



INFORMATION SHEET 4

CONFUSION & DEMENTIA

If you are concerned about someone who is becoming forgetful or confused, it is important that you discuss your concerns with the person's doctor. Becoming forgetful and / or confused does not mean that a person is developing dementia, it can also be a symptom of other illnesses e.g. stress, depression or infection. The GP can carry out a 'mini-mental test' to see if dementia is a likely cause.

If the GP feels it appropriate, they may then refer the person to a specialist consultant for assessment / diagnosis. There are several drugs available which can be used in some cases to slow down various types of dementia and improve the symptoms, so an early diagnosis is important. It is also important to find out which kind of dementia the person has, and this is often done by a brain scan.

WHAT IS DEMENTIA?

Dementia is a term relating to a number of different conditions where the person experiences a decline in their ability to think, reason and remember. The most common dementia is Alzheimer's disease, but people can also have vascular or multi-infarct dementia, which is caused by a series of small strokes in the brain. There are also rarer conditions such as Pick's disease, Lewy body dementia, Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease and alcohol-related dementia. These may have similar symptoms, but different treatments, especially in the early stages.

THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

As time goes by, people with dementia become less able to make everyday decisions such as managing their finances. It is therefore important that a person with dementia organises their finances whilst they are still able to do so. An important step is to make a legal arrangement called a 'Lasting Power of Attorney'. This enables a person to select someone to act on their behalf if and when they become unable to manage their own affairs. This must be done whilst the person is able to fully understand what they are doing. Most solicitors will provide advice on this scheme.

Signpost have copies of a booklet 'Who decides when you can't' which gives extra information on the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Please phone 0161 456 2808 for a free copy.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE

The **Community Mental Health Team** consists of social workers, occupational therapists and community psychiatric nurses. Referrals to this service can be made through your GP. These professionals may be able to help you overcome specific difficulties that you need advice on, such as equipment, sleeping and behaviour problems, information about medication and possible side-effects, and help in accessing welfare benefits and services.

The **Alzheimers Society Stockport** can provide support and information for those people with any form of dementia, their carers and families. They offer various kinds of support including:

- The opportunity to talk to someone on confidence on the telephone
- The opportunity to meet someone to discuss private issues
- Support groups for carers
- A Lunch Club and Social Club for both carers and those with dementia
- A weekly Drop In Café.

For more information on their services, please call 0161 483 4446, or write to them at '292b London Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport, SK7 4RD'.

The **Stockport Dementia Care Training Project** provides training in dementia care for professionals, waged carers and family carers. They provide Carers Information Groups run over 8 x 2 hour sessions, or a One-Off Carer Information Session.

For more details contact by telephone them on 0161 419 6016, or email to 'sally.mendham@nhs.net'.