Dementia is an umbrella term for the variety of conditions that can cause the brain to deteriorate. Alzheimer’s forms the majority of cases but the thing all dementias have in common is a high risk of behavioural disorders, change in personality and people behaving out of character. Here are 10 signs that may indicate the early onset of dementia:

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life
2. Challenges in planning or solving problems
3. Difficulty in completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure
4. Confusion with time or place
5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
6. New problems with words in speaking or writing
7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
8. Decreased or poor judgement
9. Withdrawal from work or social interaction
10. Changes in mood and personality

If your loved one is displaying any of these behavioural changes then please talk to your GP who will be able to help with a diagnosis. Early intervention is so important and can ensure that there is an opportunity to take advantage of prescribed medicines and a range of therapies, this can make all the difference to the quality of life of someone with dementia.

Remember, you are not alone; always ask for help, especially if you are the main carer.
Free Dementia Training In Your Community

Home Instead isn’t just leading the way in training our CAREGivers, many of our 150 offices have also been supporting family members and the broader community by providing free family dementia workshops in their local area.

Home Instead has so far delivered over 500 free workshops and trained an incredible 10,000 people. The workshops have been extremely well received and have been attended by people from all walks of life, such as carers, NHS staff, firemen, policemen, ambulance services, MP’s, charities, voluntary care services and retailers.

Many of us could be affected by dementia at some stage in our lives whether it is you, a loved one or someone you meet in your day to day life. Like everything in life, learning new skills to help both yourself and others is invaluable.

The content of the workshops have been developed directly from Home Instead’s unique City & Guilds Alzheimer’s CAREGiver training programme and includes sessions on the following:

- Understanding Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias
- Capturing Life’s Journey
- Techniques to manage behaviours
- Activities to encouraging engagement

To find a workshop in your area please contact your local office (see details on the back page).

“I think this has given me more hope that I can help to improve the situation, difficult but possible.”

“Very positive session. It gave good pointers about deflecting behaviour etc. Life history really matters, this is a very positive suggestion. Made me feel that I am not doing as badly as a carer as I sometimes feel I am. All very valuable.”

“Wish I had this awareness training when I cared for my mother.”

“It’s reassuring to know that other people feel the same way I do.”

“Most valuable was recognising how important it is to share and spend precious moments rather than concentrating on the chores.”

“Even for a health professional like myself, it has been a real insight sitting with a group of family carers, sharing their own thoughts and feelings; it has been a real learning experience.”

Lancashire Fire & Rescue and NW Ambulance Service were just a couple of the organisations who attended Lytham’s workshops.
Our grandparents and even our great grandma were a big part of our lives growing up and although they didn't have any formal education to speak of themselves, they were fantastic, although unorthodox, teachers. I was taught to count with dominoes, taught to read by reading Woman's Own & Woman's Weekly out loud to my Nan before bed and taught patience by learning how to play Patience!

I was reminded again of unorthodox teaching methods when earlier this week, like many across the country, I attended a Home Instead Dementia Awareness workshop (with Ruth, Peter and the team at the East Lancashire branch), as part of National Dementia Awareness week. We were shown new methods of how to interact with dementia sufferers. We were also taught so much about the disease and the ongoing research into the causes and the search for a cure. One of the most powerful sections was on how to effectively communicate with dementia sufferers. I put these methods into practice on my visit to Nan earlier today.

When I arrived, Nan was sat there in the centre of everything, people buzzing around her and wanting to be near her so I joined the crowd and took my place. Nan loves to talk about her family, especially her Mum and Dad, and at this time during early evening she usually talks happily about them and what they've been up to; randomly picking out words that don't join up. This evening was different.

As shown on our dementia awareness course, I'd taken in a couple of images that I'd printed out of things that I know Nan likes - a big cart horse, a flat iron, flowers, a mangle and a picture of a shop we would all visit when a wedding or event was coming up, Stewarts of Ardwick. It was just like the sitcom “Are you being served” and my brother and I loved it!

Showing Nan the pictures was nothing short of amazing! She looked at the horse and after calling it a “beautiful Gee Gee” went on to tell me that her Dad kept horses, which he did. She told me that “he looked after them really well you know” She also looked at the iron and said “ooh that looks like a good iron”.

What made me smile the most, was the fact that Nan reminded me of something; on looking at the picture of Stewarts of Ardwick, she laughed and said “remember all those stairs” and pointed to where the two staircases were that we would all have to stop after the first long flight for a breather. That was a memory that I had totally forgotten, filed away until tonight. After showing Nan the pictures, she did something she hasn't done with me since her diagnosis and she started asking me questions; “are you working” “what do you do now” “do you like it”. The question and answer session lasted about 15 minutes and it was an absolute joy!

It may seem a strange thing for you to take printed images with you on your visit to see your loved one, but like Ruth at Home Instead said it would, it triggers memories and gives the person a different focus.

All the while I was sat with Nan, I was producing maltesers, one at a time and she looked at me each time like we were friends, conspiring to eat chocolate whilst no one was looking. That's exactly what we are - friends. Of the very best kind.
Giving You ‘Confidence To Care’

We are sharing our knowledge about dementia in many ways and most recently launched Confidence to Care, a book full of practical advice about recognising behaviours and how to cope with difficult situations.

The book combines personal stories with practical techniques and is drawn from decades of caring experience from family carers, professional carers and internationally recognised experts in ageing and dementia.

Each chapter begins with a real life example and goes on to explain why the behaviour happens, suggestions for care approaches and prevention tips.

Confidence to Care (UK Edition) is available through Amazon. All profits from the book will be donated to the Home Instead Senior Care Foundation (UK) and designated for donating to organisations and causes that support the elderly.

Online Information For Carers

We have put together some very useful resources which are available on our website www.homeinstead.co.uk, including online videos, checklists, A4 guides and useful references which will help and support you when you are caring for a person with dementia.

There are also a number of different online tutorials available. By the end of the course you will be equipped with several techniques to help improve both you and your loved one’s quality of life. Each class can be downloaded as a PDF checklist and can be completed within 5-15 minutes.

For more about dementia take a look at the Information and Resources section on www.homeinstead.co.uk/Alzheimers_and_Dementia_Care.do or just give your local office a call.