

Creating a Dementia Friendly workplace; Supporting employees affected by dementia

The number of people in employment and affected by dementia is rising. As a result employers are focusing more than ever before on their approach to dementia and in supporting their staff. The benefits of this impact not only the employees but the organisation as a whole. It creates a working culture where all staff are valued, helps retain experienced and skilled staff, makes the workplace inclusive for everyone and fulfils a Legal Duty.

If you are an Employer, Manager or Lead a team in an organisation the sections below will give you ideas around ways to create a Dementia Friendly workplace and support your staff who are affected by dementia.

Communication

- Create a workplace where staff know where to go if they want to discuss any issues and concerns, such as a dementia diagnosis or carer stress.
- Provide a quiet and private area to have these conversations.
- Staff should feel confident that they can confide in their Lead, Manager or Employer and feel supported when having difficult conversations.

Awareness and understanding in the workplace

Demonstrate your workplace is one that is supportive of people affected by dementia. The more awareness and understanding staff have of dementia, the less stigma there will be. To spread awareness and understanding you could:

- Arrange training or workshops to better understand dementia for yourself and employees. Look into arranging a Dementia Champions training or sending a member of your team on relevant Dementia Advice Sheffield training.
- Include dementia-related information on staff notice boards and newsletters. This will support the employee with dementia and employee who is a carer of someone with dementia.
- Revisit your organisations HR policies and procedures and give clear policies about how your organisation supports people who develop dementia, as well as carers. An employee might receive a dementia diagnosis and be inclined to check the company policy around dementia before informing you. Check this is easily accessible.
- Sign up to receive Dementia News to get information on services, resources and advice that you could share with your employees affected by dementia. Sign up here (<https://mailchi.mp/39d07bcd31aa/sign-up-landing-page>).

- Assign a organisation 'mentor' or 'dementia lead'. They might give support to employees affected by dementia, arranging training opportunities for staff or attending relevant Dementia Advice Sheffield training.
- Contact Sheffield Dementia Action Alliance for advice around making your workplace more dementia friendly.
- Display your organisation's Sheffield Dementia Action Alliance certificate to show you are committed to becoming more dementia-friendly.

Supporting employees living with dementia

People are being diagnosed at a much earlier stage in dementia, with many being in employment. In the UK over 42,000 people are living with young onset dementia (diagnosed under the age of 65) with 18% continuing to work after a diagnosis. An employee might have difficulties in performing certain tasks and duties but with support and flexibility they can be supported to continue working and contributing to the organisation. You should:

- Discuss with your employee their diagnosis and work together to make adjustments so they can continue to work for as long as possible. This will be different for everyone. If your employee agrees, involve their GP or Occupational Therapist to support them in the most effective way.
- Review how your employee is managing with their role and responsibilities at agreed dates. If changes in their role and responsibilities need to be made show you have a flexible, responsive and positive approach.
- Remember it is your employees decision when they would like to tell colleagues. Increased awareness and understanding in the workplace will make this easier to do this as colleagues will be well informed about dementia.
- Record all discussions and future plans agreed by you and your employee and share this information with them. Some people with dementia benefit by having information both verbally and visually.
- Check support in place and direct to other services. They may need emotional and practical support.

What adjustments could you make?

Although dementia is likely to affect a person's ability to do certain tasks, many skills and abilities are retained, often for a considerable period of time. Adjustments will help make certain tasks easier to complete. It is important to work with each individual to discuss what would make a difference to them. Under the Legal Act, employers also need to show they are making 'reasonable adjustments'. These adjustments could be to:

- Present information through multiple modes e.g. written instructions as well as verbal.
- Encourage use of memory aids e.g. checklists and voice recorders .
- Allow flexible hours or for staff to take more breaks as required.
- Provide appropriate re-training opportunities.

- Support a member of staff to become a ‘mentor’ or ‘dementia lead’ to regularly check in and support with any concerns.
- Look at your working environment and complete a Dementia Friendly Environment Checklist to help you assess the building and make it as inclusive as possible. You might consider re-organising the workplace to create a quiet area, look at signage and labelling and modify lighting as required.
- Contact Dementia Action Sheffield if you have case specific questions around supporting staff.

Supporting employees caring for someone with dementia

The number people in employment and caring for a parent with dementia or a partner with young onset dementia is rising. Becoming a carer typically involves taking on new responsibilities and roles, which can impact all areas of life including work. There can be many mixed emotions that come with being a carer. It can be positive and rewarding but can be mentally and physically exhausting, especially when balancing work.

What actions could you take?

By supporting a carer you will be demonstrating that their experience and skillset is valued and that you are accommodating to their needs. This is likely to have a big impact on their wellbeing and the work they do. To support a member of staff, you might :

- Offer flexible working arrangements such as remote working or flexible working hours, consider compassionate leave.
- Sign-post to other services. You could do this in newsletters or on staff notice board. Familiarise yourself with other services such as the Cares Centre.
- Offer practical tools to help employees build personal resilience and manage stress e.g. training around resilience.
- Contact specialist dementia services in Sheffield to get advice on supporting an employee who is caring for someone with dementia.
- Share good practice with Sheffield Dementia Action Alliance of how your organisation is supporting employees who are carers. We want to celebrate your success and share good practice among other Alliance members.
- Contact Sheffield Dementia Action Alliance to discuss other ways your organisation’s workplace can be more Dementia Friendly.