



Dementia Cafe Manual

For your Club & Community



What is a Dementia Cafe?

A Dementia Cafe is a welcoming, monthly meeting, usually 1.5 – 2 hours long, 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!

A Dementia Cafe in a GAA club is a cup of tea, a chat, and staying connected to the club and community.

It is not a service, it is not clinical, but it could be a huge support to someone in your community whose life is impacted by Dementia.

Why GAA Clubs Matter

GAA clubs are at the heart of every community.

You already have:

- A welcoming space
- A strong volunteer culture
- Deep local connections
- A place people trust

Running a Dementia Cafe is simply an extension of what your club already does best: Looking out for one another.

What Makes It Special in a GAA Club

- Familiar clubhouse setting
- Photos, jerseys, and club history
- Talking about matches, players, and memories
- Music, songs, and local stories

This is powerful: sport and memory are deeply connected.



The Impact You Will Make

Running a Dementia Cafe helps:

- Reduce isolation
- Support families
- Keep people connected to their community
- Make your club more inclusive

You are helping people stay part of the place they belong.

The delivery of a
Dementia Cafe
will count towards
accreditation if you are
participating in the Irish
Life GAA Healthy Clubs
programme!

"Having the cafe in our local GAA club has been hugely important, as GAA clubs are seen as the heart of the community in any town/area and having people who have been affected by memory loss or dementia go to such a cafe in the GAA clubhouse promotes inclusion and a sense of being an integral part of that community."

Regina Lafferty
Cafe Coordinator, Seaview Memory Cafe
O'Dwyer's GAA Club, Balbriggan



"It's great having the cafe in the club. We have been involved with this GAA club for 22 years. It's a place where we have made lifelong friends. Since attending the cafe with my mother we have reconnected with people that we haven't seen in a long time. Having the cafe in the GAA club brings the community together. My mother might forget the cafe tomorrow but she is enjoying herself at the moment."

Fiona Collins, Seaview Memory Cafe Attendee

How to Get Started (5 Simple Steps)

Step 1

Gather a Small Team (4–6 people)

You don't need a big committee.

Include:

- A cafe coordinator (Chairperson)
- Someone who can manage communications
- Someone with good links to the community
- A healthcare professional who can answer questions
- If possible, the lived experience – either someone living with dementia or a family carer, past or present
- Volunteers (including young members if possible)
- Involve your club's Healthy Club Officer—this project fits perfectly into their remit.

Step 2

Pick a Date & Space

- Use your clubhouse (ensure that it is a large enough space and that the facilities are accessible to everyone)
- Same time and day each month (e.g. first Tuesday at 11am)

Step 3

Keep Costs Low

- Typical costs: include tea/coffee & biscuits and printing posters
- Occasional costs such as small gift for speaker or musician's fee
- Many clubs can run this with minimal or no cost. While cafes are always free to attend, any local sponsorship, donations, or club funds used for the cafe must be tracked transparently through the dementia cafe's account.

Step 4

Spread the Word

Start local:

- Club WhatsApp groups, Social media, Parish newsletter, GP surgeries & Pharmacies, Word of mouth
- Before you launch, email cafenetwork@engagingdementia.ie to officially join the Irish Dementia Cafe Network so we can add your club to the national map and send you free resources.

Step 5

Run Your First Cafe

If you have tea, chairs and a warm welcome, you're ready!

Volunteer Roles (Keep It Simple)

Cafe Coordinator

Keeps things organised, main contact person

Hospitality Team

Tea, coffee, welcoming people

Community Link

Connects with local services

Healthcare Professional

Helps find appropriate speakers

Activities Lead

Organises light music, talks, or GAA-themed chats

Young Volunteers

Great for energy, helping out, and intergenerational connection

Important

This is not a heavy commitment—just a few hours once a month.

But the reward is so much more than that!

Typical Monthly Cafe Running Order

11:00am – Welcome, tea & coffee

11:20am – Short talk or guest speaker

11:45am – Chat and social time

12:15pm – Light activity (music, storytelling, GAA memories)

1:00pm – Finish



Creating the Right Atmosphere

This matters more than anything else.

Do:

- Be warm and welcoming
- Use simple, clear language
- Give people time to talk
- Encourage inclusion

Don't:

- Rush people
- Overcomplicate things
- Make it feel like a formal service

Easy Activity Ideas

- Music session or singalong
- Guest speakers (Occupational Therapists, Solicitors, Dementia Advisers, for example)
- Art activity or light exercise led by someone from community
- "Match of the Day" memories
- Old photos or jerseys
- Invite a former player or local young player to give a short talk
- Have a mini sporting memories event – sports reminiscence is very powerful in reconnecting people to distant fond memories and is particularly powerful for people living with dementia. See the **"Sporting Memories"** resource from the Alzheimer Society of Ireland.
- **The Replay** is an online archive celebrating the iconic voice of Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh, the legendary commentator of Ireland's national games. Set the **The Replay** up on a TV or laptop and decide which match you would like to listen to together. You can search for audio commentary as well as match day programmes of famous games dating back as far as 1985. **TheReplay.ie** can be used as part of reminiscence therapy to help people living with dementia reconnect with lost memories. Come revisit unforgettable moments from our sporting history.

Conversation Starters (For Volunteers)

Many people worry about saying the wrong thing—help them.

Try:

- "How about the weather we have been having?"
- "What's your favourite thing to do these days?"
- "Who was your favourite player?"
- "Did you ever play or support?"

There's no pressure—just chat.

What You Need to Check (Quick Essentials)

- Ensure that the club's existing Public Liability Insurance extends to cover this community event
- Ensure that the space is accessible to those with mobility issues (toilets, seating)?
- Have a sign-in sheet at the door to capture names and phone numbers/emails safely (GDPR) so you can text them a reminder before next month's cafe

If unsure, support is available (see below).

You are Not On Your Own

Support is available from:

- The Irish Dementia Cafe Network
- www.dementiacafe.ie
- www.engagingdementia.ie



The Irish Dementia Cafe Network and Engaging Dementia can help with setting up the Cafe, speakers, promotion and advice and guidance

Contact

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

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

Contact the Irish Dementia Cafe Network at:
email: cafenetwork@engagingdementia.ie
call: 01 260 8138



Understand Together

The GAA has partnered with the HSE's Dementia: Understand Together campaign and the family of former GAA President Seán McCague, to raise awareness about dementia and inspire clubs and communities to become dementia inclusive. The theme for the partnership, **Standing Together on and off the Pitch**, recognises the vital role that local clubs and volunteers play in supporting people living with dementia to stay connected and involved in their communities. Find out more at www.understandtogether.ie



**Dementia Cafes make a Difference.
Start one in Your Club Today!**

