



Dementia Friendly Language

Language is a powerful tool.

The words we use can strongly influence how others treat or view people with dementia. This means we have a responsibility to use language that is empowering and inclusive of the diverse experiences of dementia.

Dementia is not necessarily a defining aspect of life and life does not stop when dementia starts, so let's convey that in the language we use.

The Condition

Preferred terms	Non-preferred terms	Rationale
Dementia	Dementing illness	There is a need to reflect accurately that dementia is an umbrella term for a large group of illnesses that cause a progressive decline in a person's cognitive functioning and memory.

The People

Preferred terms	Non-preferred terms	Rationale
Person / people with dementia People living with dementia (incorporates people with dementia, their families and carers) People impacted by dementia	Sufferer Victim Demented person People suffering from dementia	Terms such as 'sufferer' and 'victim' contribute to the stigma surrounding dementia. People with dementia experience changes in their abilities over time. While their need for support may increase as the condition progresses, it is important to avoid language that implies they are helpless. Choose positive and inclusive terms that maintain the person's dignity.
Family carer(s) or carer(s) Wife, husband, partner, daughter, son, friend, for example. Care partner	Carer(s) of people suffering from dementia	A 'carer' is someone who provides unpaid care for a relative or friend with care or support needs. 'Family carers' may be used to avoid confusion where 'carers' may mean 'service providers'.



Supporter		People may prefer to use the terms husband, wife, daughter, friend instead of carers. 'Care partner' or 'supporter' is also preferred by some people with dementia to reflect the partnership arrangement they may have with the person who is assisting them.
Older person or older people	Elderly	If you need to identify people over the age of 65, older people is the preferred term over senior citizen and elderly, which can be discriminatory in nature.

The Impact

Preferred terms	Non-preferred terms	Rationale
Words to describe the impact: • Living with dementia • Painful • Distressing • Emotional • Challenging	Words that should be avoided to describe the condition: • Hopeless • Unbearable • Impossible • Tragic • Burden • Doting/dotage • A living death	Appropriate descriptive words should be chosen to suit the audience and the context. Not everyone will experience every emotion. Each person will relate differently at different times to their experience of dementia and have an individual response. It is important to be realistic about dementia while not being overly pessimistic or frightening. It is important to assist people with early stage dementia to be positive in dealing with their diagnosis.
Impact / effect of caring for a person with dementia	Carer burden Burden of caring	It is important to use terms that are emotionally neutral and inclusive. Describing caring as a 'burden', or using 'burden' to describe people with dementia, is negative. While caring for a person with dementia is challenging, many carers also identify with the positive and rewarding aspects of their role.