



## COVID-19 and Dementia: lessons from China

- Currently there is no evidence that COVID-19 causes cognitive impairment or cognitive decline. However, COVID-19 can cause hypoxia and delirium.
- It's important that anyone with dementia maintains their medical care and continues to follow medication regimes. People who are reliant on support with medication may find this more difficult if social contact is reduced. People who were previously independent in managing medication may require more support if their usual routine has been disrupted. Consider using technology to set reminder prompts, or a telephone call prompt may be helpful if face to face visits have reduced.
- A person may experience exacerbation of dementia symptoms for example, as a response to changes in routine or lack of routine, increased anxiety, reduced social contact, reduced availability of carer support. Symptoms may include: disrupted sleep patterns, agitation, irritability, aggression, anxiety, restlessness, withdrawal, boredom, loneliness. Where possible developing a new routine including activities to support a sense of value as well as mental and physical wellbeing will be important.
- Changes in environment, such as a hospital admission, can also increase dementia symptoms as the person with dementia may become disorientated and confused. Hospital environments can be noisy, with bright lighting, PPE equipment can also be frightening and increase anxiety and distress.
- People with dementia or mild cognitive impairment may find it difficult to remember and understand about the pandemic. They may find it difficult to remember to wash their hands regularly and to not touch their face. They may forget that they have been asked to stay at home and to maintain social distance. Memory aids may need to be used to help such as easy read posters by the sink, doors/exits. Consider washing hands together if you are visiting.
- Family and professional Carer anxiety, stress, loneliness and fatigue is also likely to be increased; roles and responsibilities may be changing and previous support services may not be providing respite. It's important that Carers health and wellbeing are supported.