



WORKING WITH DEMENTIA

**Information
for Human
Resource
Professionals**

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



**Line Manager of person
with dementia**

"I think one of the key messages is - it's very easy to focus on what people can't do. It's much better to focus on what they can do and have an open conversation at the very beginning."

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. If you notice a change in an employee's behaviour or performance in work, it is important to discuss this with the employee and provide signposting to occupational health services or the employee's GP. Diagnosis of dementia may take a number of months, or in some cases more than a year. However, if you have noticed the types of changes explained in this guide, the suggestions provided here will be of help to support the employee before and during the diagnosis period as well as post diagnosis.



Support for the employee 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 an employee with dementia it is important to consider the following:

- Dementia may be considered a disability as defined within the Equality Act 2010.
- Focusing on an employee's abilities and what they can do is reported as helpful in making adjustments and planning support.
- Some examples of 'reasonable adjustments' which have supported people with dementia to continue employment post diagnosis include:
 - / Flexible working, such as altered shift patterns, reduced hours, working from home.
 - / Memory aids, e.g. online calendars, providing written information and instructions.
 - / Technology, e.g. mobile phones, voice recognition technology etc.
 - / Environmental adaptations to reduce noise and distractions



Human Resource Professional

"He was coming to sort of see me on a weekly basis for maybe about 4 or 5 weeks, until I eventually phoned his wife and this started the diagnosis process."

Supporting line managers of an employee with dementia

Human Resource Professionals are an important source of support for line managers and colleagues of people with dementia. HR professionals should be prepared to provide advice, support and signposting to line managers regarding how best to apply employment policies and practices to support employees with dementia.

This may include:

- Reviewing existing policies and procedures to ensure they are applicable to an employee who is diagnosed with dementia.
- Ensuring appropriate review procedures are in place to support line management practices for an employee with dementia; for example, regular reviews of 'reasonable adjustments' in place.
- Ensure there is a clear pathway for supporting employees decisions to leave work and subsequently support with the process of applying for...



Line Manager of person
with dementia

"Human resources are very good and they gave us great support."

Dementia awareness in the workplace

Creating a 'dementia aware' work environment has been found to be successful for supporting employees with dementia, as well as increasing confidence of line managers and colleagues in supporting people with dementia in the workplace. Additionally, dementia awareness sessions in the workplace can further benefit the company to ensure that staff are equipped to support customers with dementia. Details of organisations who deliver dementia awareness training can be found in the further support and information section.

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/

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