2 of which is being donated to the Society.

Stuart Grimshaw, who founded the app's developer Headsoup, says, 'LIFT reflects the user's movements, conducting sound. It's simple, joyful and genuinely transformative for people who are too often excluded from creative expression.'

Search 'LIFT at Home' on Apple's App Store to try the app.

Share

Share your views, feedback and news – please email **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2. We can consider contributions received by 3 March for the April/May issue (wording may be edited).

Jacket potato: a quick and filling option

Recipes in recent issues got Toto2, on Dementia Support Forum, thinking about easy, economical and healthy meal ideas for carers.

She says, 'I believe fresh food is not only good for us but a lot cheaper than processed food.

'A jacket potato, with some grated cheese and M&S crispy bacon mixed together with a side salad, was always a favourite quick meal. With fibre from the potato and fresh salad, it was super quick and filling.

'Although not always a favourite choice for cooking, the microwave did have its uses when Mum was in need of something quick and simple. Whatever I could come up with quickly and easily was nibbled and pushed around the plate.

'But I can honestly say the jacket potato was always eaten along with the veg or salad, and that was a win to me!'

Your food tips

Do you have any tips for other carers about keeping meals healthy and interesting, while still being simple and inexpensive? Email them to **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2.

Inspired art

An artist in Renfrewshire, Scotland has been drawing on experiences of her father's dementia in her latest work.

Lisa Derrick painted a series of five pictures titled 'Through light and shadow', inspired by their daily walks together.

'My dad was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2019,' says Lisa. 'But in December 2024, after years of watching my mum struggle as his full-time carer, I took six months' unpaid leave from my teaching job and went to live with them in England.

'It was an intense and emotional time – a mix of sadness, exhaustion, laughter and love. I spent my days with Dad doing puzzles, drawing, singing, dancing or simply sitting beside him. And every day, without fail, we went out for a walk.

'Here I witnessed how nature could soothe him – how a cold breeze or birdsong could lift the fog, even for a moment. And as the gorse bloomed it became our repeated topic of conversation. That bright yellow would bring a smile to both our faces.'

Lisa returned home – and to her studio – following the 'heart-wrenching' realisation that her dad needed to move into residential care.

She is kindly donating 15% from sales of her 'Through light and shadow' paintings to the Society – find out more at **lisaderrick.co.uk**

Coming up

Find out what's happening in the next issue of Dementia together magazine, and ways to get involved.

Freeimages.com/michel01

As winter fades and spring edges closer, we're looking ahead with optimism to April/May's Dementia together – another issue packed with helpful ideas, experiences and advice.

In the spirit of spring renewal, we're heading to the Midlands to spend time with a birdwatching group for people affected by dementia.

We'll be finding out more about the Dementia Run Club too – a group of 10 runners with personal and professional connections to dementia.

Researchers studying better ways to support carers – including those caring from a distance – will also be sharing how they involve people.

We'd love to hear your ideas!

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

For our next **book group**, we're reading Tangled Up, written by neuroscientist Michael Hornberger.

It's a readable guide to what happens in the brain to cause Alzheimer's and why it happens, and about the history and future of research. Would you like to contribute? See page 27 for details and for your chance to win a copy.

We'd love to feature more of your **recipe ideas** too. Do you have a tasty dish that brings back treasured memories that you'd like to share?

Do you have dementia?

If you're living with dementia, has one of our articles inspired you to share your own experiences?

- Have you got a new-found passion or tried something completely new since diagnosis, like John on page 13?
- Maybe, like Phil on page 14, you want to reflect on your experiences before you had symptoms, while getting diagnosed and after diagnosis?
- Or perhaps you have a viewpoint on dementia that you want to air, like Ellen on page 17?

Or maybe after reading about Chris's love of music on pages 8–11, you'd like to tell us about your enduring passion?

Are you a carer?

If you support a partner, friend or relative who has dementia, you can contribute to the magazine in lots of ways.

We're looking for your travel planning advice for other carers before 3 March:

- Do you have any advice on planning a journey or holiday with a person who has dementia?

Or has your experience of caring inspired you to start fundraising for Alzheimer's Society, like Diane on page 19?

Perhaps Nupur's interview, on pages 30–33, resonated with you and you'd like to share your experiences of financial planning and decluttering?

What else?

What do you think we're getting right with Dementia together magazine? What could we do better? What are we missing out on covering?

Your feedback helps us to make the magazine better for everyone – email **magazine@alzheimers.org.uk** or write to the address on page 2 to share your ideas and comments.

Competitions

Bide fall prevention device

We have a Bide fall prevention device (see pages 28–29) for one lucky winner drawn from correct entries.

Q: How does the Bide help to prevent falls?

A. The bedside device plays a message reminding you to take care as you get up and move around.

B. You hold it with both hands out in front of you and it keeps your step steady and sure.

C. You place a device under each foot and they take control of your movements.

Forget-me-not seed pack

We have an eco-friendly Forget-me-not flower seed pack for five winners drawn from correct entries.

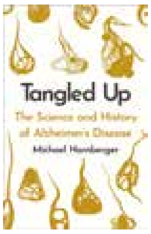
Q: What makes these forget-me-not seed packs more eco-friendly than many other seed packs?

A. When forget-me-nots grow from the pack's seeds, they turn into wind turbines.

B. The packs use a minimal amount of packaging, which is made from recyclable tomato fibre.

C. Because you're outdoors sowing the seeds from May to September, you need less power for electric fans.

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



Book giveaway

See page 27 for a chance to win a copy of Tangled Up by Michael Hornberger.

December/January winners and answers

Dunker biscuits

S McNeill in Cheshire, C Ridler in Norfolk, S Wiles in Kent and R Harrison in South Yorkshire each won a selection of three packs of dunker biscuits. Answer: The false statement was, 'British prime ministers aren't allowed to dunk their biscuits in tea or coffee, even in private.'

Memory calendar

K Hoyle in Gloucestershire, A Bondoc in Northamptonshire and S Weir in Flintshire each won a Memory calendar 2026. Answer: The calendar currently used in most parts of the world for non-religious purposes is the Gregorian calendar.

Book giveaway

C Nicholson in South Yorkshire, R Gill in Northamptonshire, C Rawlinson in Lancashire, P Armson in Berkshire, J Jones in Staffordshire and L Hutchinson in Cumbria each won a copy of Anna and the Beast, by Christine Reddall.

Anagramword

Across: Doughnuts, chocolate, sausage rolls, cheddar, croissant, biscuits, blueberry.

Down: Chicken curry, spotted dick, brownies, full English, sandwich, spaghetti, ice cream, roast beef.

Terms and conditions: 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.

Alzheimer's Society

Your Will has the power to make breakthroughs

Do something powerful by leaving a gift in your Will and help beat dementia

Dementia is overwhelming and heartbreaking - but it's not inevitable. Your Will has the power to help beat it.

We're the only charity tackling dementia from every angle by providing care for those who need it now, campaigning for dementia to be the priority it should be, and funding groundbreaking research led by scientists like Dr Ryan West.

This is only possible thanks to the kindness of individuals choosing to include gifts in their Wills, which together, fund a third of all this work.

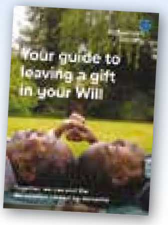
We're determined to beat dementia, and with your support, that future can become a reality.

Your Will is more than a document; it reflects what matters to you and the future you want for your loved ones and generations to come.

We're at a turning point, and together we have the power to create a world free from the heartbreak of dementia.

Will you do something incredible and leave a gift in your Will to Alzheimer's Society?

Request your free guide to gifts in Wills



Visit alzheimers.org.uk/willguide

Phone 0370 011 0290

☐ Please send me my free guide to leaving a gift in my Will

Title First name Last name

Address

Postcode

Email Phone

We'd love to send you updates on our life-changing services and research, as well as our fundraising, campaigning and volunteering activities.

Please tick below to let us know you're happy for us to stay in touch.

☐ **By email** ☐ **By phone** ☐ **Please don't contact me via post**

We will never sell your details to any third parties, please see **alzheimers.org.uk/privacy** for more information. If you'd like to change what you receive from us at any time, please call Supporter Care on **0330 333 0804**

Post in your own envelope to:
'FREEPOST ALZ SOC WILL GUIDE'
You do not need a stamp or any other address details.

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Registered charity no. 296645. Alzheimer's Society operates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.