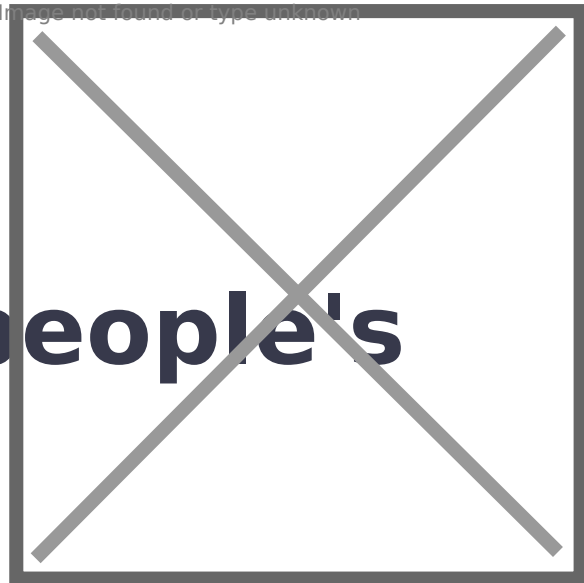


# Keeping up people's hobbies

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Go to <https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/improving-care-and-support/people-with-dementia/keeping-up-peoples-hobbies> for the latest version.

Everyone is different and a what is a hobby for one person might be a chore to another. One person may love cooking and get great pleasure from it; to another it is a task that has to be done. It is our differences that make us special.

## **Why are hobbies so important?**

People are often identified by their hobbies, for example as a 'footballer', an 'avid knitter' or 'crossword fanatic'.

It's a fundamental part of their makeup and as human beings, we need to be active and engaged to live well.

Doing our favourite things has many benefits for our health and well-being and can help us to be more mentally alert.

Hobbies involving other people have the additional benefit of keeping us socially engaged and connected with those around us, chatting, laughing and preventing loneliness.

There is plenty of evidence to support the idea that people can lose their skills through lack of practice.

So people with dementia should be encouraged and supported to continue to enjoy their hobbies and pastimes.

## **Simplifying hobbies for people with dementia**

Sometimes, simple changes will need to be made to enable the person to continue to succeed.

The trick is finding something that is just right, not too hard that the person cannot do it and becomes frustrated or disillusioned, and not so easy the person feels undervalued.

For a keen knitter, her dementia might mean she can no longer follow her favourite complex knitting patterns.

This doesn't mean she'll never knit again. Perhaps she could follow a simpler pattern or knit squares or scarves without a pattern.

If this is a struggle, perhaps she would enjoy undoing knitting, winding wool or sorting through old patterns. In this way she can enjoy her hobby by using the strengths and abilities she's retained.

The footballer may like to join a veteran team or enjoy 'walking football', which is played at a slower pace but still has the camaraderie of team mates.

Maybe he would enjoy cheering at a local game or prefer to watch the big game on the television.

The crossword fanatic may choose a more simple challenge, or find that enlarging the puzzle on a photocopier can help if eyesight is an issue.

By 'grading' activities people can continue to enjoy their favourite hobbies.

Sometimes people will stop doing their favourite hobbies because of perceived risks. For example, a person who has always enjoyed baking may be discouraged from doing so in case they hurt themselves on the hot oven.

Positive risk taking acknowledges and minimises potential risks, without eliminating them all together.

More information about positive risk taking can be found in 'Supporting people with dementia to get out in the community' section.

## Activities and routine

Routine is important. It's important to try and maintain a calm environment and a good routine to minimise upset and distress and to help a person maintain their independence.

### Sleep

Maintaining a healthy sleep pattern is really important for people with dementia, here is [advice on maintaining the sleep-wake cycle](#).

A daily routine will make staying at home easier. It can help the person know what to expect on a given day and feel less anxious, especially if they are worried by everything in the news. Alzheimer's Society have given this advice about maintaining a routine:

- put a regular schedule in place – you might find it easier and more reassuring to do things at the same time each day or week. If you find you feel better at certain times of the day, try to arrange activities for then
- keep things straightforward – simplify your routine or daily tasks to make them more manageable
- it might not be possible to follow the person's routine, for example, if this usually includes several daily walks. Try to looking at alternatives based on what the person particularly enjoys – whether that is exercise, fresh air,

flowers or hearing birdsong

- take things one step at a time – try to focus on one thing at a time and break each task down into smaller steps.

Tips for starting new activities:

- put out the things you need before starting an activity, for example, tools for gardening or ingredients for cooking. The person with dementia might like to help you with this
- reduce distractions such as background noise
- give yourself time and take things at a slower pace if you need to. And be reassuring if the person finds things difficult.

## Music

Music can bring people together, stimulate the brain and reduce feelings of agitation. We've found a couple of practical resources with ideas about how you can bring music into the lives of people living with dementia.

[BBC Music Memories](#) has a lot of music that you can search by type and 'memory radio' with archived radio shows.

[Playlist for life](#) have more specific information and tips about how to put together playlists of music that everyone can enjoy.

You can [find a playlist of Welsh language songs](#).

The [My house of memories app](#) lets you explore objects from the past and share memories.

## Activity guides

Health Innovation Network have [a catalogue of helpful activities](#).

There are some simple [ideas for care homes to try while maintaining social distancing](#).

## Useful resources

Find out more about the importance of hobbies for people living with dementia.

[Cân y Gân](#) - a Welsh language music playlist and CD created for care homes and those that provide care to welsh speakers but may not know which songs to play. You can download the collection from the link above

[Playlist for Life](#) - personal music for dementia (a website that lets you create playlists by decade, browse other people's playlists and much more)

[Five creative activities to help people living with dementia](#)

[Using art and music at home](#)

## Research links

Improve your practice by accessing the latest research findings:

[Dementia and imagination: Research Informed Approaches to Visual Arts Programmes](#)

[Exploring the theoretical foundations of visual art programmes for people living with dementia](#)

## We want your feedback

Help us to improve the Dementia resource for care professionals by telling us what you think about it in our short [four question survey](#).