

HOW TO SET UP A DEMENTIA CAFE

Manual & Resources





Acknowledgements

This manual was produced by Engaging Dementia, and The Irish Dementia Cafe Network, in collaboration with the National Dementia Office (NDO) and the Expert Advisory Panel.

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Background

A Dementia Cafe is a type of post-diagnostic support, or a support for people and their families following a diagnosis of dementia. The first Alzheimer Cafe was set up in Ireland in 2011 in Donnybrook in Dublin. In the years that followed, other Alzheimer, Dementia and Memory Cafes were set up, but they differed in how they were organised and held.

The National Dementia Office (NDO) decided to allocate some of the dormant accounts funding to bring the Alzheimer and Dementia Cafes together and create a national cafe network. Engaging Dementia was commissioned by the NDO to co-ordinate the establishment of an Irish Dementia Cafe Network in 2019. Working with the NDO, Engaging Dementia set up an Expert Advisory Panel and contacted all of the Alzheimer, Dementia and Memory Cafes in Ireland to involve them in the project. The project drew on the findings of a research project on Alzheimer Cafes in Ireland that had been carried out by the Centre for Economic and Social Research on Dementia (CESRD). The CESRD Research Study was published in 2020 and is available free of charge at www.cesrd.ie.

What is a Dementia Cafe?

A Dementia Cafe is a welcoming, monthly meeting for people living with dementia, their families, friends, and health care professionals.

It offers:

- A warm and friendly atmosphere
- Reliable information and guest speakers or activities
- Peer support and shared experiences
- A sense of community and belonging
- And it's always free!

This manual

This manual provides guidance on how to set up and run a Dementia Cafe. It includes information and resources, as well as signposting to organisations and websites for further information on dementia. The information in this booklet draws on available evidence, input from cafe co-ordinators and the Irish Dementia Cafe Network's Expert Advisory Panel.

Get involved!

For further information or to find your local Dementia Cafe go to www.dementiacafe.ie

Follow us Facebook to keep up to date with Dementia Cafe activities around Ireland.

Contact the Irish Dementia Cafe Network at cafenetwork@engagingdementia.ie



IrishDementiaCafeNetwork



cafenetwork@engagingdementia.ie



www.dementiacafe.ie



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Introduction

The Irish Dementia Cafe Network agreed on a set of principles for all dementia cafes.

The Four Core Principles

Atmosphere – Welcoming, respectful, relaxed, and fun

Information – Talks, leaflets, and resources about dementia and community supports

Support – Space to share experiences and feel understood

Community – Connections that lead to friendships and stronger local networks

It was agreed that every Dementia Cafe would be open to people living with dementia, their families, friends, health and social care professionals, and that it would always be free of charge.

The Irish Dementia Cafe Network was launched in September 2020, with the goals of supporting existing Dementia Cafes, creating resources for communities around Ireland to create new Dementia Cafes, and to facilitate learning and networking for its member Dementia Cafes. If you are interested in setting up a Dementia Cafe please contact us and we will help guide you through the process, with templates and resources and introduce you to other people running cafes.

The Benefits of a Dementia Cafe?

- Provides social connection and reduces isolation for people living with dementia and their families
- Offers a safe, inclusive space where people can openly share experiences and learn from each other and healthcare professionals
- Enables sharing practical advice from professionals and carers
- Builds awareness and understanding in the community

HOW TO SET UP YOUR CAFE

Step 1

Form a Committee

We recommend that you set up a committee, so it is not too much work for one person. In this way, it helps ensure the cafe can continue smoothly over time.

Gather a group of 4–8 people to volunteer. Ideally this group will include:

- A health or social care professional
- A person with dementia or a family carer (often called someone with the “lived experience”)
- Local supporters (e.g. Alzheimer Society, dementia advisers, voluntary groups, students, or community champions).

Decide roles such as Coordinator, Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Communications.

The types of activities managed by different committee members might include contacting speakers, promoting the cafe, managing the funds/paying suppliers, managing volunteers, etc.

Tasks at the Dementia Cafe meeting include setting up the registration table, setting up the room, making teas and coffees, welcoming guests and visitors and introducing the speaker.



Step 2

Make a Plan

- **Name & Contact** – Pick a clear name, decide who will be the main contact, and set up a phone/email.
- **Venue** – Choose an accessible, dementia-inclusive space (community hall, library, cafe, church hall, sports club, etc)

Check out the Dementia Inclusive Community Guide from a Universal Design Approach, available on www.understandtogether.ie.

- **Time** – Plan to hold the cafe once a month, same day/time for consistency.
- **Costs** – Keep them low: room hire, liability insurance, refreshments, printing. Fundraise locally if needed or apply for funding (i.e. County Council grants)

It is very important to see if the cafe is covered by the public liability insurance for the venue or not. The Dementia Cafe is responsible for both the event and the members of public that come to the cafe. Having appropriate public liability insurance in place provides financial protection against a wide range of claims, ensuring that organisers can focus on delivering a memorable event without the worry of potential legal fees and compensation payments hanging over them. We have found BHP Insurance to be a very reasonable company to get insurance for a Dementia Cafe. You can even quote the Irish Dementia Cafe Network, to remind them that many of the cafes have insurance with them. Sometimes a building's insurance plan will cover the Dementia Cafe so it is worth checking with them.

You will need to decide on simple procedures for how you will manage the finances of the cafe. There is no need for the committee to be set up as a charitable organisation. However, it's important that you have good procedures in place to make sure that any funds that are raised for the cafe are used only for those purposes. Please contact us for a sample Finance Policy for Dementia Cafes.

Regarding fundraising, please refer to the helpful booklet "Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public", available on www.charitiesregulator.ie.

- **Speakers** – Plan varied talks by, for example, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Dementia Advisers, Geriatricians, Carers, People living with Dementia, Solicitors, and Social Workers, Nutritionists, Exercise Experts, Garda, Artists, Musicians. Poets, etc. Make sure to explain to any invited speakers about the audience, and remind them to keep the language they use clear and simple.

If there is a topic that you would like to cover but you can't find a speaker for that topic, or if a speaker cancelled at the last minute, take a look at Engaging Dementia's YouTube Channel. There you will find a selection of recorded talks that you are welcome to show at your cafe meeting.

- **Promotion** – Use flyers (give out to local GP offices, Public Health Nurses, Primary Care Centres, Memory Technology Resource Rooms, pharmacies, churches and community centres, etc.) social media, and word of mouth.
- **Email communication** – Email can be a very effective way of reaching people. Make sure to collect email addresses of any attendees or people who contact the cafes and send a reminder email out before each cafe meeting.
- **Sound system** – If the room or group is large, you might need to have a portable speaker and microphone.
- **Information table** – Have a table with leaflets on dementia, aids for independent living, healthcare and community support, etc. You can also download some of the leaflets available from www.understandtogether.ie and www.alzheimer.ie. We also have resources on our website www.engagingdementia.ie.
- **Volunteers** – If you are looking for volunteers to help you run the cafe, try Volunteers Ireland, at www.volunteer.ie. You can also reach out to local schools and ask Transition Year students to volunteer at the cafe.

Step 3

Join the Irish Dementia Cafe Network

By joining the network, you'll gain access to ongoing advice, promotional support for your cafe, and help with recruiting volunteers. Email cafenetwork@engagingdementia.ie to register.

Step 4

Run your Cafe

- Welcome people warmly at each meeting
- Include time to chat, share refreshments, and listen to a short talk
- Keep an information table (or email links if online)
- Gather feedback and adapt based on attendees' needs and interests

Step 5

Stay Connected

- Attend networking and learning events with other cafes
- The Irish Dementia Cafe Network holds online Learning and Networking events 1-2 times a year with a series of topics and speakers. Everyone who is on a dementia cafe committee is welcome to attend. The event is free of charge.
- Share ideas, speakers, and resources



Final Tips

- Keep it simple and welcoming – tea, smiles, and listening ears go a long way.
- Always focus on respect, empathy, and inclusion.
- Remember, you are not alone – the Irish Dementia Cafe Network is here to support you.

Find more resources at
www.dementiacafe.ie



Frequently Asked Questions

- **Is a Dementia Cafe a carers support group?**

No. A Dementia Cafe is open to everyone who is affected by dementia. All types of people attend, including people who have a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or another type of dementia, their families and carers, healthcare workers, and people who are involved in community supports or interested in supporting a dementia inclusive community.

- **How do we support a person with dementia to participate in a committee?**

A person who has a diagnosis of dementia or the carer of a person living with dementia would be an excellent addition to any Dementia Cafe committee. For practical guidance on how to support a person with dementia to participate in a committee or in other dementia cafe activities, read the Hear our Voice booklet, which has been produced by the Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) and the Centre for Economic and Social Research on Dementia (CESRD) at www.alzheimer.ie.

Hear our Voice was written by people living with dementia.

- **I have dementia. Can I go to a Dementia Cafe meeting?**

Yes. We would recommend that you bring a friend or family member with you.

- **Is a Dementia Cafe free of charge?**

Yes. Some Dementia Cafes need to fundraise to cover the running costs of the cafe, but there is never an attendance fee to attend a cafe meeting.



• **Do I have to contact the Dementia Cafe before going to a cafe meeting?**

We recommend that you contact the organiser before attending a cafe meeting. This is to make sure that the cafe will be running on the day that you plan to attend and you can check out who will be speaking on the day. You can just go along to the Dementia Cafe, and you will be welcomed by the cafe team, but if you can let them know you are coming, it might help them with their planning.

• **Can I get involved in my local Dementia Cafe?**

Yes. Dementia Cafe committees are always interested in meeting people who would like to join the committee or volunteer to help at cafe meetings. People who are involved as committee members or cafe meeting volunteers say that it is an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Contact your local Dementia Cafe to get involved!

• **Has research been done on Dementia Cafes?**

Yes. The Centre for Economic and Social Research on Dementia (CESRD) carried out a research project on Alzheimer Cafes in Ireland, which it published in 2020. The results of that research informed the development of the four principles (Atmosphere, Information, Support, Community) which underpin the Dementia Cafe.

• **Do I need to know about General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)?**

- People who attend Dementia Cafe meetings often like to receive a reminder of the details of the next cafe meeting. If you collect attendee's contact information, you need to consider how will you store this information and who on the committee will manage communications.
- All personal data must be managed in a way that complies with GDPR. For further information on GDPR, see the Citizens Information website at www.citizensinformation.ie or email us on cafenetwork@engagingdementia.ie.

• What is Dementia?

Dementia is an umbrella term for a range of conditions with symptoms related to thinking, memory, understanding and planning. There are many different types of dementia, with Alzheimer's disease being the most common type. There are approximately 77,000 people living with dementia in Ireland, with many more people providing daily support and care.

Every person living with dementia is different and their experience of dementia will be individual to them. However, most people have difficulties with short term memory or remembering things that happened recently. This can include having difficulty locating objects, naming things or remembering appointments. There can be other difficulties too, such as changes to vision, hearing, or orientation to time and place. Dementia is a progressive condition, so difficulties can often increase over time.

For more information about dementia, visit our website:
www.engagingdementia.ie

“ The cafe is fun,
welcoming, friendly
and safe. You can
get a cuppa, make
friends, enjoy a bit of
entertainment and get
useful information all
in the same place. ”

Maeve Montgomery
Cafe Coordinator Dundalk Alzheimer Cafe /
Monaghan Alzheimer Cafe and Dementia Adviser,
The Alzheimer Society of Ireland



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