

# Living with Dementia

## **A dementia diagnosis can cause a lot of change, and lots to think about...**

Everyone experiences dementia differently. Many people live well and independently for many years with dementia. Planning for your future can reassure you that your affairs are in order and you'll be cared for and supported in the way you'd like.

There's a number of things to think about for future planning to make sure things are in order as much as possible...

Many people with dementia stay independent long after their diagnosis and continue to do many of the things they enjoy. But over time, dementia can reduce your ability to remember people and places, look after yourself, and make decisions for yourself. Planning ahead can be reassuring – it means that you have arrangements in place if there comes a time when you can no longer make or communicate your decisions.

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Talking about your diagnosis can be difficult, especially the first time you have a conversation about it. You might get emotional, which is perfectly normal. You might prefer to approach the topic differently with different people.

As your circumstances change, let your friends and family know what kind of support you need, such as help with managing your finances. This is particularly important if you live on your own. But also remind them of what you can still do and how they can help you to stay as independent as possible

## **Around the house**

- Follow a routine. Doing things at the same time each day or week can feel reassuring and help stimulate your memory.

- Stick notes up in prominent places to remind you of things you need to do regularly, such as locking the doors at night or putting out the bins.
- Carry a notebook to write down your daily tasks or reminders.
- Put important things such as your keys or glasses in the same place every time you finish using them, so you know where to find them.
- Try out some gadgets, such as a clock that shows the date and day of the week, or a pill box with compartments for different days and times to help you keep track of your medication

## **Cooking**

- If it's hard to follow the recipes you used to use, try to adapt them to suit you. For instance, you could choose a shorter version of a recipe if following lots of steps is tricky. You can also get adapted kitchen tools, and use a talking timer to remind you to check on what's in the oven.

## **Gardening**

- Simply getting outside can raise your spirits. If you're finding gardening harder than you used to, contact Thrive (page 42) for advice on practical solutions, such as choosing specially adapted tools. You can also attend Thrive gardening projects.

## **Reading and puzzles**

- If it's hard to focus on or follow books, try reading short stories, or newspaper and magazine articles. Keep doing crosswords or Sudoku puzzles if you enjoy them – and don't worry if it takes you longer to complete them or you need to switch to an easier version than you're used to doing.

## **Television and radio**

- Some people with dementia find it hard to concentrate on programmes with complicated plots or lots of characters. Some find listening to the radio or an audio book easier. Music is an enjoyable way to bring back memories too

**If you need help with things like washing or getting dressed, or with other domestic tasks, ask your local council's social services department for a care needs assessment**

A social services assessor will look at your needs and decide what support would be best for you. If you have a carer, their ability to provide support should be taken into account. They're also entitled to a separate carer's assessment to identify any additional support they might need. Even if you're not

eligible for help through social services, they should give you information and advice about other local support services. There may be a charge if you receive support, which is based on your savings and income