

Living with dementia at any time brings everyday challenges for the individual but Coronavirus is making daily life much harder and may increase feelings of anxiety, frustration, confusion and loneliness. This may increase the likelihood of people with dementia walking about which could be particularly challenging during COVID-19 due to increased risk to the person with dementia, but also to other residents and staff.

Warwickshire County Council wants to support Care Homes with ideas to help to reduce walking about whilst also stimulating those with dementia to ensure their needs are being met. Care homes will need to adhere to government guidelines and to policies regarding infection control for COVID-19. It is suggested that staff have a photo of themselves to try and help their residents recognise them whilst wearing PPE.

There are several reasons why people with dementia may walk about; they are often 'walking with purpose'

- Memory loss and confusion
- Reliving pain, discomfort or restlessness
- Boredom or lack of activity
- Feeling lonely, lost or looking for someone
- Desire to stay independent and maintain a routine or continue a habit e.g. wanting to get a drink

Ways to minimise walking about

By trying to understand why the person is walking about and what they may need, this can help to find ways to meet their needs which will enhance safety of the individual and others in the home. Consider the physical environment and whether that may have an impact on individuals (e.g. noise can be disorientating for people with dementia). Sundowning, where a person with dementia may experience a change in behaviour at dusk, may lead to increased anxiety or agitation; [click here](#) for guidance on how to prevent and manage sundowning. Consider Positive Behavioural Support guided interventions for dementia; [click here](#) for a useful document with various strategies to enhance wellbeing and avoid likely triggers.

Try to use a range of **logical, creative** and **practical activities** as these types of activities will create mental stimulation, improve concentration and provide a sense of achievement and purpose whilst also increasing self-esteem and boosting wellbeing. Appropriate activities can be personalised for the individual. Links have been added to support these activities.

Logical Activities	Creative Activities	Practical Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crosswords • Word searches • Puzzles, sudoku • Card games, dominos, snap – many can do done individually • Board games • Range of activities and Sensory stimulation products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing, Colouring • Knitting, Crochet • Writing • Singing- use YouTube to find musicals, theatre performances, Karaoke sessions • Play a virtual piano: www.onlinepianist.com/virtual-piano • Sensory stimulation, e.g. fidget widgets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seated exercise / activity through a Nintendo Wii or x-box • Reading • Spending time in the garden; planting • Listening to podcasts • Listening to relaxation apps (try Calm and Headspace) • Listening to music (try Alexa and YouTube) • Listening to experiences of others; try the Dementia Diaries • Reminiscing activities • Products to support reminiscence

Gathering support from family and friends

Family and friends can support loved ones and connect with them remotely in various ways:

- Send in favourite books, CDs and DVDs for their loved one
- Set up weekly video calls via face time/ skype/zoom
- Help to create a family tree, or a memory book about the person's life by talking to the person
- Help create a personalised music playlists of music and songs that the person likes to listen to. BBC Music Memories uses music to help people reconnect with their most powerful memories
- Create a photobook or photo-gift
- Provide letter writing materials (possibly old postcards) to send messages to family. Set up a postbox in the home for residents to 'post' their note back to their family

Use of Assistive Technology

The following products may be beneficial for people with dementia. These may need to be for the sole use of one resident during Covid-19. Equipment should be purchased as per the Equipment in Care Homes protocol.

Product	Further details	Cost	Other information
Interactive cat/dog (comfort product) Look and sound like real pets. Range of products available	From Alzheimer's Society Cat breathing pet Dog breathing pet Ageless Innovation products from Amazon: Cat Dog	£26.99 £26.99 £98.90 £120	The more expensive products (Ageless Innovation Cats and Dogs) have built in sensors that respond to petting, hugging and motion which can bring joy and comfort.
Empathy/Therapy Dolls (comfort product) Specifically designed for people with cognitive loss.	https://www.alzproducts.co.uk/dementia-doll?gclid=EA1aIQobChMIpdy3q5rv6AIV34BQBh0c6QAaEAQYASABEgIG_D BwE	£49.99 exc. VAT	Includes a set of blue and pink clothes. Dolls do not cry. Range of delivery options, including next day
APPs for people with dementia via a tablet	https://interestingengineering.com/8-great-apps-for-dementia-and-alzheimers-patients-and-their-families		These will require support
Activities to Share A range of resources to reduce boredom and promote creativity	https://www.activitiestoshare.co.uk/	Some are free	Activities can support logical, creative and physical activities

Further information and resources:

Please [click here](#) for Warwickshire County Council local microsite with key national and local guidance for care home settings.

A useful resource for use now and in the future: Understanding Behaviour in Dementia that Challenges: A Guide to Assessment and Treatment. Second Edition, Paperback (21 August 2017)

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Understanding-Behaviour-Dementia-Challenges-Second/dp/1785922645>

If you have ideas that you wish to share with other care homes or products you can recommend, please email dementiapartnership@warwickshire.gov.uk