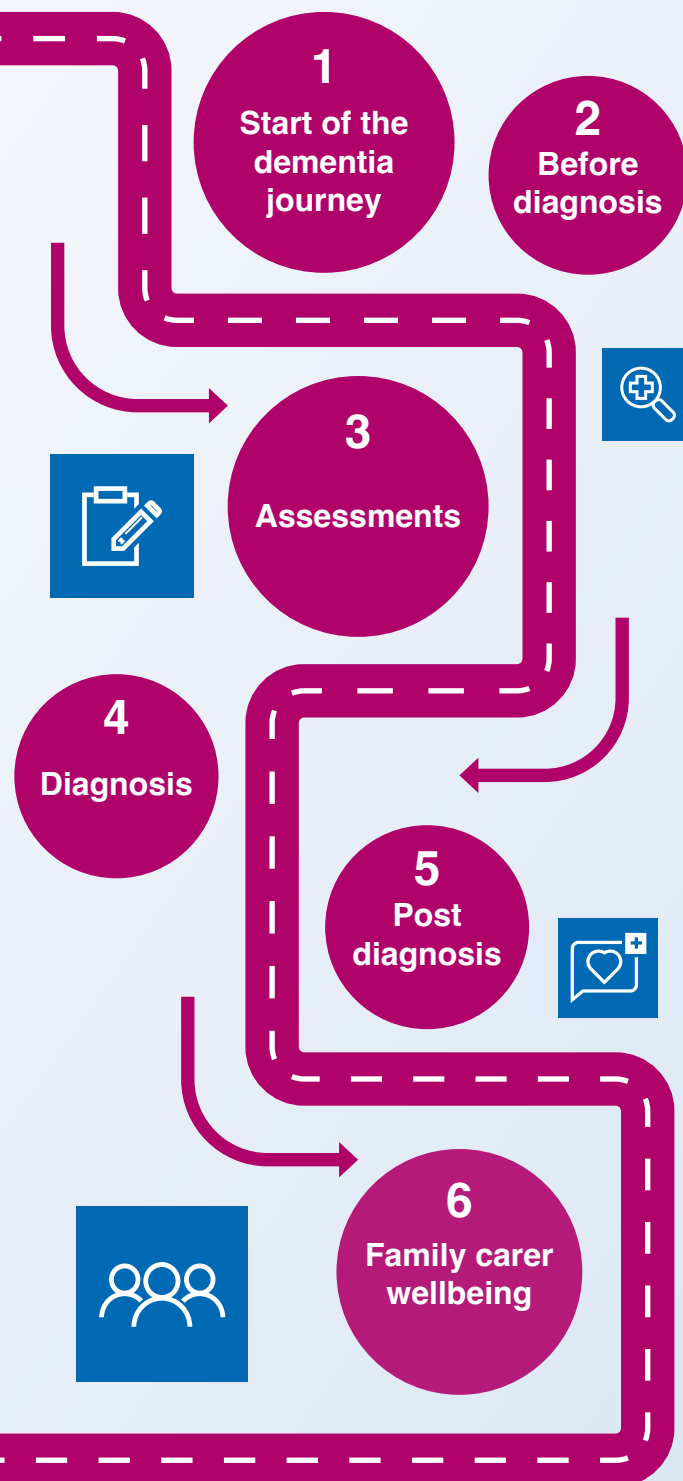


Dementia can be a very personal and sometimes overwhelming experience for people with the condition, as well as their families, and caregivers. There are many different symptoms, challenges, and feelings that will come with a diagnosis of dementia, and no two people will experience it in the same way. Spotting early signs, getting a quick diagnosis, and connecting to good support can help people to live well and plan for the future.

This guide helps care workers, families and supporters provide consistent, compassionate, and person-centred care throughout the dementia journey.

Whether you're worried about someone's memory, helping a loved one with understanding a diagnosis, or looking for care options, this guide offers simple steps, useful tips and reassurance.



From early signs to practical support

A step-by-step dementia guide

Visit skillsforcare.org.uk/dementia to download more dementia resources and find support on dementia



1. Start of the dementia journey

Look out for symptoms such as:

- memory loss that disrupts daily life
- confusion with time and place
- problems with communication and language
- changes in mood, personality or behaviour
- difficulties with familiar tasks i.e. cooking/self-care.

Further information can be found at:

[nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/about-dementia/worried-someone-has-dementia](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/about-dementia/worried-someone-has-dementia)

If you notice these symptoms in someone close to you, have a sensitive conversation with them in a quiet, safe and comfortable setting.

Ask them how they have been feeling, and if they have been finding anything more difficult than usual.

2. Before diagnosis

- Keep a note of symptoms and changes you have noticed. Write down how long they've been happening and how they affect daily life.
- Encourage the person to see their GP. Early diagnosis helps with planning, treatment, and support.

Further information about the symptoms of dementia can be found at:

Alzheimer's Society: [alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/dementia-diagnosis/how-to-get-dementia-diagnosis/dementia-symptoms-checklist](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/dementia-diagnosis/how-to-get-dementia-diagnosis/dementia-symptoms-checklist)

3. Assessments

The diagnosis process can take time and includes different tests by a GP or specialists.

- The GP might do a screening test, such as a memory test, and take blood and urine samples to check for things like thyroid problems, vitamin deficiencies, liver or kidney issues, diabetes, or infections.
- Genetic testing is done only if there's a strong family history of young onset dementia.
- The person being assessed may see another specialist such as a neurologist, psychiatrist, or geriatrician.

4. Diagnosis

If the outcome of the memory assessment is a diagnosis of dementia, the consultant at the memory assessment service (MAS) will give the diagnosis and send a letter with details about medication and ongoing care.

- Talk with family and friends and explain what it means, and how you feel.
- Contact your Local Authority Adult Social Care service to explore financial help, carer's rights and other forms of support.
- Use local services like support groups, memory cafés, choirs, day centres, or carers' centres.
- If the person is in employment, you may have to inform the person's employer so that they can help with any support or adjustment.
- Learn about legal steps like Power of Attorney (LPA). Anyone over 18 with mental capacity can set this up. It can be done through a solicitor or online at [gov.uk/power-of-attorney](https://www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney)

5. Post diagnosis

- A key worker or care coordinator may help to manage health and support for the person you support, and to make a care plan. If they already have one, it may need reviewing.
- Begin to discuss their wishes for care, treatment, and end of life decisions, and encourage them to write these down.
- Create a life story together that shares who they are, their interests, family, and what matters to them.

Further information can be found at:

Dementia UK: [dementiauk.org/information-and-support/financial-and-legal-support/advance-care-planning](https://www.dementiauk.org/information-and-support/financial-and-legal-support/advance-care-planning)

6. Family carer wellbeing

If you are supporting someone you know, practically or emotionally, with co-ordinating their dementia care then you may be eligible for support yourself. This is what is known as being an 'unpaid' or 'family' carer.

- Ask for a carers assessment from your local council or care provider. This helps them understand how caring affects you and what support you need.
- Get support from friends, groups or talking therapies to help you adapt.

Further information can be found at:

Carers UK's free helpline: 0808 808 7777

Age UK's free helpline: 0800 678 1602

Independent Age's free helpline: 0800 319 6789

Alzheimer's Society practical advice and support: [alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/help-dementia-care](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/help-dementia-care)