

# **Coronavirus 19 and people living with Dementia**

Dementia is a disease of the brain and reduces the capacity of people to reason and make choices. So the UK and global response to Coronavirus 19 is particularly challenging for families and people living with dementia. **Here are some notes about some of the help available – aimed at generic helplines and families in Lambeth.**

In Lambeth we have nearly 2,000 residents with dementia. And many of our residents have family members with dementia living outside the borough

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## **1. Government guidance**

For the latest government advice on coronavirus see:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> Detailed guidance is published daily.

For the latest Lambeth council information see

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/elections-and-council/about-lambeth/coronavirus-covid-19-information>

## **2. Telephone helplines with staff who understand family carers & can talk through options:**

Alzheimer's Society **0300 222 11 22**

Dementia UK Admiral Nurses **0800 888 6678**

Lambeth & Southwark Alzheimer's Society **020 7735 5850**

Lambeth Independent Living & Carers Partnership **020 7095 5720**

Caring4carers **07939 221 484**

Lambeth council's new Covid19 Vulnerable person helpline: **020 7926 2999**

## **3. Chat forums on dementia**

If you'd like to connect online with other people affected by dementia, try Talking Point at <https://forum.alzheimers.org.uk>

Skype, Face Time and Zoom are some online face to face tools and don't forget the pleasure of getting a letter or postcard. Simply picking up the phone and making sure people are okay is extremely powerful at this time.

## **4. Information on dementia**

Alzheimer's Society and Dementia UK have many information sheets on aspects of dementia with useful tips and suggestions eg on washing , eating , walking about, music : <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/daily-living>, or <https://www.dementiauk.org/get-support/>

## **5. Dementia services**

Dementia Connect is a directory of services for people living with dementia. <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/find-support-near-you>

Lambeth's AgeUK's My Community is a directory of services <https://mycommunity.directory/>.

Of course many services are now temporarily closed to help prevent the spread of coronavirus.

## **6. Volunteer help**

See Lambeth council's web page on volunteering:

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/elections-and-council/about-lambeth/how-you-can-help>

Many local residents are registering with groups like COVID-19-mutual-aid on whatsapp and facebook to help with contacting households at the doorstep.

## **7. Tips on getting through the day**

Try to persuade & encourage the person with dementia and to avoid confrontation with them if possible.

Set up a regular time for telephoning.

Talk about early memories. Use music and old movies to help with reminiscence. See additional suggestions below.

For people who forget recent news - a notice by the front door can remind people about not going out and other changes due to coronavirus.

Set up different areas in your home eg: watch favourite films and musicals in the living room, listen to the radio in the kitchen, do jigsaw puzzles at the table.

Activity box with puzzles and crafts.

Look at assistive technology for reminders about eating regularly, not going out, washing hands etc: <https://www.atdementia.org.uk/>

## **8. Contingency planning**

Many people living with dementia struggle with changes to daily routines. It is important to take time to prepare for different situations such as the person with dementia getting sick or if carers get sick.

**9. Suggestions on talking about early memories** ( from Age Exchange <https://www.age-exchange.org.uk/> )

Use family photo albums/home videos/slides to start off a conversation

Use old family recipes/family cook books to produce 'reminiscence' foods (Victoria sponge, trifle, etc) or take time exploring familiar packaging or individual ingredients, such as nutmeg, cinnamon, OXO cubes...

Music – dig out old CDs, records or tapes, or use the internet to listen, sing along to and discuss favourite music stars/bands – have a dance in the living room if you have the energy!

Use of the natural world – even just through the window – pay attention to the changing season. Think of prompts that conjure up spring – blossom, green shoots, nesting birds, chicks and lambs. Opening the window to listen to bird song, smell spring flowers (daffodils, hyacinths, etc) and feel the warmth of the sun can be very emotive and evoke memories.

Old films, film clips and images (via google) of famous Hollywood stars - actors and comedians who are familiar to people.

Household tasks such as folding the bed sheets, table cloths, dish cloths or dusting can generate reminiscence. Other tasks like polishing silverware, shining shoes or sweeping can also stimulate conversation and memory.

Smells – soaps, perfume, cologne and bathroom toiletries can help promoting memory. Activities that incorporate smell such as making lavender bags or doing a hand massage with a nicely fragranced hand cream (after washing them of course!) can be an enjoyable reminiscence activity.

**10.Lambeth Dementia Action Alliance**

Lambeth Dementia Action Alliance - working for a Dementia Friendly Lambeth.

[https://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/local\\_alliances/30863\\_lambeth\\_dementia\\_action\\_alliance](https://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/local_alliances/30863_lambeth_dementia_action_alliance)

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