

## What is being communicated?

**Communication** - can the person effectively communicate needs and wishes? If not, consider the following:

- **Verbal cues** – is the person repeatedly shouting, screaming or groaning?
- **Facial expression** - This may include frowning, sadness or crying, grimacing, and tense and frightened expressions.
- **Body language** - Signs include guarding and bracing or rubbing or holding a particular part of the body
- **Behavioural Changes** - Has the individual become tense and unusually challenging or angry, being unusually resistant to care, sometimes pushing people away. Depression and withdrawal are also common.
- **Physical Changes** – poor food and fluid intake, infection (urine, chest, constipation), ongoing health issue.

## Useful Information:

**Alzheimer's Society** Tel No: 0300 222 1122  
Website: [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

**Memory Matters** Tel No: 01752 243333  
(Hub) Email: [hello.moments.cafe@gmail.com](mailto:hello.moments.cafe@gmail.com)

**Dementia Advisor Service** Tel No: 01752 435358

### Community Memory Pathway

Top Floor Local Care Centre  
Mount Gould Hospital  
Plymouth, PL4 7QD  
T. 01752 435365  
[www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk](http://www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk)

The Community Memory Pathway operates between 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday (not including Bank Holidays). Outside of core working hours there is an answerphone available but messages will not be picked up till the next working day. If your situation has changed and/or you require immediate action please contact Devon Doctors on 111. If your situation requires the Emergency Services please dial 999.

# Community Memory Pathway



## Agitation, Restlessness, and attempts to leave the home environment during COVID19

There are times when a person with dementia will have changes in their behaviour (aggression, depression, sleep disturbance, restlessness, agitation and anxiety). These can cause distress and be difficult to manage. However, it is important to remember that these behaviours may be as a result of an unmet need.

If there is a sudden change in behaviour it is worth seeking a review from GP in the first instance to rule out any conditions which could be treated and reduce the presenting problem.

Alternatively, the Community Memory Pathway can be contacted for information, advice and support. This leaflet is aimed at carers who are supporting someone with dementia who may be agitated, restless and wanting to leave the home environment on a regular basis.

**Walking (wandering or pacing):** Likely to be a indication that the person wants to do something, see someone or simply to get some exercise., especially if they have been sitting for long periods of time with no stimuli.

***How to offer support when walking is frequent and problematic:***

- Talk - see if they need anything. Keep language simple and offer one thing at a time. Use pictures if this helps with communication.
- Offer them a food and drink
- Guide to the bathroom and check if the toilet is required
- Go for a walk in the garden, walk with them if you where possible and discuss aspects of the garden
- Try activities relating to their previous jobs, roles or interests.
- Have awareness of their ability to initiate, engage and sustain an activity. They may just need help getting started, or that activity might need adjusting to maintain their interest

**Wanting to leave the house:** This may be due to not recognising where they are. They may believe they have somewhere important to be, such as going to work. They may miss family members or significant others. If they are prevented from leaving, they will worry about what will happen and their level of distress will escalate.

***How to offer support:***

- Asking the person to sit down or saying they cannot leave is unlikely to help.
- Find out where the person wants to go.
- Acknowledge how they might be feeling, for example, “You’re worried about your children .. Let’s see if we can find out where they are”
- Walk with them, ask them to help you to do something; purposeful activity will reduce the person’s need to leave.
- If the person is asking about their children or family they may be missing them. Support them to look at photographs of family if available.

**Ways to reduce risks associated with wanting to leave the home environment:**

- Encourage the person to carry a mobile to help locate them easily, if not, consider the use of GPS tracker watch or device which will allow you to locate them and be alerted if they go outside.
- Use bed or chair sensors to alert you on a pager when they get up.
- Use devices that alert you if certain doors are opened (bells or chimes or pressure and motion sensors)
- Consider removing any visual cues - you could put a curtain up to cover the front door, or put all keys, shoes, coats, handbags in a cupboard out of sight.
- Make sure the person is carrying some form of ID in case they get lost (ID card, bracelet, necklace or sewn or printed into their jacket pocket or collar)
- Complete the Herbert Protocol form as a ‘ready to go’ aid to help police if a vulnerable person goes missing.
- Let neighbours know that they may leave the house unattended, and if seen should be gently approached and contact made with you right away.