

A person wearing a dark t-shirt and light-colored overalls is shown from the back, holding a paint roller. The background consists of vertical stripes in shades of purple, pink, and yellow. The text 'WORKING WITH DEMENTIA' is overlaid on the right side.

WORKING WITH DEMENTIA

Information for Colleagues

This guide has been prepared as part of a dissemination grant awarded by the Alzheimer's Society. It is based on the findings of the Alzheimer's Society funded project 'Dementia in the Workplace: the potential for continued employment post diagnosis' which was completed in 2015 and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland funded project 'Employers' responses to Dementia in the Workplace in Scotland' completed in 2018.



Key facts about dementia

- Dementia is an umbrella term which describes a range of symptoms which progressively affect cognitive functioning.
- Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia, but there are a number of different causes of dementia.
- Although more commonly associated with older age, dementia can affect people of all ages.
- Symptoms of dementia include problems with a range of cognitive functions including:
 - / memory problems
 - / spatial awareness
 - / language and communication
 - / judgement and decision making
 - / changes in mood or personality



Dementia in the workplace

People with dementia often report they first notice symptoms in their employment. Examples of these include:

- Missing meetings
- Misplacing belongings or equipment
- Tasks taking longer to complete
- Difficulties with communicating
- Problems remembering instructions which are not written down

For an individual who is diagnosed with dementia whilst still employed, these symptoms can impact on their performance at work. However, it is possible for people with dementia to continue working after diagnosis, with the appropriate support.



Person with dementia

"The first thing I started to notice was that I would go to these meetings in different rooms and I'd get back to my office and there would be clothes or books, papers, hats - all sorts of things would be randomly left on my desk. Things that I had left and not even missed them."

How to support a co-worker with dementia

It is possible for people with dementia to continue working after their diagnosis. People with dementia who have continued working report it helps them to manage their symptoms and that the routine and social interactions help to keep them well and preserve their self-confidence. In order to support a co-worker with dementia it is important to keep in mind the following:

- If your co-worker has been open about their diagnosis, speak to them about it. They may be happy to explain to you the effect dementia has on their work.
- Dementia awareness training may be beneficial to help you understand how to support someone with dementia.
- While your co-worker may be grateful of an offer of support, try to find the balance between supporting them and doing things for them.
- If you have any worries about your co-worker, ensure there are open and appropriate channels for this to be discussed with management or human resources.



**Colleague of person
with dementia**

"At the beginning I did find it really hard to say to her 'oh you've forgotten that', but she would tell me off and say: 'Look, if I forget something you need to let me know so that I know I'm forgetting things.'"

Looking after your brain health

Many people who have a co-worker diagnosed with dementia report feeling shocked at learning their co-worker had been diagnosed with dementia. This often resulted in them feeling worried about their own health and questioning their own memory and abilities. It is important to ensure that you know where to access support, if required, and take measures to protect your own health and decrease your risk of dementia. Some useful information is:

- The main risk factor for developing dementia is age, meaning that although people of working age can be diagnosed with dementia, it is not common.
- There are causes of cognitive impairment including work-related stress, menopause, or depression. For many who experience cognitive impairment, the symptoms are temporary and will improve with time or after treatment.
- There are many ways to protect your brain health.
 - / Healthy diet
 - / Exercise
 - / Reducing alcohol intake
 - / Smoking cessation



**Colleague of person
with dementia**

"Some of us older ones have discussed, as to what is actually just an age thing and a slowing down and what potentially could be the first signs of dementia. It's worrying."

Further support and information

Alzheimer's Society

www.alzheimers.org.uk/

National Dementia Helpline

0300 222 11 22

Alzheimer Scotland

www.alzscot.org

0808 808 3000

Age Scotland Early Stage Dementia Team

www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/

0800 12 44 222

Dementia UK

www.dementiauk.org/

0800 888 6678

Young Dementia UK

www.youngdementiauk.org/

01993 776295 - general enquiries

01865 794311 - support-related enquiries

Dementia Friends

www.dementiafriends.org.uk/

www.dementiafriendsscotland.org/

Healthy Working Lives (Scotland)

www.healthyworkinglives.scot/Pages/default.aspx

Health at Work Network (NHS England)

www.nhshealthatwork.co.uk/

Published by:
Alzheimer Scotland Centre for Policy and Practice
Institute of Healthcare Policy and Practice
School of Health & Life Sciences
University of the West of Scotland
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Copies of the final report are available on request from the Alzheimer Scotland Centre for Policy and Practice, Lanarkshire Campus, University of the West of Scotland.

Study funded by Alzheimer's Society grant number 328