

Guidance and good practice for golf clubs supporting people living with dementia

Key information on what you could do at your club

What is dementia?

Dementia is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease, or a series of strokes. It is not a normal part of the ageing. There are many different types of dementia, but the most common type is Alzheimer's disease. Dementia is progressive, which means it gets worse over time. Different types of dementia tend to affect people in different ways, especially in the early stages. Often it may be hard to know if someone has dementia especially in the early stages. That's why it's really important to provide good support and information to everyone.

A person with dementia might:

- have problems with their day-to-day memory for example, difficulties recalling events that happened recently
- have problems concentrating, planning or organising – for example, difficulties making decisions solving problems or carrying out a sequence of tasks
- have problems with language for example, difficulty following a conversation or finding the right word
- be confused about time or place – for example, losing track of the day or date, or becoming confused about where they are (even in familiar places)

- have visual perceptual difficulties – for example, difficulty judging distances or misinterpreting patterns or reflections
- show changes in their mood such as becoming frustrated or irritable, withdrawn, anxious, easily upset or unusually sad
- show changes in behaviour such as repetitive questioning, pacing, restlessness or agitation
- Some people with dementia may find that their symptoms can vary a lot from one day to another.

Living well with dementia

A diagnosis of dementia does not mean it is not possible to live well. Many people with dementia continue to be active and carry on with the things they enjoy. Even as dementia progresses, people can lead active, healthy lives, carry on with their hobbies and enjoy friendships and relationships. Someone with dementia may forget an appointment or tell you the same joke twice, but their condition does not stop them doing the things that matter the most. However, as dementia progresses people will need support from others.



Exercise is beneficial to everyone, whether or not they have dementia, and everyone who is capable should get some exercise. There are lots of different types of exercise that can be adapted to individual preferences and abilities.

Exercising can:

- encourage mobility - and therefore independence - for as long as possible
- improve circulation and help prevent stiffness and muscle wasting
- aid relaxation, promote a sense of calm and help ensure a good night's sleep
- reduce anxiety, stress and depression

The information and advice in this document will cover some examples of good practice already out there and suggestions of things you could do.

In this resource we have given you examples relating to the three areas in the dementia friendly sport and physical activity guide, launched in February 2019.

People	Programme	Place
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The full guidance is available in full from the England Golf website and also the Alzheimer's Society website.

Dementia is used throughout the guidance as a term to cover all forms of the condition, including Alzheimer's



People

Retaining members or keeping people playing golf who are living with dementia

Although dementia is not directly related to age, it is more prevalent in older people and it could affect your membership, currently or in the immediate future.

If members approach you to discuss their diagnosis then the following suggestions could be useful to consider:

- Recruit volunteers from the local Alzheimer's Society, Side by Side scheme or from your existing membership to support someone diagnosed with Alzheimer's to keep playing or get back playing
- Invite family members to accompany the person diagnosed with Alzheimer's and even play with them without cost
- Help the member share this with their friends at the club and empower them to keep playing together, even if it is social golf rather than competitive
- If someone has lapsed from membership or could be considering it due to a diagnosis of dementia then consider how you could add value to retain them – perhaps free use of a buggy for a round a week that could help keep them playing and active

It is important to remember that individuals will know themselves best and you should look to listen to them before implementing changes to ensure it meets their needs.

Supporting members who may have a partner living with dementia

It is important to remember that a member of your club may be struggling to play due to needing to provide care or support for a partner who is living with dementia.

- Invite the member whose husband or wife may be living with dementia to accompany them out on their round
- Extend competition times so that they are accessible throughout the day, meaning that the member can book a time later in the day to play with other members and put a score in for the competition

[Read about how Terry and Dave have created a way to keep playing golf together, even after a diagnosis of dementia](#)

Competitive golf considerations

A number of enquiries have come in to England Golf from clubs, county bodies and golfers about things that they could do to include and support people living dementia in to their competitions.

Below are some of the things you could consider introducing which would be considered reasonable adjustments.

It is important to remember that if you have any specific questions about the Rules of Golf then you should contact the R&A Rules Department directly for clarification

- Appoint a marker for a group in competition, play a minimum of 3 balls in these so that someone with dementia concerned about keeping their score does not have to score themselves or mark for someone else. They can still keep their score but it will allow your competitions committee to sensitively challenge any potential discrepancy
- Format and types of competitions – you could run 9 hole competitions that relieve the need to keep score for a full 18 holes. You could also organise pairs formats like a scramble, so that someone living with dementia can be supported by their friend and relieve the pressure on every shot counting
- Review your terms of competition – you may restrict the use of caddies for players for competitions but you could make an exception for those with dementia who require someone to support them to ensure that they can participate fully and to their best within your competitions



Finding people to play with

You may have members or recently lapsed members who wish to continue to play but are unable to without the support of someone else.

You could recruit volunteers from within in the club or you could consider how the Alzheimer's Society 'Side by Side' volunteering programme could assist you, as this example of how [Annette supports John to keep them both golfing](#)

Providing the best customer experience

When we talk about 'people' it is not just those directly affected by dementia but also your club staff.

Getting your staff, committee members and any other members at the golf club who would like to take part in a dementia friend's information session is a great way to find out more, ask the questions that you have and feel more confident about supporting people with dementia

You can arrange a Dementia Friends information session with your local Alzheimer's Society or you can complete it online.

Visit www.englandgolf.org/dementiafriends to find out how to do this. Be sure to use the code GOLF1234 to be part of the England Golf Dementia Friend's family and to show golf's contribution to creating 4 million dementia friends

Support and advice

[Dementia Friendly Sport and Physical Activity Guide](#)

Make contact with your local Alzheimer's Society or call the national dementia helpline - **0300 222 11 22**



Programme

Recruitment through golfing activity

As a club you may want to offer golf to those locally who are living with dementia. To do this we have created some guidance on who to approach, how to have the conversation and a sample action plan

1. Finding your audience

Find your local Alzheimer's Society network which will be made up of the local branch of the charity and any peer support groups -

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/find-support-near-you>

Don't push the hard sell straight away, open it up by saying that you'd like to have a chat about what the golf club and they could do together

2. Knowing your audience

Having a connection to sport may not be something that the local group has ever had so try to find out as much as you can about what they currently provide as activities.

For example, if a popular coffee morning already happens on a Tuesday morning then it would not be useful to plan your golf sessions for the same time as you will limit the opportunity to attend

Keep in mind when your quiet times are at the club and try to utilise these first but be prepared to compromise



3. Becoming dementia friendly

Understand what the local network would like to see you commit towards to offer the dementia friendly sessions.

England Golf would recommend that your key staff, including front of house complete a Dementia Friends information workshop as a minimum

There are lots of other things to consider doing, such as improving your signage, lighting and layout which could help people living with dementia – these are covered in the Dementia Friendly Sport and Leisure Guide available to download from our website.

The local Alzheimer's Society can assist you in completing some of these tasks and setting your plan to improve.

4. Setting up your sessions – remember to include your PGA Professional, the local Alzheimer's Society contact or group, and a committee member

Identify a time for the sessions – make sure it works for as many people as possible

Identify a cost – how can you make it as affordable as possible but at the same time don't be afraid to charge something, even if you give things in kind like the cost of range balls

Also remember that there may be an interest in golf because there are people living with dementia who used to play regularly, so you may want to organise something out on course rather than at the driving range or practice area.



5. Promoting your sessions

Once you have an idea of when you're going to run your sessions you need to promote them.

Give yourself plenty of time to do this as people wanting to attend may need to book transport or make arrangements with friends or family to be able to attend.

Don't just rely on the network of the local Alzheimer's Society, promote these sessions to your members and to local press as there will be others out there who could benefit from the sessions.

6. Supporting your PGA Professional

Together with the Alzheimer's Society we've put together some guidance for golf professionals on some of the key information they will want to know and consider when planning their sessions.

Remember to ensure that you find out from those who sign up if they've played golf before, if they've any goals for coming to the sessions or why they're coming along. This will help you pitch your sessions to ensure they're engaging, as well as getting to know more about the people coming along.

7. Think about volunteers

You may need to recruit some volunteers to assist at the coaching sessions or to meet and greet on the day of your activity.

Having someone to help people find their way to the right place enhances the experience and tackles one of the biggest barriers to taking part in any activity.

8. Seek feedback as you go

Make sure that you're gathering feedback after the activity to ensure that people are getting the most out of it.



9. Review and improve

Once your activity has finished, arrange a meeting to review and find out what you've done well and what you can do to make it even better next time

You may find it useful to look at some existing activities to give you ideas of what you may want to do

- [Mytime Active Cobtree Manor](#)
- [Golf in Society](#)

Other activities you could consider

You will have rooms and spaces that could benefit local people living with dementia and their local peer support group. Even if you're not looking to run any golf activity for the group, you could provide opportunities for:

- Coffee mornings
- Consultation meetings
- Seated exercise or yoga classes
- Sporting memories sessions

Speak to your local Alzheimer's Society contact and see if these would be of interest and could be a great first way to connect people to golf and fight all the stereotypes they may have about you and your facility



Place

Training

As discussed above, you should look at your main staff members and prominent club representatives attending a Dementia Friends information session.

This will allow you to understand more about what dementia is, ask any questions you may have and consider how you can use this information to improve what you do back at the club.

Creating a dementia friendly environment can help you engage with your local community

Physical Environment

The Alzheimer's Society have published a Physical environment checklist in the dementia friendly sport and leisure guide which you can use to assess your current provision.

You can seek advice from the local Alzheimer's Society on where you currently rate and what you chose to set as actions and any further information you require in order to become more dementia friendly.

These could include signage for toilets and changing rooms. They could also be things like ensuring you have clearly marked accessible car parking spots.

The Dementia Friendly Sport and Leisure Guide has put together a checklist for you to utilise to consider what you already have in place and what you can do to improve your facilities. Check out page 40 of the guide, [available on our website](#)



Policies

England Golf follow the SafeGolf standards. These are about safeguarding the welfare of children and young people but the principles also extend to adults at risk. This could include those living with dementia.

Completing the SafeGolf standard will give you the foundations to providing a safe environment for all and also give you as a club information on how to report any concerns you may have.

How does my club achieve SafeGolf accreditation?

If your club is currently Golfmark accredited then not to worry your club has met the SafeGolf standard by completing this process.

If your club hasn't completed Golfmark then you will need to do two things:

- Be affiliated to England Golf
- [Apply for Golfmark](#) and complete the Safeguarding section, in full.

Please note you do not have to complete the full Golfmark standard. Once the Safeguarding section is complete your Club Support Officer will review and sign the standard off and your club will be awarded SafeGolf accreditation.

Further advice and support

National Dementia Helpline **0300 222 11 22** – for all things, benefits, diet, driving licence

How to stay active with dementia - www.alzheimers.org.uk/active