



Wellbeing for Life Who Else Can Help?



Learning Outcomes

- You will know the types and roles of different health professionals.
- How to find local health care and support groups for information and advice.
- Knowing the importance of communicating and sharing information.



What Help is Available?

- We all have an idea of what help is available to us when we are unwell.
- We can speak to our GP, see the practice nurse or make an appointment with the chiropractor for a bad back, but what happens when we are caring for someone who requires more than a visit to the doctor?
- It is important to have an understanding of the healthcare available to the person you support.
- It is possible that you will see many different health professionals, so knowing who to see, their job roles and how they can help, can give you confidence in your support of a person with dementia or a learning disability at the end of their life.
- You may see health professionals such as doctors, and other 'allied' health professionals such as occupational therapists.



What Do You Do First?

The GP should be your first point of contact.

GPs can provide a wide range of care and advice for a many health conditions and can refer to other health professionals.

You may find yourself seeing a number of different doctors as they will each specialise in different areas and medicines.

You can see your GP at the surgery or even at home.

There will be times when your appointment will be with a practice nurse.

Nurses support people in many different ways, and if a nurse is visiting your home, they will be a District Nurse.

Health Appointments

- The person you support will at times be dependent on you making decisions and booking health appointments on their behalf. Informing them why they are attending and what the appointment is for is vital. They have a right to know why they are going to see a health or social care professional and what this might entail. This also gives the person time to ask questions and prepare for the appointment.
- Whenever possible, include the person in making the appointment to ensure that it is convenient for them.





Health Appointments

- It can be helpful to take a pen and paper with you to the medical appointments to write down what you are told, and to note any questions you or the person you support have before the appointment. As a staff member, you need to take your own notes to the appointments, clearly outlining the health issue(s), timelines, or any other relevant information the GP might need. You must be proactive in your recording of health (the Health Recording documents and Health Calendar documents should help with this).
- If the doctor is using language and terminology that you or the person you support, do not understand, ask for a simpler explanation, or ask the doctor to present the information in a way that makes sense to the person. It is their responsibility to help the person to understand the diagnosis. If you get home and have forgotten something, don't be afraid to phone and ask for the information again. Make sure everything is noted in the person's health records.

Remember: If you provide 24 hour support for the person, you should be taking their Health Calendar and Baseline Health Assessment to each and every single appointment.

Don't Keep Things to Yourself



You may find you are spending a lot of time with a person who requires many health appointments and you feel you have a wealth of knowledge about this person and their medical requirements.

It is important to remember to share and record the outcomes of what the person you're supporting has been told, or what they need to do next, with other people working with them and family members, to ensure that everyone has the most up-to-date information.

You may find it easier to take their health records with you to health appointments. This will help you to record exactly what was said so that the record of the conversation is as accurate as it can be.



Other Health and Social Care Professionals that you might come into contact with (Who Else Can Help):

- **Admiral Nurses** are specialist dementia nurses who give expert, practical and emotional advice to people and families living with dementia (please note that Admiral Nurses are not available everywhere; for more information, please see <https://www.dementiauk.org/get-support/admiral-nursing/>).
- **Art therapists** use art in safe and secure settings to help people to express themselves and communicate in different ways
- **Audiologists** will check hearing. Distorted hearing can cause confusion and isolation
- **Community Mental Health Nurses** are also known as Community Psychiatric Nurses. They can provide care and treatment for people with mental health problems and people living with dementia
- **Consultants** are doctors that have years of experience in a particular area. When you see a consultant this will tend to take place in a hospital
- **Dentists** if a person has toothache and is unable to tell you, this can cause great discomfort. Dentists can also advise on problems with dentures and gum problems
- **Diabetes Nurses** - a diabetes nurse helps a person living with diabetes. Diabetes is a disease that prevents the body from producing or absorbing enough insulin.



Other Health and Social Care Professionals that you might come into contact with (Who Else Can Help):

- **Dietitians** translate the science of nutrition into everyday information about food. The person you support may visit a dietician for concerns about digestive problems
- **District or Community Nurses** can visit the person's home to provide care. They can be contacted through the local GP surgery
- **Fall Specialist** - the 'Falls Prevention Practitioner' or 'Fall Specialist' is in most cases a registered nurse, trained to carry out a comprehensive gerontology assessment and put in place a treatment plan to reduce the risk of further falls. (For more information on Falls, please see our 'Reducing the Risk of Falls' module in Theme 3.
- **Hospice Specialist or Hospice Nurse Specialist** – this is a professional trained nurse or specialised in palliative care.
- **Lymphedema Nurses** - lymphedema is a long-term (chronic) condition that causes swelling in the body's tissues. It can affect any part of the body, but usually develops in the arms or legs. A Lymphedema Nurse will specialise in this area of expertise.
- **Music therapists** use the power of music to help people deal with feelings they cannot put into words. You don't need to be "musical" to engage in music therapy



Other Health and Social Care Professionals that you might come into contact with (Who Else Can Help):

- **Neurologists** specialise in the brain and nervous system. Some neurologists have experience in dementia, in particular dementia with Lewy bodies and Parkinson's dementia
- **Occupational therapists** (OTs) help people of all ages to carry out everyday activities which are essential for health and wellbeing. They can advise on maintaining skills and assistive technology
- **Orthoptists** can help people with eye problems such as squint or double vision. An orthoptist will help with treating people with double vision associated with diabetes, thyroid disorder or multiple sclerosis
- **Paramedics** respond to 999 and 111 calls and are trained in all aspects of urgent and emergency care, ranging from problems such as cardiac arrest, heart attacks, strokes, spinal injuries and major trauma, to minor illnesses and injuries
- **Radiologists** a radiologist specialises in diagnosing and treating disease and injury through the use of medical imaging techniques such as x-rays, computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), nuclear medicine, positron emission tomography (PET), fusion imaging, and ultrasound. Some of these imaging techniques involve the use of radiation so adequate training in and understanding of radiation safety and protection is important.



Other Health and Social Care Professionals that you might come into contact with (Who Else Can Help):

- **Speech and Language Therapists (Sometimes written or pronounced as SALT)** provide treatment and support for people who have difficulties with communication, or with eating, drinking and swallowing. You will see a Speech and Language Therapist if the person you support has trouble communicating or swallowing problems linked to dementia. (For more information, please see our 'Safer Swallowing' eBook/eLearning Module.
- **Palliative Care Staff** – Palliative Care is end of life specialist care for the terminally ill, together with support for their families. **Phlebotomists** - are people trained to draw blood from a patient (mostly from veins) for clinical or medical testing, transfusions, donations, or research. **Physiotherapists** work with people to help with a range of problems which affect movement using exercise, massage and other techniques. A physiotherapist can advise on exercise and mobility
- **Podiatrists** (previously known as chiropodists) treat and prevent foot and leg problems. If a person has sore or painful feet this can have a negative effect on how they feel
- **Psychiatrists** - must evaluate an individual to determine whether their symptoms are the result of a physical illness, a combination of physical and mental ailments, or strictly **psychiatric**.



Other Health and Social Care Professionals that you might come into contact with (Who Else Can Help):

- **Social care professionals** - people who work in social care can help with non-medical support. They can offer support with dressing and bathing and can advise on making adaptations in the home. They can also tell you what's available in your local area
- **Social Care Workers** can help with personal care such as washing, dressing, changing bedding, doing laundry and helping with meals. They work in the home as well as in residential care homes and supported living
- **Social Workers** are trained to assess a person's needs and give the best advice that they can to the person that requires it. To contact a social worker you can ask your doctor or local social services department
- **Specialist Nurses** (e.g. Macmillan/Marie Curie) – you might see a Nurse who specialises in a specific field, e.g. Macmillan Nurses will specialise in Cancer, Admiral Nurses in Dementia.
- **Tissue Viability Nurse** - provide specialist advice and care to a wide variety of complex and ongoing wounds. These include pressure ulcers (both the prevention and management of such), traumatic injuries and complex non-healing wounds.



Health Recording is Vital

- Choosing a way to record health history that is best for the person you support, their families and other people who may work with them, is very important.
- You may have a system already in place that works well, but remember to always update this after time spent with a health professional, with detailed information that is easy to understand and relevant to the person you are supporting.
- If the person you support is given paperwork, ensure they understand what this means in a way that makes sense to them, and keep an accurate record of actions and outcomes.
- Keep all paperwork safely stored in a file.
- If the GP tells you a letter will follow in the post, and this is not received within a week, then chase this as a matter of urgency as this is how gaps can appear in a person's health records.
- If you notice changes in the person you support keep an accurate and thorough record of all changes (e.g. using the Health Calendar).
- The GP may ask for evidence of changed behaviour, and being able to provide it may help the person to receive a timely diagnosis.



Tips to Help with Health Recording

Consider noting the following details at the health appointment:

- Who has the person seen?
- Main points discussed and if any medication was prescribed (be careful of polypharmacy – if a person is on four or more medicines, we do not know how those ingredients will interact with the body and this can be dangerous).
- What were the outcomes?
- Was the information clearly explained to the person supported (by the Health Professional), in a way that makes sense to the person?
- Keep copies of letters and record actions and notes from the appointment as soon as possible.
- Ask a person to come with you as an extra set of ears so you don't miss information.
- Don't be afraid to say you don't understand and to ask for a simpler explanation.



Where do I go to find Local Health Support?

Take time to research what is in your local area and you may be surprised to learn of the many and varied support services. The first step may be to have a conversation with the GP and they will signpost you in the right direction.

You can receive health care and advice at your local surgery, hospital, and at private or volunteer organisations such as a local community hall running a memory café. There are also charities such as the Alzheimer's Society, who run events such as Singing for the Brain. When you are at these events try and spark up conversations with others, as this can be an opportunity to find out about other events and support that are in the area, which could really benefit the person you support.

Find Support Near You

You can find information in libraries, community halls, hospitals, GP surgeries and local newspapers. There is a big online community which offers help, support and advice. This will give you a chance to see how others have dealt with challenges and to see positive stories and outcomes too.



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