

# Running self-help groups in sheltered and extra care accommodation for people who live with dementia

## A guide

This resource pack was compiled and written by Cindy Glover,  
Group Facilitator for the Dementia Self-Help Project



## The Mental Health Foundation

**The Mental Health Foundation** is a leading UK charity that researches and develops work on issues affecting people with mental health problems, dementia, and learning disabilities. The Foundation coordinated this project and its evaluation, and employed the group facilitator to run the project.

## Housing & Care 21

**Housing & Care 21** is a leading UK housing association providing social housing, care and support to older people, including people living with dementia.

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# Part one

## Introduction

The Dementia Self-Help Project was run by the Mental Health Foundation in partnership with Housing & Care 21. This practical resource is one of the outcomes of the two-year project, which finished in 2013. The project involved setting up, facilitating and evaluating three self-help peer support groups for people with early stage or moderate onset dementia who were living in extra care sheltered housing schemes in London. The project was funded by the City Bridge Trust, The Salters Charitable Foundation, and The Rayne Foundation.

### Aim of the project

The aim of the project was to find out whether the following outcomes could be achieved:

- Improved mental health and wellbeing for people living with dementia and family members who participated in the groups.
- Improved independent living skills for people living with dementia who participated in the groups.
- The ability for those participating in the groups to stay living longer and/or with the same level of care and support in their current housing, and the ability to delay moving to residential care or significantly increase their care and support.
- The groups to become self-sustaining either independently or with support from the housing provider (using the housing provider's own resources).

An evaluation gathered information about the process of setting up, running the project, and sustaining self-help groups of this type. The evaluation was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Fountain and the evaluation report was published at the same time as this resource pack. It is available to download for free at: [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/dementia-self-help-guide](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/dementia-self-help-guide).

A group facilitator, Cindy Glover, was employed by the Mental Health Foundation and seconded to Housing & Care 21. She was responsible for setting up and facilitating the groups, which were all based in London. Each group met on a weekly basis and was facilitated for six months. During this period, Cindy addressed a range of practical issues about living with dementia in supported housing settings. Up to nine people with dementia or memory problems were in each group. Occasionally some were accompanied by a relative. It was envisaged that there would be a Housing & Care 21 member of staff present to enable learning facilitation skills and co-facilitate the group. However, this only happened in one of the three schemes.

This guide has been put together by the facilitator, Cindy, based on her experiences of setting up and running the groups, with input and ideas from colleagues on the project advisory group. The project has been very well received by staff and participants. The evaluation is showing very positive findings. We hope that by reading this guide, staff members in housing schemes or other community organisations will feel confident and able to run similar groups elsewhere.

As a result of this project, a full evaluation report has been published in addition to this practical resource guide.

### **Evidence on why self-help groups work**

The project was evaluated by measuring participants' physical functioning, social relationships, wellbeing, expectations of the group and orientation in time. Participants were interviewed when the group was formed, after six months (when the Mental Health Foundation facilitator withdrew), and after nine months.

The evaluation also included collecting information from a variety of people involved in setting up and maintaining the peer support groups, including members of staff from Housing 21, key stakeholders from the project advisory group, Mental Health Foundation staff, participants in the groups, and the group facilitator.

Overall, the evaluation found that the peer support groups had a positive impact on participants' wellbeing, social support and practical coping strategies. Participants improved in their communication abilities and in managing their memory and their lives. Staff and stakeholder interviews revealed perceived benefits which extended beyond group members to include staff, families, friends, other residents in the house, and the housing provider. Findings also showed the need for such peer support groups to become more embedded within the housing schemes, with dedicated staff time and resources towards encouraging meaningful activities.

#### **One participant said:**

“Despite my physical frailty, my trembling and my poor memory, if we stand together we are strong. We can face the challenges we face. Let us be strong because we are together...”

#### **One relative of a participant commented:**

“She is getting quite a lot of stimulation – especially with the memory group, which I know she really enjoys. Even though she doesn't remember, the energy of enjoyment stays with her.”

For a full copy of the evaluation report see: <http://mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/dementia-self-help/>

## Who is the resource guide for?

This resource is intended for those who already have some knowledge of running groups and activities, and wish to run self-help groups for people who are either living with dementia or worried about their memory. It is primarily aimed at those working with people living in sheltered or extra care housing, but it is hoped it will be of benefit to others working in the field of dementia care. As the groups were delivered on site in the housing schemes, it does cover issues associated with running similar groups for people living in their own homes but who are geographically dispersed, such as transport.

The resource pack is a culmination of the lessons learnt through running a total of 72 weekly groups in three different extra care sites over a period of 18 months. It is a practical resource to assist group facilitators in setting up and running similar groups; it contains 50 ideas for activities, many of which were as a result of suggestions and ideas provided by the group participants themselves.



## What is a self-help group?

### What this section is about

This section covers what a self-help group is and what it aims to achieve. It also explores the difference between a self-help group and an activity group.

**Self-help groups** provide a place where people with similar problems or issues can come together to share practical ideas and give emotional support to each other. They can help people to:

- Take an active step in coping with their issue.
- Feel reassured that they are not alone with their problems.
- Create a sense of identity, shared experience and security.

People living with dementia can feel very vulnerable and reluctant to talk about the issues they are facing. A self-help group needs to be a safe environment where people gradually build up trust and feel able, if they wish, to share issues. It is the role of the facilitator to enable this (see below).

Self-help groups which are run for people living with dementia often follow a set theme or topic in order to help people to focus and concentrate. The themes may not always seem related to self-help, such as reminiscence, but topics can help create the feeling of companionship, shared experience of life and a sense of security. A chosen theme in reminiscence may relate back to dealing with different situations or loss. For example, talking about fashion may lead the group to discuss the clothes they now wear and how these have changed due to ease of dressing or comfort (e.g. no longer wearing stilettos). Alternatively, it may lead to participants sharing the difficulties they experience in getting dressed: for example, managing buttons. This in turn might lead to a discussion on coming to terms with changes in one's life or in people giving ideas on adapting clothing and sharing suggestions about where to buy easy-to-wear clothes.

### What makes 'self-help groups' different from 'activity groups'?

The expectation of a self-help group is that the group members will be empowered and enabled to share and problem solve for themselves and eventually communicate with each other with minimal guidance or the intervention of a facilitator.

In contrast, activity groups often have an end product or goal, such as acquiring or improving on a skill, winning a game or creating a product. The self-help group goal focuses more on what happens during the group meeting: the conversation and discussions that take place, the feelings of being connected, increasing confidence and sharing suggestions with each other on ways to manage problems.

It can be disheartening for someone to engage in an activity that they used to enjoy, but which they can no longer perform to the same standard. Some people in the early stages of dementia might give up activities they once did for this reason. Activities selected need to be at an appropriate level, where a person can participate and create with success.

Self-help groups do not preclude the use of activities, but the process of engagement and communication and improved wellbeing is the principle aim, rather than 'winning' or an end product. Self-help groups for people living with dementia should leave them with positive feelings of self worth and wellbeing. People may not always remember the content of the session, but they should be left with the sense that they have had a 'good' time.

## What is facilitation and the role of the group facilitator?

### What this section is about

This section explains what group facilitators and co-facilitators are and what their roles involve.

### Facilitation

Facilitation involves the engagement of participants to draw out opinions and ideas from the group. It enables the group to function as a cohesive unit in order to share, discuss, and look at issues of common interest, such as changes, loss, or ways of managing. It enables the group to make decisions – facilitation does not involve the authority to make decisions for the group.

### The group facilitator

A group facilitator is someone who is able to bring a group of people together to share common issues or problems and assist them in the process of sharing and identifying strategies which might help.

A facilitator's role during the meeting group is to:

- Explain what the group is about.
- Enable group members to introduce themselves and get to know each other.
- Assist the group in forming ground rules and, if necessary, remind them of these rules in subsequent meetings.
- Create a conducive environment/atmosphere where people are enabled to share.
- Listen to and summarise what is being said by the group or individuals and reflect this back to the group as needed.

- Make new members welcome and introduce them to the group.
- Enable those who are vocal to also listen to others.
- Enable those who are quiet in the group to contribute.
- Observe any discomfort that an individual in the group might be feeling and deal with this in a sensitive way.
- Promote and encourage participation of all the group members to actively engage in what the group is doing.
- Enable discussion without taking a particular position.
- Be fair, open and inclusive, and challenge any forms of discrimination.
- Provide a structure and process for sharing and discussion to take place.
- Enable the group to search for solutions.
- Keep the group focused – where there are issues raised that are not appropriate, they should be acknowledged and noted to be either explored at a later time or spoken about on a one-to-one basis outside of the group's time. Alternatively, the facilitator can assist the person to get appropriate help or information; keep to the allocated time of the group.

### The co-facilitator

A co-facilitator supports the facilitator. Ideally, the two facilitators work together and there is no main facilitator; the roles change fluidly between taking the lead, observing, reflecting and helping group members to participate. Although ideally two people should facilitate, realistically this is not always possible and compromise needs to be reached. For example, a situation may arise where on-site staff are suddenly sent to 'help' with the group and there is not time to explain the group's aims and so on. Whoever is helping with the group should be made welcome and learn quickly what their role is. See suggested handout for a person helping with the group (Appendix 1).

A co-facilitator of a group needs to support the facilitator (see above) and additionally:

- Assist people to find the way to and from the toilet if they need this during the group.
- If someone leaves before the group ends, leave with them and ensure they are ok. If not, then stay and chat with them or signpost them to another member of staff or encourage them to return.
- Assist members, where appropriate, to take responsibility for the group; for example, in making tea or washing up.

## Top tips

- Try to always have two facilitators running a group. It is extremely hard, as well as limiting to what you can do, if you are the only facilitator.
- Before starting the group, explore all avenues for help; for example, getting other tenants to help facilitate, or local volunteer services. You will need to invest time in training for this, but it is worthwhile in order to run a successful group.
- Know the on-site procedures to follow should an emergency occur where the group is being held. Check other staff know you are running the group and that they will respond if you raise the alarm.

### Case study/example

A group participant, Mrs. P, occasionally mentioned things that were important but not relevant to the topic being discussed. In response, the facilitator acknowledged to her that the subject was important and it was written up on a separate sheet as a topic that would be addressed by the whole group in a future session.

## What is dementia?

### What this section is about

This section gives a very brief outline as to what dementia is ...and is not.

‘Dementia’ is an umbrella term used to describe a number of signs and symptoms of many different types of illnesses. It is not in itself a diagnosis.

There are many different types of dementia; the most common forms are Alzheimer’s disease and vascular dementia. People deal with these illnesses and diagnoses in different ways. This is often influenced by personality, values and support networks. Putting yourself in someone else’s shoes and trying to understand their feelings and what is going on for a person living with dementia is important when running self-help groups; it enables the groups to be run in a sensitive, appropriate and compassionate way. The important thing to remember is every person is unique, individual and precious.

## The signs and symptoms of dementia include:

- **Problems with memory** – commonly this is the memory of recent events (short-term memory), hence the difficulty that people may have in remembering where they have put things or what they have recently eaten. In most forms of dementia, it is the short-term memory that is affected first. Long-term memory, such as childhood memories, tends to be less affected; however, in the later stages this may also be lost. Memories with strong emotional content tend to be better preserved and remembered, even if they are memories of recent events. The person may not recall the details but they will remember the emotions; for example, remembering an event as being a happy one or a sad one.
- **Difficulty organising and sequencing tasks** – such as managing new or less familiar tasks like changing a light bulb. Eventually, people may have problems doing routine things that they have done all their life: they may put tea bags into the electric kettle, put the electric kettle on the stove, or have difficulty in managing money and sorting coins for change in a shop.
- **Hallucinations** – meaning seeing things that are not there. This is more common in Lewy body dementia. It can cause people to feel very wary, afraid and anxious, and can occasionally cause them to be aggressive.
- **Problems with speech** – losing words or not being able to recall the right word, or saying the wrong words; for example, saying 'knife' instead of 'biscuit' or saying words the wrong way round.
- **Perceptual problems** – for example, having difficulty judging depth and distance. This is more common in vascular dementia. This can also be frightening, for example someone could perceive a round black rug on the floor as a deep hole.
- **Disorientation** – this can be in time, place or recognising people. For example, people think it is morning when it is night or that their son is their husband, or that they are somewhere other than home. This again can be very distressing or frightening for them. It can also be very upsetting for the people who are close to them.
- **Disinhibited or inappropriate behaviour** – this can occur when the frontal lobe of the brain is affected, as this part controls the ability to regulate impulses. The person may say or do things that are not socially acceptable in relation to the environment they are in or people they are with.
- **Changes in behaviour** – this varies from person to person. People may become more withdrawn, less able to initiate tasks, more agitated, frustrated or depressed. Sometimes the changes can be as a result of knowing something is wrong or as a reaction to the way they are being treated by others.

## Why get a diagnosis and what dementia is NOT

Although dementia is currently an incurable illness, there is now medication available which can help slow down the progression of some forms of dementia. This enables people to remain functioning at a higher level for longer. There is also much that can be done to help, including self-help groups, counselling, and enabling the person to enjoy the present and plan and make informed decisions regarding their future.

Dementia can be difficult to diagnose, which explains, to some extent, why diagnosis rates are low – currently around only 44% of people living with dementia in the UK have a diagnosis. In addition, because of the stigma attached to the diagnosis of dementia, people often prefer to live with the uncertainty rather than the knowledge of whether or not they have dementia.

Dementia is NOT delirium, which is when someone becomes acutely confused as a result of an infection and may display some of the signs and symptoms above. Delirium is a reversible condition and requires immediate treatment. A combination of delirium and dementia is not uncommon and it is important to identify when someone has an illness on top of their dementia.

Sometimes symptoms of dementia are mistakenly diagnosed as depression. Depression is very common among people with dementia and some symptoms of dementia can affect a person's mood. However, depression is very different from dementia because it is not an organic brain illness and there are a number of effective treatments and interventions which can deal with depression.

There can be many complex reasons behind the above signs and symptoms, meaning the cause may not be dementia. For example, the symptoms could be as a result of thyroid problems, dehydration, poor diet, delirium, depression or lack of mental stimulation. All of these are treatable. For this reason, it is important to seek help.

Dementia is NEVER the result of old age, although everyone experiences cognitive impairment to some extent as they grow older. For this reason, it is important to seek help.

Having difficulties remembering things does not automatically mean that someone has dementia. As people age, certain areas of thinking show a normal decline; this includes the ability to remember, think and react quickly. It can take longer to learn new information, and when attention is divided, for example when doing two things at once, there may be difficulties. The process of getting words out may take longer, such as when trying to remember the name of someone or something.

Often, the wisdom of experience can lead to better problem solving. However, problems not encountered before (such as using a

computer) make take longer to figure out. All these symptoms can be the natural process of growing older, but they can also be the start of dementia or other illnesses. Running groups which include people who are worried about their memory helps in either allaying fears or assisting people to find the correct timely diagnosis and help.

### Case study/example

Mr. B was encouraged to attend a group by his wife, as she had noticed gradual decline in his memory; he was often forgetting appointments and what he was meant to be buying at the shops. Through the group discussions, he was encouraged to discuss the memory problems with his GP, who referred him to the memory clinic. He was diagnosed to be in the early stages of Alzheimer's and started taking medication; following this, he reported an improvement in his mental functioning. For further information, see Appendix 17 on recommended websites.

## What is sheltered housing and extra care housing?

### What this section is about

This section gives a brief overview of sheltered and extra care housing.

Both sheltered housing and extra care housing are important community resources in supporting an ageing population, enabling older people to live independently for as long as possible. Many older people are able to stay living in sheltered or extra care housing until they die, thus preventing moves to more residential care settings.

Neither sheltered nor extra care housing are residential care homes. People have their own tenancy agreements. Tenants or their relatives remain responsible for their own arrangements, such as GP appointments. Care, if needed, is delivered as part of a person's individual care plan, which is assessed by social services or organised privately. Tenants have more, if not total, autonomy compared with people living in residential care homes; they have their own front door and therefore extra privacy. They may be eligible for benefits, such as attendance allowance and housing benefit, which are not applicable to those living in residential care.

### Sheltered housing

- Sheltered housing has been available for over 40 years.
- It can be privately owned, there can be shared ownership (where the occupant buys a proportion of the equity and pays rent on the remainder) or it can be rented. Each person has their own self-contained flat or bungalow within a complex.

- Most schemes have been developed by local authorities or registered social landlords (housing associations).
- Care, if required, is provided for individuals by staff working for external agencies, not based on site.
- There are usually some communal facilities, such as a lounge and often a laundry room.
- Support is provided by a scheme manager, sometimes called a warden. They may be on or off site and contacted through an emergency alarm call system.
- Sheltered housing is usually lived in by those aged 55+. An estimated 19% of those over the age of 85 now live in sheltered accommodation.
- Now, an increasing number of older and frailer people are living in sheltered accommodation.

### Extra care sheltered housing

- Extra care is a more recent model of housing, with care provision for older people. It has been developed over the last 20 years.
- It can be privately owned, there can be shared ownership, or it can be rented. Each person has their own self-contained flat or bungalow within a complex.
- Facilities are all designed to mobility/wheelchair access standards.
- Most people have a care package of at least four hours a week, which is assessed by social services. The care is usually provided by on-site staff (often with a scheme manager) but can be purchased from different providers if individuals wish. Increasingly, people assessed as qualifying for care funded by the social services can opt to have a 'personal budget', so they can exercise more choice in the care they receive.
- Extra care housing offers the full legal rights of occupation associated with being a tenant or home owner, in combination with being able to access 24-hour on-site care. This is delivered flexibly, depending on a person's care package.
- Schemes often offer a range of services, such as hairdressing salons, shops, restaurants and occasionally a day centre.
- Care staff and staff responsible for the building management are based on site, though they are not always employed by the same organisation. For example, the landlord may be a housing association but the care may be provided by a different organisation.



## Working with a housing provider

### What this section is about

This section is for those who are not employed or familiar with working for a housing provider. For example, you may be employed by the health service to provide a series of groups within a sheltered housing scheme.

It covers:

- How to decide where to work and points to consider if you don't have choice in this aspect.
- Things to be aware of and sensitive to.
- How to make yourself welcome.
- How to ensure staff know who you are and why you are there.
- Anticipating and understanding the challenges that may arise.
- Confidentiality.

### How to decide where to work

No place will be entirely ideal, but an understanding of issues will help you have realistic expectations and awareness of what needs to be put in place before you start the group.

If you have a choice as to where to work (for example, you have been commissioned to provide groups within sheltered accommodation within a local authority or NHS trust and wish to identify the most suitable sites), some points to consider are:

- What type of environment will you be based in? Sheltered housing or extra care? Be aware of the differences (see previous section). If tenants are living in sheltered accommodation they may be more independent and less readily available to take part in a group, as these are more likely to involve going out and engaging in activities in their community.
- What is the scheme managers' level of interest in and understanding of what you hope to achieve or offer? You need to ensure clarity of understanding as to what managers expect and also what support you can expect from them.
- How many people living there might be suitable, likely, and available to attend the group? If numbers are low, then you may need to look at other local housing schemes to partner with.
- How many relatives are likely to be interested in or available and willing to attend? Relatives attending will change the dynamics

of the group. Too many attending can result in it becoming a relatives' support group or may inhibit tenants from talking about issues, especially if they want to discuss their feelings towards their family. The inclusion of relatives who are non-tenants might be something the group discusses and decides on.

- What is already provided in terms of activity groups (structured and non-structured) and how well attended are they? Do people with dementia attend? Are they encouraged to (or not) by other tenants? This may give you an insight as to whether there is a stigmatising or accepting culture within the accommodation.
- Do tenants go out much? Where to? This may provide links with other community activities and include community groups occasionally visiting the group.
- What activities are brought in; for example, film clubs, local church, shows? How often does this happen? How well attended are they?
- What was the atmosphere like on your initial visit? Was it welcoming?
- Is there a suitable room to hold the group in each week? If there is not, this may prevent you from running the group.
- What on-site resources and equipment can you make use of?
- Do tenants want you to run a group there? Be aware there may be different perceptions among groups of residents, not all of which may be positive, about having a self-help group for people with dementia held on site.
- What connections already exist with the local community?
- Is there a tenant or member of staff able to co-facilitate the group with you? If so, this will assist in helping the long-term sustainability of the group.
- What are the times available for you to run the group? How will it affect any routines or other activities people are involved with?
- How long do you intend to run the group for and how will you help its sustainability? What will happen to the group when you take holiday?
- How established is the community and how frequently do tenants move? If the turnover of tenants is high, then this may have implications for the group feeling secure enough to get to know each other and share on a more personal level.
- What are the attitudes of staff towards the people living with dementia? If they are negative, you may wish to consider some training before the group begins.

See Appendix 2 for an assessment form that can be used for assessing where you work.

**If you do not have a choice as to where you are work** it is still important to reflect and gauge what the potential challenges might be. Planning for these will minimise potential problems before the group begins.

## Things to be aware of and sensitive to

### Staff

- Don't assume everyone knows who you are or what you will be doing.
- Don't assume everyone wants you to be there. Most places are busy with set timetables and routines and changing these or supporting new activities or staff can be stressful. Staff may not appreciate being given extra work in order to support you.
- Are the housing provider (represented by the scheme manager) and the care team both from the same organisation? If not, make sure you work with both.
- What are your expectations of them and what are their expectations of you? Clarify and, if necessary, keep under review.
- Be clear that staff know what your role is and also about their responsibilities specific to the group. For example, will they be collecting people from their flats to attend the group, or will you?

### Tenants

- Other tenants may be resentful at not being included in the group or not know what it is for; it is therefore important to take time to talk with them and explain the project and its purpose.
- Check if you will be occupying a room that they would otherwise have access to so you can find out whether they might resent you using it.
- Do some tenants have negative attitudes towards people living with dementia that need to be discussed?

Being aware of these potential challenges will help in preparation and thinking through what to say and how to manage any conflicts of interest. Be clear about your objectives and know what to say, but also be prepared to listen and to compromise.

## How to make yourself welcome

- Visit at a time that suits staff and tenant routines.
- Talk about the purpose of the group with all staff and tenants. If possible, create opportunities for doing this by attending tenant meetings, other activities, and staff meetings.
- Provide time to listen to tenants, relatives and staff, and for them to express and discuss any concerns, and to offer ideas and be involved.
- Have a general handout about the group to give to tenants, staff and relatives.
- Allow plenty of time to be around before the group begins so that you familiarise yourself with the building. Get to know the staff and tenants, listen to any concerns, and think through how, if necessary, these might be addressed if they are raised in the group. For example, someone well known by the group being ill in hospital means you will need to adapt the group accordingly to make time to acknowledge and talk about this.
- Be aware of the atmosphere and be sensitive to people's moods.
- Check whether group members are all able to attend.
- Check any other changes that tenants might want to raise or discuss as a group, such as hospital admission, deaths or staff leaving.

## Ensure staff know who you are and why you are there

- Each week on arrival make sure you see your main staff contact before starting the group, most likely by visiting the staff office.
- Ensure not just on-site managers but also senior/regional managers in the organisation know what you are doing.
- Staff and tenants change; for this reason, you will probably have to repeat explanations of your role to different people. Don't assume they will all know if you've explained it or expect the information to be passed on.
- Introduce yourself to staff you haven't seen before.
- Try to arrange regular meetings with the manager in order to discuss or anticipate any issues that might arise.
- Leave written information for staff which covers: the group and its purpose; who is attending; when the group is held; and your contact details.

## Anticipate and understand challenges that may arise

- Know who you should report to if you have a safeguarding concern.
- Don't join in with gossip and try and avoid listening to it.
- Remember you are a visitor.
- Respect staff and tenants and empathise with their situations. Learn from them: the best source of information is often staff, as they usually spend the most time with tenants.
- Find time to discuss with your line manager any issues which have arisen within the group.
- Be clear of their expectations of you and your expectations of them.

## Confidentiality

What is discussed in the group is confidential. However, if you are concerned that any matter raised is a safeguarding concern you have a responsibility to report it to your line manager and your organisation's safeguarding officer, as well as the safeguarding officer for the housing organisation, in line with whatever safeguarding policy they have. Ensure you have knowledge of this at the start of the project.

## Understanding whose job it is to do what

Residents of extra care and sheltered housing will have security of tenure and usually have mental capacity to make their own decisions. When hearing aids don't work, keys go missing or optician appointments need to be booked, it is the tenant and not the housing association that is responsible. If you have concerns about this, check with the tenant that they are happy for you to discuss this with someone else first. Preferably support the person to do it themselves, or do it together.

Some tenants (usually more the case in extra care sheltered housing) will have a care package assessed by social services. Staff on site may be providing that care service, but only the care in the care package. Other care and support needs are provided for the tenant either by themselves, by relatives or by referring back to social services for a review of their care plan. Full reviews are unlikely to happen unless they are requested. It is possible that if they already have a care package in place, they will be seen as a lower priority by social services compared to those who have never been assessed or who are not living in sheltered accommodation.

Check who you should report to if things go wrong – e.g. electrics, clients' concerns.

## Top tips

- Communicate continually.
- Have key contact numbers easily to hand.
- Make sure you know what procedures to follow for fire and safety, how to use the emergency alarm system, and how to raise safeguarding concerns.

### The following are examples of situations occurring when working with housing and care providers.

Over the course of the groups, discussion revolved around a perceived risk averse culture that some staff were believed to promote. One such example was a group member being told she was not allowed to bake a cake for others in the scheme because of the risk. However, when this was discussed with the manager about this, it was possible to come to an agreement that the group could take responsibility for this, with the support of the facilitator, and the person was then able to bake for the other participants.

During one group, tenants started to attend late. This was because they were waiting for their medication. The method of administering medicine from blister pack to bottles had changed. This increased the time it took to give medication. The time of the group was changed to accommodate this.

## Involving and making use of your local community

### What this section is about

This section explains the advantages and benefits of engaging the local community in the groups.

### The advantages of involving the community

Society comprises of many different people and diverse communities. If people are not able to go out any more, and this is certainly the case for some residents of sheltered and extra care housing, they often miss the experience of meeting different people, going to different places and generally participating in community life. Some enjoy the opportunity of seeing babies, children or young adults. In addition, they can miss activities they used to engage in, such as visits to the pub or the chance to go shopping. Having new faces appear in the group increases participation level and engagement.

## Who is the local community and who should you involve?

Before you start the group sessions:

- Think through who and what is in the local community where the sheltered accommodation is situated.
- Walk around the area and note down what you see: libraries, shops, places of worship, schools, etc. Think, if you were no longer able to go out, which of these would you miss the most?
- Be nosy! Find out if the local church has a parent and toddler group. What activities happen at the library? Are there pet visiting schemes or dog training clubs advertised at the veterinary surgery – might there be well-behaved dogs that could visit? Buy a local newspaper and check what events are happening locally that you might have missed on your walk about. Gather as much local information as you can from the council website, leaflets, libraries, faith groups, etc.
- Think through what people, activities, and places you know the group members no longer engage with and might like to be able to use.
- Assess people for the group to find out what they enjoyed in the community they came from, and what elements they used (or still use). They may well have a better knowledge of the area than staff or yourself, so make sure you tap into this.

Who you then involve from the community is up to the group and what they like doing. Deciding this should be as a group – use the activity sheets on community in the resource pack as guidance. Thinking through the points above will help you form an idea of what is realistic and what is available.

## Asking for help from the community

- This takes confidence to do. The golden rule is: make sure you visit community facilities (e.g. shops) at a time that suits the person running the facility, and when they have time to listen and talk. People are usually happy to listen or help, and if they are unable to do so, they may have a suggestion as to who you might be able to get help from.
- When visiting an organisation, ensure you speak to the right person; you may need to phone beforehand to find out the right name and when the best time to visit would be. Visit or ask them at a time when the shop/place is quiet.
- People are usually less likely to say ‘no’ if they see you in person.
- Find out about them and what they do; while they talk, listen and think through how this might benefit the group. For example, the local beautician might not be able to give you the free hand

massages you had hoped for, but they may be able to provide you with sample hand creams for raffle prizes or old beauty catalogues for doing collage or discussion groups.

- Explain clearly where you are working and what you are doing, and have an idea about how you think they may be able to help. Then ask whether they might be able to contribute.
- Remember that most people, if they have time, genuinely like to help out.
- Make sure you take information you can leave with them even if it is only a business card, and take the name and contact details of the person you speak to.
- People often don't respond to letters or emails as they are too busy, so don't waste your time writing them; go and visit!
- Afterwards, make sure you follow up with a thank you card or email, and keep their contact details for next time. If it is appropriate and you are having any get-togethers or parties, invite them as a thank you and a way of keeping in touch.

### Case study/example

Ms. L did not meet the criteria for attending the group but she did say she was very lonely. She had moved to the accommodation a year ago from a completely different part of the country. She had not been out of the accommodation apart from on weekly outings with a care worker to do her shopping. She was too scared to go out alone and was fearful of the London streets, and therefore never went out unaccompanied. A referral was made to the social services for a case review. It was more than six months later that the review took place. In the meantime, a referral was made, with her agreement, to a voluntary befriending service, and they offered her a befriender. She is now able to go out on her own and engages actively in the local church. Having knowledge of and access to the resources available locally to the housing scheme made all the difference to Ms. L's life.

### Involving and working with relatives

- Relatives are often a fantastic resource; if they are regular visitors to the scheme then they usually know the person they are related to well, and can often help with filling in information if the person is anxious or disorientated. Also, they often know how to relate well to other group members.
- If the group member is new to the accommodation and perhaps anxious or not used to a group and going out of their flat, relatives can help them feel more at ease and then gradually withdraw once the person is settled.



- **A note of caution** – it is important to explain to the relative the purpose of the group and, if they are attending the group, to emphasise that their role is one of enabling rather than answering or dominating conversations over their relative.
- Relatives may need support themselves; this should be given outside the group by signposting them to relevant services, such as carer support groups.
- There may be occasions when it is not appropriate for the relative to attend, or when the person living with dementia would prefer them not to be present. Before the relative attends any groups, explain that this situation might occur, so that when or if this occurs they are not offended. For example, sometimes the group may wish to discuss issues relating to family: about not understanding dementia or not wanting to be a burden on family. In these situations, it is easier for the person living with dementia not to have their relative present as then issues can be explored more fully.

### Case study/example

One lady really benefitted from the group, but due to her memory problems only felt confident enough to attend when her niece could accompany her. Over time, the lady gradually attended on her own.

### Having visitors to the group

There are many people who might visit. Before they do so, remember it is for the group to decide who visits, and not you. You should check first that the group is willing for them to visit. Visitors might include local school children doing an intergenerational project, someone sharing a new skill or hobby, a musician, students, or someone wanting to learn about how to run similar groups.

- If the group has a visitor, try to meet them before they attend in order to clarify boundaries, what you expect of them, and what they expect of you. Also, just because they have visited once does not give them automatic permission to visit again. This should be made clear to them.
- The visitor needs to have a general understanding of dementia and the way to communicate appropriately with people living with dementia.
- The visitor should not be left unattended with the group and should never work unsupervised or without guidance.
- Never share confidential or private information about tenants.
- If an animal is brought into the group, check that the entire group is happy with this and that there are no allergies or people who will be afraid.

- If using dogs, check the safety and temperament of the dog. They should initially be kept on a lead. Also check whether the dog is housetrained, has fleas, is likely to bark a lot, or is likely to jump up and scratch delicate skin. Say no to the visit if you have any doubts.
- Ensure the court manager or staff member in charge is aware that the visit is happening.
- Check the organisation's policy around pets and animals before organising for someone to bring an animal to the group.

### Top tips

Find out what the group likes, but also find out what is on offer locally so that you do not build up unrealistic expectations.

Make full use of relatives and friends of relatives – sometimes, advertising on notice boards in the scheme helps with this. For example, you can say “**Wanted – person who can...**” or you can put up requests for equipment, from tennis balls (for a session on tennis and sport) to fur coats (for a session on controversy and fashion).

### Case study/example

One of the groups discussed fashion and how they missed the ‘frocks’ they had worn. Contact was made with the local vintage clothes shop, and they lent items for a group discussion on fabric and fashion – once this link was made, other group sessions could follow on, focusing on shoes, hats, etc.

A local florist was asked to come and run a flower arranging workshop, which she willingly agreed to, only charging wholesale price for the flowers that were used.

# Part two

## Preparing for the group

### Recruiting participants

#### What this section is about

This section explains who should participate in the group and contains suggestions on how to identify and select people.

Pre-group preparation is essential for delivering a successful session for each individual as well as for the group as a whole. The section includes:

- Essential criteria for a group participant.
- How to find your people.
- Having a pre-group 'launch'.
- Reviewing who is attending.

#### Essential criteria

To attend a self-help group the participants should have the following:

- An understanding of what the group is for and an awareness or concern regarding their memory loss or other signs and symptoms of dementia, such as becoming socially withdrawn.
- An ability to listen to others.
- An ability, with encouragement if necessary, to contribute to discussions.
- An ability to concentrate sufficiently to be able to take part in the group.

Some of the points above might be difficult for members to achieve all of the time. People can have 'good days' and 'bad days'. They may need reminding to listen to others, or encouragement to join in. People may drift off from concentrating and even fall asleep. Your assessment needs to take into account to what extent these factors are going to prevent someone from attending.

#### Suggested ways of finding group members

If you do not already work in the place where the group is being held, ask the experts!

This should include:

- The staff, especially those who have daily close contact with tenants.
- Attend a staff meeting and explain your project and ask for suggested names.
- Tenants/residents. Attend other activities that are provided for tenants, e.g. coffee mornings. Inform them why you are attending and what you plan to do. Gauge interest and ask if they know of anyone who might be interested. Be aware that some of them may not wish to speak about concerns in front of others, so you may wish to call informally on them after the meeting to discuss the group with them further in private.
- Relatives and friends. These can be reached by putting up posters in communal areas.

You can also:

- Write a letter to each tenant offering more information; provide your contact details or, if they have one, insert a short article in the tenant newsletter. Suggest that they share the information with their families and friends if they want, and ask them to spread the news.
- Depending on time constraints, include in the letter to each tenant a request to meet with them, and suggest a provisional meeting date.

## Having a pre-group launch

This is an opportunity for you to invite all potential participants and also other tenants. Providing refreshments and music usually attracts a good number, and making it a social event where relatives and staff can attend also helps.

A launch is useful for:

- Observing how the individuals you think may attend the group might manage in a meeting.
- Creating an opportunity to meet relatives and inform them and other tenants about the group; it gives them a chance to ask questions.
- Creating an opportunity to briefly talk about the group and possibly find other potential members who you may not have previously identified.

The launch should be advertised beforehand with posters, articles in newsletters, by word of mouth, and by putting an invitation through letterboxes to ensure everyone knows about the event.

## Reviewing who is attending

Once you have your list of potential people, have a review, thinking through:

- Is the group balance right in terms of people being able to support and share with each other? Do you think the group mix will work? If not, you may need to consider changing the way the group is run (e.g. if you have several members with visual impairment or with more advanced dementia, this will influence the type of sessions you will run).
- Are there issues you might need to consider that may be of concern to other group members? For example, personal hygiene issues possibly relating to incontinence, personal prejudices, discriminatory views, etc.? If there are, you may need to speak to the individual about this or address it sensitively when setting the ground rules. If matters cannot be resolved then it may be that an individual decides not to be part of the group or is supported to leave the group if they are unwilling to consider the issue of concern.
- If there are people with severe hearing or visual impairments, think through how you will cater for this within the group. Check with the person whether they are willing for other participants to know that they cannot see or hear well and whether you may mention this.
- An overall aim of what you think each person will achieve by coming to the group.
- The abilities within the group, being realistic about what size the group will be. An ideal size for the group is eight people, with a maximum of two people who have hearing difficulties, and one with sight loss. It does not matter how many people have mobility difficulties, apart from that it will influence the time it might take in getting people to and from the group. Think through whether you have enough support for this and ensure you have sufficient room for those in wheelchairs.

If you need to reduce the size, choose group participants who you feel will most benefit, or consider running two smaller groups.

## Top tips

- During the selection process, do be open and honest about the group and who it is for.
- Have knowledge of other help that might be available if a person is not suitable for the group, e.g. a local befriending service.
- Make your poster bright and bold; use a font size that people can read, and place it at a height people can see.

## Case studies/examples

It is not always clear from an initial assessment who will be able to take part in the group, as the following examples illustrate; be careful not to make assumptions or prejudge ability.

Mr. P had very poor concentration and he easily became agitated. He was invited to join the group, and although he was a little ambivalent, attended the first two sessions; he chose to leave on both occasions after about 10 minutes. As he was unable to listen to others or contribute (due to his level of agitation), he was not included in further groups. Ideally, Mr. P would have been given one-to-one attention instead of attending the group, but this did not happen. He occasionally joined in for the tea break and then chose to leave with a staff member.

Mrs. G was in her 90s and seemed to have a poor attention span, and also had poor sight and hearing. However, she was motivated to attend the group. There was hesitation as to whether she met the criteria in terms of concentration, but Mrs. G attended and became more alert and focused during the activities, and it was noted by staff that she often mentioned the enjoyment she derived from attending.

Mrs. H was unable to understand the reasons for attending the group. However, her daughter was very keen she should attend and was willing to accompany her. As numbers were low, the facilitator decided to include her in the group, and her daughter became a positive asset to the group in terms of helping her mother and others to participate.

## Assessing potential group members

### Meeting with the individual

Each person attending the group should be met and assessed, even if the person is known well. This gives an opportunity to:

- Assess whether or not they meet the criteria for the group and find out, if suitable, if they are interested in attending.
- Clarify with them the objectives of the group and find out their expectations.
- Get to know individual preferences and ascertain any specific needs you should be aware of (e.g. health or communication issues).
- Answer any questions they have or to address any concerns.
- Find out days they are available.

(See Appendix 3 for assessment form.) Use this as guidance only – it is unlikely you will ask ALL the questions.

## The assessment

- Explain why you are visiting the person and thank them for their time.
- If possible, and if they are willing, meet them in their home. This gives a snapshot of the person and usually helps them feel more at ease.
- Visit at a time that best suits the person and give them an opportunity to have a relative or friend present if they want.
- Start the assessment by chatting generally so the person feels relaxed. You may wish to use visual cues such as photographs from their home.
- Keep questions to a minimum. Find out from other staff as much basic information as possible before doing the visit.
- If you are going to write notes, ask for permission. Do not 'form fill', but just write a few key points to jog your memory and help you write up the assessment later.
- At the end, summarise the conversation and thank them again for their time.
- Write up the assessment as soon as you can after the visit, or at least make notes on things you might forget.

## Top tips

- Don't call your visit 'an assessment'. Explain you want a chat because you are starting a group.
- People are often very anxious about answering direct questions; therefore, make the conversation quite general in order to gather the information.
- If the person has a relative or friend with them, ensure it is the tenant you are asking questions of. If you need to clarify something, ask "Do you mind if I ask... a few things?"
- Be prepared to digress and reminisce. Try and make the conversation two-way, chatting about general things – it's not an interrogation!
- Don't outstay your welcome in order to gather information. The group is for their benefit.
- It is better to conduct two visits and build up rapport than to try and get all the information at once and exhaust the person.
- Be clear as to what they hope to get out of the group and what you think they will get out of attending.

- Leave a letter at end of the visit with information about the group and your contact details. This is to remind them of your visit and the purpose for it.

## Preparing the group environment

### What this section is about

A successful group is dependent on many things; one of these is the environment in which it is held. This section covers a checklist of things to consider when setting up the group.

### What to look out for in a room

- **Heating** – Is it adequate or too hot? Guidelines for older people suggest 21°C and not above.<sup>1</sup> If using additional heaters, be mindful as to noise level as this may cause distraction. Also check if there is a lot of external noise when the windows are open.
- **Ventilation** – Check for drafts, strong smells or stuffiness. You may wish to consider using an air freshener or opening windows in advance.
- **Noise** – How are the acoustics? Will people be able to hear each other? What might cause a problem when the group is held (e.g. loud heating systems, external noise, corridor noise, noise of lift)?
- **Room size** – Ensure there is adequate room for people to sit comfortably. Arrange furniture so that it has a cosy feel even if the room is very large; for example, place chairs in a small circle in one area or use screens if available.
- **Accessibility** – Think about the distance of the room from tenants' flats. Will this affect people's motivation or ability to attend?
- **Toilet facilities** – Should preferably be nearby, but if this is not possible then ensure clear signage and directions both to and from the toilet or that people go to the toilet before the group starts.
- **Furniture** – Ensure a variety of suitable chairs for people attending group, as well as safe access to tables of a suitable height for tea breaks and other activities. If there are no suitable tables, ensure safety in reaching for drinks on low coffee tables.
- **Refreshments** – If not available, get access to the use of a kettle (and plug socket and a couple of good trays for cups, etc.).
- **Lighting** – Good lighting is needed, especially for those with poor vision. This should preferably be natural lighting, but if this is not possible then use extra lamps or even give lighted magnifiers to members.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to the West Midlands Public Health Observatory (UK): <http://www.wmpho.org.uk/publications/item.aspx?id=47>

<sup>2</sup> Assistive Technology (AT) dementia for suggested products: <http://www.atdementia.org.uk/>



- **Interruptions** – Minimise interruptions by having a note on the door. Check the room use does not conflict with other routines (e.g. bins being emptied by the cleaner).
- **Room safety** – Check for tripping hazards (e.g. carpets/rugs, loose wires), and safely position the flip chart.
- **Access to audio visual equipment** – If you are using this (e.g. a television, music system or DVD player), check beforehand that it is in full working order and you know how to operate it.
- **Storage** – Is there a safe and secure place for any equipment you might use?
- **Notice boards** – Check whether you can use them and if there are adequate drawing pins.
- **Room use by others** – Check if you need to book the room in order to use it. Is the room ever used by others at the regular time you might want it? How much control can the group have in it becoming their space? After the group, do you need to rearrange the room as it was?

### Creating the room identity

Check with other room users regarding what changes you are allowed to make to the room. For example, are you able to put up pictures or add furniture or equipment such as a games corner? If you are able to, once the group is established, you may wish to discuss and decide as a group on the following in order to make the room more welcoming and enable the place/group to be enhanced as somewhere people enjoy coming into (providing you have the resources to do so – if not, don't raise expectations):

- Flowers and plants (if plants, then see if someone will take responsibility for watering).
- Keeping the room tidy.
- Providing a selection of seats or stools for feet if chairs are too high.
- Welcoming music before the session starts.
- Notice on door/ flip chart.
- Notice boards with information about the group – what has happened, future events, birthdays, calendars.
- Dated clock to aid orientation.<sup>3</sup>
- Use of familiar reminiscence objects.
- Newspapers or magazines of interest.

<sup>3</sup> Assistive Technology (AT) dementia for suggested products. <http://www.atdementia.org.uk/>

The perfect room does not exist! Bear in mind the needs of your individual group members; write down a checklist of what your key criteria are and adapt accordingly.

### Top Tips

- Be aware of seasonal changes affecting the room's suitability for hosting the groups and the time of day you will be using it. A room assessed in summer may seem ideal but the reality when running the group in November may be different.
- The layout of one sheltered housing scheme had identical lounges in the same position on different floors, which could confuse group participants. Placing a notice on the door of the lounge where the group **did not** meet and directions in the lift as to where it did helped to orientate people who occasionally went to the wrong room for the group.

## Format/structure for the group

### What this section is about

- How many people should be in the group?
- How long should a group session last?
- The importance of group structure.
- Suggested template for a group programme.
- Ways of reminding people about the group.

### How many people should be in the group?

There are no set guidelines for this, but ideally no fewer than four people living with dementia and up to 12 participants in total (including facilitators). However, this depends on:

- Individual abilities of group members and their stage of dementia.
- Other disabilities the group members may have that will require additional support.
- Number of co-facilitators or more able members, e.g. relatives or other tenants.

Take time to reflect on the balance of the group, e.g. levels of ability to participate. Ensure there is a balance of more active participants and those that will require significant support to participate.

## How long should the group last?

The group sessions can last from one hour to two and a half hours in length. Points to consider are:

- How many people are attending?
- How are individual people's concentration levels?
- Will there be a 'slow' start while people arrive, which will not count as 'group time'?
- Will you have a tea break?

A typical length is two hours with approximately 20 minutes tea break in the middle. In one group where there was a very slow start to the group (as there was little help available to get people to the meeting room), the group started with the tea break which was not counted as group time and then when everyone was present the group began with a maximum of an hour. In another group, the tea break was after the main activity, giving people time for individual chat and discussion. The group then finished with a reflective summary as to what the group had discussed and what would be covered the following week.

## Group Structure

Again, there is no hard and fast rule for this and it will depend on things such as when the group is run and whether people are likely to arrive punctually or not.

Having a set routine will provide a sense of orientation and consistency. People will know what to expect and will feel more secure. Therefore, whatever you decide is the best format for your group, be clear about what it is and, wherever possible, keep it the same. However, do not forget to review at regular intervals to see if it is still the best structure.

## Template for the group

See Appendix 4 for a method of planning each week's group. The evaluation part is important in checking what needs to be brought forward to the following group meeting, as well as time for reflective practice and looking at what works well or could be improved upon.

## Ways of reminding people about the group

Different methods work for different people and you will need to be flexible in your approach:

- Using calendars, diaries and whiteboards in individual flats.
- Calling for people half an hour before the group and then calling again to accompany them.
- Using an 'intercom' system that goes to individual flats, if possible.

- As the group gets to know each other, ask them to take responsibility for calling for each other.
- Signs and notices in the lift or communal areas.
- Asking other staff to remind them of the group in the morning.
- Letters written with dates and times of meeting (programme for the month).
- Telephoning participants.
- Keeping the group to a set time and date and place will, in time, help.

## Ground rules

### What this section is about

- What are ground rules?
- Why are ground rules important?
- How to decide on ground rules.
- How to use ground rules during the group.

### What are ground rules?

Ground rules are a list of agreed statements produced by the group as to how the group will behave during the time it meets. These are decided on by and for the group. They are written down and can be referred to during all subsequent groups, usually at the beginning of the group, or when someone new joins the group. They should be easily accessible at all times.

### Why are ground rules important?

- Ground rules allow for the smooth running of the group. They act as a reminder for the code of conduct and behaviour the group has decided on, especially if there is conflict or anyone is having difficulty adhering to the 'rules' set by the group.
- They provide a sense of reassurance and safety to the individual group members.
- They help people take responsibility for the group and contribute to the ownership of the group.

## How to decide on ground rules

Ground rules need to be discussed and agreed in the first group meeting (after introductions and welcome and the reason for meeting).

Explain that as the group will all be meeting for X number of weeks, it would be helpful to have a set of guidelines that the group could adopt so that it runs smoothly.

Follow up with an example such as: we will start the group with introducing ourselves to each other each week.

Use a flip chart to write the suggestions straight away for all to see.

**If (as is quite likely) no one has any ideas, you may wish to ask a few direct questions, for example:**

- Do you think listening to each other is important? Do you think we should have this as one of our rules for the group?
- Do you think it is rude to be interrupted? Should we have this as one of the guidelines?
- We have things that are the same (like our memory problems) and we have things that are different (like our backgrounds). Should we respect our differences?

(Refer to Activity 15 on setting ground rules)

## How to use ground rules during the group

Once the group has decided on the ground rules, these should be typed up clearly for all the group members to be able to see and displayed somewhere in the room so that they can be referred to. You may also decide to give individual copies to each member.

How often you remind the group depends on the members; for some, it may give a sense of routine familiarity and safety, whereas for others it may seem regimented and bureaucratic. They do not have to be referred to each week, but they need to be acknowledged and may be used, if for example:

- There is a new member or visitor to the group.
- Someone is finding it difficult to adhere to the rules – give a gentle reminder to the whole group rather than to the individual; ideally people will remind each other but ensure people do not feel criticised or that they have done wrong.
- To check if the group wants to review rules; this will occur with time as the group evolves and may need to include how to make new members welcome so that the group does not become resistant to new people.

## Forming a group identity

### What this section is about

A group identity helps people belong to something. If someone feels they belong, they are more likely to feel relaxed, accepted, confident and able to share both positive and negative thoughts and feelings. This section explains how forming a group identity might be achieved.

It includes:

- How to make individuals feel welcome before the group starts.
- Ways to make the group feel safe and to encourage sharing during the group, creating a sense of responsibility for the group.
- Top tips.
- Case studies/examples.

### How to make individuals feel welcome before the group starts

- Try and get to know group members as much as you can before the group starts. This begins when you do the initial assessment to recruit participants.
- Visit or telephone members in advance and remind them the group is happening and that you are looking forward to seeing them. This will also give you an indication as to whether people are able to attend the group that week (they might be ill or have a prior engagement). Once you know who is and isn't attending you may need to change the programme slightly.
- Be aware of the physical needs of the individual and how you will cater for these, e.g. are they likely to use the toilet or need help with things like verbal communication, participating in sighted activities, hearing, or seating?
- For each planned activity, think about the implications for individual members and whether they are likely to be able to fully participate; if not, how can they be enabled to do so?
- Give time to set the scene – have the correct number of chairs ready in a circle or horseshoe shape (better one too many chairs than too few).
- Have a welcome sign on the door which also reminds people what they are coming to.
- Have a flip chart or notice saying 'welcome' with the name of the group, day and date.

## Ways to make the group feel safe and to encourage sharing during the group

- On arrival, welcome individuals to the group. Where this is not possible, have a welcoming feel to the group – e.g. by having some familiar music playing (see section above on ‘preparing the group environment’).
- Remind people of the ground rules (see section above on ‘ground rules’).
- Try to seat people where they will be most comfortable for their needs; for example, where they can best hear things.
- At the beginning of the group, explain or remind the group what happened the week before and what the group will be discussing.
- Have broad headings on a flip chart, and follow a set familiar routine; this helps people to feel secure and aids orientation as to what is happening (see Appendix 4).
- Use warm-up activities (see Part 3) to gauge the mood of the group and help people relax. Adapt the group accordingly. This can feel like a slow start but it is worth the investment in time, especially using activities where people get to know each other and the things they have in common. These can then be used by the facilitator to prompt or remind people of common interests.
- Allow for times of quiet reflection – speaking in order to fill silences is not always necessary.
- Be relaxed – give time for people to think and respond.
- Remind and give people information about what the group is discussing or doing, as required by individuals.
- Explain things in short simple sentences.
- Make use of nonverbal cues, such as hand gestures, to explain things.
- Be aware of your body language, as well as the tone and pitch of your voice.
- Try to avoid asking direct questions specifically aimed at individuals; ask more generally.
- Thank people for attending the group and anything specific they have contributed to the group.

## Create a sense of responsibility for the group

- Have ground rules that the group decides on.
- Get participants to choose the name for the group.
- Give the more able in the group responsibility for seeing others back to their flats or collecting people (if they are happy to do so).
- Ask for help in running some of the activities – use people’s skills and strengths.
- Ask people to choose what refreshments should be bought for the following week.
- Ask people to help with clearing up or washing up at the end of the group.
- Let people choose what music should be played at the beginning of the next group.
- Always refer to the group as “your group” or “our group”, never “my group”.
- Allow people to question decisions you have made and be prepared to change.

## Top tips

- Things will go wrong and you won’t remember everything. Don’t beat yourself up about it.
- Do give yourself time to prepare and also time to reflect.
- Remember you are running a challenging group; be patient with yourself as well as others.

### Case studies/ examples

One part of a group session was planned around the theme of identity and Jamaica, which is where one of the group members was from. Just before the meeting, the man communicated that he was unable to attend. Therefore, the group talked about Nigeria instead, where another group member was from.

One lady was very short and found the seating was too high. A small box was provided specifically for her to put her feet on while sitting in the chair to prevent them dangling. Wherever the box had been placed in the room next to a chair, she and others saw this as her chair.



One gentleman was easily distracted because he would worry about a flat outside the window and people looking in. By placing him facing away from the window he was more able to concentrate and join in the group.

In one group, music was chosen the week before with different people choosing their favourite music to be played for the following week. It included an eclectic mix from Dizzy Gillespie to Johnny Cash. Often when the group commenced, people had already had a sing along together, instigated by one of the members.

Money was allocated from a budget to pay for refreshments, but one group decided they would prefer to pay for the tea themselves through weekly contributions.

## How to get the group to support each other

### What this section is about

This section covers how to help individuals within the group become more aware of each other's needs and how they might support each other.

- This takes time: you cannot force friendship, but you can create opportunities. Remember that some people will be naturally more caring or helpful than others: everyone is different.
- Most people are willing to help others. Some may not be aware that things need doing but are happy to help if asked. Do ask, but be sure that it is a task they are able to do with confidence and respect their decision if they choose not to help.
- It is easy to let the more able or naturally helpful people dominate the 'helping'. Allow those who are able to help, but remember that the less able or quick may wish to contribute. Suggest activities such as washing up are done in pairs (a physically more able with a less able person).
- Have an informal rota – thanking those who did something the week before and asking for two other people to do it this week.
- Make a list of tasks (see below) that group members might be able to help with. Give status to the tasks and the group members that are helping, appreciating and thanking them; being helpful can have a positive effect on someone's wellbeing and confidence.
- It is often easier and quicker to do things oneself, but it is far more beneficial, even if it takes twice as long, for group members to do things themselves.

- Providing a relaxed and caring atmosphere should create a place where, as people get to know each other, they start to recognise faces and show an interest in each other.

Possible tasks that could help the group support each other include:

- Preparing the room, moving chairs and tables, etc.
- Reminding and knocking on the door to collect others and accompany them to the group session.
- Preparing the cups for tea/coffee.
- Helping with changing the notice board.
- Clearing the room and washing up.
- Helping others to get back to their room.
- Buying milk and other items.
- Helping with distribution of flyers or letters around the building.
- Collecting money for tea and coffee – keeping records and counting money.

### Top tips

- It is important the 'job' does not dominate the group and become the focus rather than the act of helping; for example, a situation where people complain that someone hasn't done their 'job'.
- Be prepared to delegate and take risks in order to enable. This can be challenging as it is sometimes not the culture within housing schemes for older people.

### Case studies/ examples

Mrs. G was disorientated as to where she lived and required someone to walk with her to the room. This was done at the end of the group by the facilitator. One day, another member of the group volunteered to take her instead, as she saw the facilitator was busy. The following week, she was asked if she would mind doing it again and this gradually became something she did regularly; the two group members enjoyed each other's company, talking about the group as they went.

Mr. P was in a wheelchair, had suffered a stroke, had vascular dementia, and only had the use of one arm. Despite this, he was able to have a tea towel on his knee and another in his hand and could do the drying up while another group member washed up. He sometimes grumbled about this, but it was obvious from his

demeanour that he enjoyed being able to contribute and often laughed while doing so. Mr. P had a full care package at home and rarely got the opportunity to do this activity for himself in his own flat, let alone for others.

## Health and safety issues and risk

### What this section is about

When running groups there are health and safety issues you must be aware of. These are probably best answered by asking the question: “what if...?” What if someone falls over...collapses...becomes extremely upset?

Good risk management is as much about promoting independence and enabling safe risk taking as it is about minimising risk. Allowing people to take risks gives them autonomy, self-control, independence and a sense of achievement. It is often when people are ‘not allowed’ to do things that frustration and behaviour that challenges occurs.

### To minimise risk and maximise independence, consider these points

- Know the health and safety policies relating to the place you are working.
- Have prior knowledge of each group member’s medical conditions and also the equipment they may need to assist them in independence.
- People may forget or be unaware of the risks; for example, someone may forget their walking stick or that they are diabetic and should not eat certain food. They may need reminding tactfully of this. Unless the circumstances of danger are extreme to themselves or others, they have the right to make decisions even if you disagree with the choice they make.
- Risk assessment forms are useful and necessary tools for preventing accidents. They help to identify possible risk factors, thus enabling measures to be put in place prior to the activity to prevent injury and allow people to participate as fully as they are able.
- Sometimes there can be a culture of ‘not allowing’ people to do things for themselves. This may come from overprotectiveness of others. You may need to discuss this as a group.

- If there is a risk of someone hurting themselves or others, where possible the activity should be done WITH the person rather than for them; for example, someone wishing to make the tea but who has difficulty gripping things.
- Know the fire procedure where you are working.
- Know what action you would take if someone was taken ill or started to choke.
- Always make sure there is enough support in the group to run it safely, even if it means cancelling the group if there is not.

### Top tips

- Have enough help at hand, either from another tenant or the co-facilitator. If you have the assistance of another tenant, ensure at the start they are happy to help and that they know what to do should an incident occur.
- People living in sheltered and extra care housing are tenants and most have the mental capacity to make their own decisions most of the time. Be familiar with the Mental Capacity Act.

### Case studies/examples

Mr. L had poor mobility. When he attended the group he often forgot to bring his walking stick. By calling to collect Mr. L for the group and asking if he would like to bring his stick with him, it ensured he was then able to get to and from the group without risk of falling.

## Sustaining the group

### What this section is about

This section explores how to keep the group alive and flourishing, despite the possible mental and physical deterioration of its members.

Here are some ideas to achieve this:

- Keep new ideas coming – these often evolve from what people discuss in the group and lead on to other activities.
- Use the current news and newspapers to connect the group to topical events.
- Have things to look forward to – e.g. children visiting or a staff member's pregnancy; this could involve people guessing the sex, name and date of birth.

- Look after yourself and take a break; the group does not ALWAYS have to meet and although it is important for continuity and orientation, provided people are given some notice and reminded by staff that you are away it should not cause too much disruption to routine, especially if it means you return with renewed energy.
- Do something different – e.g. inviting a guest speaker. Enjoy and capitalise on birthdays and festivals, bearing in mind the cultural diversity of the group – e.g. independence days in different countries and different religious festivals.
- Allow the group to evolve. If the group is not to become defunct, it will need new members and they will need to be nurtured and made welcome by the group as a whole. There may be reluctance for new people to come along – expressed either by those already in the group or by a lack of confidence of potential new members. One method of dealing with this might be to do a session on dealing with change and new situations; for example, a reminiscence on schooldays can lead on to talking about first days at school and how to make newcomers welcome.
- Keep reviewing and reflecting on the group and the plans you have drawn up for future sessions.
- Remember it is their group not yours and they share the responsibility as to what they would like happen. You could have a session reviewing what has been done so far, what they liked best, etc. Repeat popular activities but also see if there are similar activities that you could create.

### Top tips

- Your resources are everywhere: the colour of the leaves on the trees (recalling dates and seasons), or the receipts in your pocket (a discussion on handling money). Many everyday objects have potential for a discussion or activity.
- Use other web-based resources – e.g. Daily Sparkle, National Association for Providers of Activities for Older People NAPA and other websites mentioned in Appendix 17.
- Meet with others working in similar places to share ideas and support.

### Case studies/examples

During one group, it was the anniversary of Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech. The group discussed the speech and then wrote a poem based on this.

The news story of three soldiers dying in the Brecon Beacons led to a session planned around hydration and the importance of drinking enough water.

People from different nationalities provide a huge potential for group ideas: sharing traditions, stories, customs, food recipes, attitudes towards children, etc.

## Is the group working?

### What this section is about?

This section looks at points to consider whether or not the group is working.

**To answer the question "is the group working?" consider the following points:**

- What do you want the group to achieve? What do individuals attending the group want to achieve? Are they the same? The answer to this will give a strong indication about whether the group is working or not.
- Be clear as to what the overall aims of the group are. Write these down and then check if the group is achieving them. It may be that the group is working for some people but not for others. If this is the case, how can you improve the group for everyone?

Over time, you may find the group has drifted a little and the purpose of the group has evolved or changed. The original purpose of the group might have been to assist people in developing and using strategies to assist in their memory and to improve wellbeing. As dementia progresses, the focus may relate more to quality of life, retaining identity and confidence building.

As the group builds in confidence and friendships blossom, participants may be able to share frustrations and sorrows or regrets on a 'deeper' level. As the role and the group shift, so the activities of the group may also change. This need not be a problem provided the group reviews, acknowledges and accepts the changes taking place.

- For each weekly group, it is important to have an overall aim. This may vary from week to week. One week it might be that the overall aim is that a new group member feels welcomed by others and you will organise activities or discussion around this, for example talking about first days at school. Individuals may then share with each other the feeling associated with being somewhere new. The next week the aim might be that the group is able to look at and share ways of remembering dates and numbers and that at least one person discovers a way of recalling dates or numbers.
- At the end of a group meeting, the overall aim should be that people leave with a sense of wellbeing, having enjoyed it, or felt listened to, and whatever feelings have been expressed – positive and negative – they feel motivated to return to the group the following week.

**The ‘success’ of the group can also be measured by asking the following questions:**

- Do people attend and want to come?
- Do they leave with a ‘good’ feeling or positive comments?
- Within their ability, do they actively engage and participate?

### Top Tips

- Always ask yourself why you are planning an activity. Start with the aim, followed by the activity to achieve the aim.
- Take time to review and reflect each week on the group – ask yourself, “Did it meet the aims”?

## Inclusivity

### What this section is about

Inclusivity is about enabling everyone to be included and involved. This section covers some common barriers that face people in later life and how they might be managed in these groups.

Inclusivity is about enabling:

- Someone with hearing loss to participate.
- Someone with visual impairment to participate.
- People with other disabilities to participate.

- Tackling discrimination in terms of sexuality, gender or race and enabling people of different gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, and so on, to participate.

### **Assisting someone with hearing loss to participate**

This might be helped by:

- Checking if they have had a recent hearing appointment and that their hearing aid is functioning properly.
- Providing a whiteboard and written instructions or a volunteer scribe.
- Making sure they are seated in the group opposite the facilitator so that they can lip read (if they do this) and also hear better.
- Summarising what has been discussed and including their opinion in the discussion.
- Ensuring that the group allows time to check that the person has heard and understood.
- Using additional amplification aids (see Appendix 17).
- Making full use of a flip chart and handouts.

### **Assisting people with a visual impairment to participate**

This might be helped by:

- Clear verbal instructions and use of other senses, e.g. touch.
- Using activities that maximise use of other senses.
- Providing a magnifier if required.
- Large clear writing on a flip chart.
- Doing activities as a small group or in pairs.
- Using other group members or a volunteer to assist.

### **Assisting someone with a speech problem to participate**

People may be able to understand what is happening in the group but have difficulty in expressing themselves. The following can help:

- Giving signs or simple choices, e.g. tea or coffee. The use of Talking Mats (<http://www.talkingmats.com/>) or picture symbols.
- Maximising the use of music – people who have had strokes and are aphasic (without speech) are often able to sing words even though they may not be able to speak.



- Making use of a volunteer or possibly a relative.
- Taking full account of the body language they use to communicate – e.g. gestures, facial expressions and body language.

## Assisting people with other disabilities to participate

This can include:

- Continence problems – ensure the person goes to the toilet prior to the group, or has an opportunity to go during the group and has the correct pads, etc.
- Poor mobility – they may need collecting early in order to attend the group or supervision transferring onto a chair.
- Difficulty initiating actions – allow sufficient time.
- Epilepsy – have an awareness of this and ensure the group does not overreact if a fit should occur.
- Poor hand or arm function – adapt activities to allow participation.

Create an accepting environment where people's individual needs are catered for, accepted, and not criticised. Once the group has grown to trust and share, then it may occasionally be necessary for the group to talk about difficult situations and the feelings associated with these. For example, anxiety associated with going out socially in case there is no toilet facility nearby. These can be done as a 'problem page' activity, allowing people to comment and make suggestions without people personally having to admit the problem.

If you feel at the end of the group that someone, for whatever reason, has been excluded, take time to talk about this afterwards and do not be afraid to apologise and discuss with them whether they have any ideas for increased involvement.

### Case studies/ examples

Mrs. G had been in hospital the previous day following a fall, but was keen to attend the weekly group. She was clearly very tired and drifted off to sleep in the group. The group decided they should let her stay sleeping as she was still shaken and quite upset by the event.

Mrs. H was anxious about attending the group because of her need to frequently use the toilet. Ensuring that she was reminded prior to each group to go, and that she used the break to nip to the toilet, meant she could cope well with the group and attend throughout.

Mr. E was initially very anxious about attending a group. By inviting a relative to attend with him for the first two sessions, he built enough confidence to start attending on his own.

Mrs. F often asked during the group 'why foreigners come over to this country'. The group was racially mixed, with the majority of members being from the Caribbean. People explained it was for work opportunities. Mrs. F seemed genuinely puzzled rather than racist, and apart from this question did not show any racist behaviour. She accepted this reason; she repeated the question in several subsequent groups. Individuals in the group did not take offence and the reply was frequently given and accepted.

Mr. C had a severe hearing impairment; contact with his family was made to ask them to arrange a hearing aid appointment for him, but this was not forthcoming. A listening device from 'Action on Hearing Loss' was purchased through group funds to enable Mr. C to participate fully.<sup>4</sup> Until this happened, Mr. C was helped to participate through the use of a small whiteboard and one of the facilitators writing down summaries of what was said.

## PLAN B – The backup plan for when things go wrong

### What this section is about

This section covers what to do when things don't go according to plan; for example, when you have planned the session around a specific issue relating to a couple of participants and they don't attend that week, or you have a visitor coming and they do not arrive.

- Don't panic!
- Things in life don't always go to plan. Be honest with the group and share the responsibility.
- Turn the group into a session about 'when things don't go according to plan' and discuss when things in their own life haven't turned out how they had hoped they would – this can take a whole session. Have the information with you and ready to use.
- Use a pre-prepared, easy-to-use activity, such as:
  - An exercise DVD
  - Listening to music and discussing the feelings it evokes or memories associated
  - A series of favourite 'tried and tested' warm-up activities.
- Use the opportunity to discuss plans or ideas for future sessions, or to recap and discuss what people have enjoyed in past groups.

<sup>4</sup> Action on hearing loss: [www.actionhearingloss.co.uk](http://www.actionhearingloss.co.uk)

## Case studies/examples

One group had invited a musician who didn't turn up. The co-facilitator made tea and the group started with a longer tea break and a chat while the facilitator planned the activity, getting the DVD to work. The group then participated in an exercise session. They started by guessing what imaginary musical instrument was being played by the group facilitator, with everyone then copying the movement as a warm-up; for example, bending down slightly and moving their arm from left to right as if playing the double bass.

## Tricky challenges you might face from group participants

### What this section is about

This section helps you to prepare for the unexpected, the different personal dynamics that you might encounter in the group, and what strategies you might use to tackle difficult situations to allow the group to reach its full potential.

Having spent time preparing and planning, the group will hopefully run smoothly. There is, however, always the unexpected situation that you cannot plan for. These are times when the co-facilitator is really helpful. Below are a few situations you may have to deal with and suggestions as to how they might be dealt with.

### When the 'problem' arises

Firstly, is it a problem for the group or is it a problem for you?

Secondly, if it is a problem for the group, remember your priority is **the group** as a whole.

Thirdly, try to understand the reasons for the behaviour of the individual. It may be their personality, a way of expressing loneliness or frustration, or they may be unwell. You may wish to speak to them privately outside the group to try and find out what is going on.

### The person who talks too much, is very dominant, or rambles

The group is for the benefit of all members – not for one individual. If someone is allowed to dominate, then others may become agitated, bored, frustrated, or even impatient or rude to the person.

### Suggestions that might help:

- Remind the group of the ground rules.

- Have the co-facilitator or yourself sit next to the person so that you can gently remind them or point to someone else who might have been trying to speak.
- Acknowledge, accept and then summarise what they have said, and ask others their thoughts on what the person has talked about.
- Ask the person a direct question that directs them to someone else – e.g., “What do you think xx thinks about what you have just said?”
- Interject in a kind and constructive way – e.g., “What you are saying is interesting/important to you but we need to hear other people’s points/move on to...”
- Use activities where people have to take in it turn to say something or to work in pairs.

### **The person who repeats themselves a lot**

People with a short-term memory span often repeat themselves without realising. Sometimes this can be more of a ‘problem’ to the group facilitator rather than the other members of the group, so again be aware – is this a problem for you or for the whole group?

#### **Suggestions that might help:**

- Acknowledge what the person is saying and try to keep their interest in the subject at hand.
- As a group, acknowledge in ground rules that people may repeat themselves a bit and, unless this becomes a continual disruption, check if this is acceptable.
- Work in pairs.
- Keep the group busy!
- Acknowledge the feelings behind the words. Think through what they are saying.
- If the repetition is continual and disruptive, then you may have to think about whether the person is at a stage of their dementia where they are no longer able to listen sufficiently to benefit from a group (see section on exit strategies below).

#### **Case study/example**

One lady in the group often asked if others remembered wartime rationing. It seemed like she was looking to make friends and create links with other group members. Once that had been affirmed, she seemed to relax a little, and although she asked it again (three of four times in a group), it did not seem to annoy others.

## The person who is silent

A person may be quiet for all sorts of reasons, including shyness, difficulty processing information, and when other members appear too dominant.

A person who is silent is not necessarily inactive. They may be listening and taking part in other ways; this can be observed through body language and facial expression. Some people take a longer time to process information, so allow time for this. If a person who is not usually quiet becomes so, check why; they may be in pain or feeling sad.

You need to be aware of the impact of the silent participant on other members of the group, as they may react negatively. It may be your role to help them understand difference within the group and that difference and being quiet is acceptable (the ground rules can be used to confirm this).

### Suggestions that might help:

- Allowing the person to be themselves.
- Giving them time – they may need to feel settled and safe before they contribute verbally.
- Dividing the group to work in pairs and then the more vocal partner feeding back; this might help build confidence.
- Using activities that encourage relaxed, non-verbal participation, e.g. sharing an exercise movement.
- Recognising the fact that the person has chosen to attend, and that this is itself a sign that they are participating, even though they may not be verbally engaged.
- Covering 'safe' subjects, such as music and food, as these often bring someone out of themselves.
- Using a subject or topic that is of particular interest or expertise to the person.

## The person who is angry

Anger may demonstrate that the group is a safe and accepting place where the person can express their anger.

- Sometimes the anger expressed can be an expression of how the whole group is feeling.
- Talking about what the anger stems from can help the whole group – others may be feeling the same about loss, lack of care, frustration with diagnosis, etc.

## Case studies/examples

One lady was often anxious as to whether she had her keys and how she would get home. Reassuring her that she would not be left alone and that she would be taken home safely calmed her. The group was able to move on to talk about the subject in hand.

Only once was someone aggressive in the group. This was someone who did not usually attend and who was brought in by a well-meaning carer. She was quickly disruptive and said how everything was stupid. It was explained to her that people came to the group because they wanted to and that she did not need to attend. She chose to leave.

Mr. B was very quiet, until the day the group discussed Grenada, the Caribbean island he came from. Facts were read out about the country, to which Mr. B nodded. He then started to talk about all the fishing he used to do.

## Exit strategy – when someone is no longer suitable for the group

### What this section is about

This section covers reasons for excluding someone from the group and how you might manage this, both with the individual and as a group. It may be that the issues below are a temporary difficulty and that the member can return to the group in the future.

### The reasons why someone might no longer be suitable

Dementia is a progressive condition and some of the symptoms may mean a person is no longer able to concentrate on or participate in the group.

It may be:

- That they are unable to understand or make use of the ground rules that have been agreed upon.
- That they are unable to listen to others and are continually interrupting, to the extent that other group members are finding it frustrating and possibly no longer wanting to attend.
- Problems with a person repeating themselves continually without realising, to the extent that the group is unable to function because of it – and the interventions described above don't work.
- Anxiety and agitation – they are disorientated to the extent that they are extremely agitated and anxious and are unable to be reassured by the group.

- Non-participation – this may not be a reason for excluding someone; see the case example below (see also section on ‘tricky challenges’).

## Suggestions as to what to do

- Make use of the ground rules. Discuss issues generally as a group. If the person is present, ensure they are not picked on or criticised. The group needs to view the problem with compassion. There may be others in the group who are worried they may also face these difficulties in the future.
- Check it really is a problem for the group as a whole.
- See the person and possibly a family member privately, and discuss the problem openly and honestly.
- If they do leave, try to replace the group with an opportunity for them to take part in something else (e.g. a one-to-one activity with a befriender).
- Plan a break in the group to review and recharge your batteries and reassess attendance.
- The person themselves might naturally ‘drop away’ from attending or be welcomed for the tea break and then leave.
- If the group is well established and participants know each other, they may be more tolerant of a person within the group. The person may manage better in the group situation because they feel safe and accepted. Ensure they sit next to someone who can support them, or enable them to leave easily and with minimal disruption or fuss.
- When the person has left, it is important to discuss this as a group; other members may have strong feeling about it. Allowing open, honest and constructive discussion, with compassion, is important.

## Top tips

- Reflect carefully before excluding anyone and discuss it with the other members. It may be that the agitation or behaviour is due to other difficulties, such as unexpressed pain or delirium.
- Over time, the group will evolve and change; what was once a ‘memory strategy’ group may become more focused on reminiscence or become increasingly activity-based. You may need to consider a secondary group for those less able to use a self-help model.

- Is anxiety due to others' attitudes towards the person in the group, or other feelings about the group? Does this need to be addressed by the group? In other words, are they being made a scapegoat for something or just being picked on?

### Case studies/examples

One man attended the group with his wife. The group seemed to be of more benefit to her than to him; he was always very quiet and virtually non-verbal. His participation was often unfocused. I had questioned whether he should attend, but he was included for the benefit of his wife. Suddenly, after 20 quiet weeks, he spoke. It was very soft, but he said: "*Despite my physical frailty, my trembling and my poor memory, if we stand together we are strong. We can face the challenges we face. Let us be strong because we are together and that is what makes us strong*". Repeating the words he had said, as some had not heard, the group spontaneously clapped, and it felt as if he had summed up what the group was for.

At 96, Mrs. G was the oldest in the group and often fell asleep. The group discussed this while she slept and agreed to let her doze off in the group. It was agreed that she enjoyed the company and friendships she had established, even though she did not often participate. Despite having been asleep, she often said how much she had enjoyed the group!

Mr. D was always a little agitated, but became more so as the weeks went by. He was physically fit and enjoyed helping to get the room ready. He would stay for a cup of tea at the beginning of the group, but would often leave when discussions began. To avoid disruption after the tea, he was thanked for his help and it was mentioned to him that the group was now going to have a discussion. Mr. D voluntarily chose to leave at this stage, seeing his work as having been completed in setting up the room and sometimes suggesting he would be available to help later.



# Part three

## Activities

### Activity guidelines

**These activities have been divided up into three broad groups:**

#### **1. Warm-up activities**

Warm-up activities usually take place at the start of the group and are aimed at using techniques that are light hearted, fun and interactive. They often use both physical and mental stimulation exercises.

These activities can also be used during the group as a way of refocusing if the group is losing concentration, needs a break from an emotive subject, or needs re-energising.

#### **2. Getting the group up and running**

These are the main activities that can be used at the start of a group's life and which help to form the group's identity, share responsibility for the group, and enable members to get to know and trust each other. They can, however, be used at any time appropriate to the group.

#### **3. Getting the group to share**

These are the main activities used to help the group discuss strategies and share on a deeper level; these are used once trust has been built and the identity of the group has been established.

A few of these activities require equipment. A basic equipment list can be found in Appendices 15 and 16.

## Page WARM-UP ACTIVITY

60	1. Ball game
61	2. I'm thinking of something
62	3. Pass the bomb
63	4. Make a word
64	5. Introductory song 1
65	6. Music warm-up 2
66	7. Pass the touch
67	8. Would you rather...?
68	9. Heads and tails?
69	10. Numbers 1
70	11. Numbers 2
71	12. Expressions
72	13. Places
73	14. Colour warm-up
74	15. Letters on the floor

In addition to providing mental stimulation, all the activities aim to respect and value the group's participants, enabling them to make social connections and reduce the loneliness that can occur alongside a diagnosis of memory problems. They also aim to help people remain an active part of the community. In addition, some of the activities have an emphasis on healthy living, independence or learning new skills.

### Main activities

The checklist opposite indicates what the key aims of each main activity are.

#### Key

1 – primary purpose/outcome

2 – secondary purpose/possible outcome

Page number	Activity	To be respected and valued	To make social connections	To be an active part of the community/group	To remain fit, healthy, and happy, and aid concentration	To access support to remain independent	To learn new skills/enhance creativity
75	16. Setting the ground rules	<b>1</b>	2	2			
76	17. What do we call our group?	2	2	<b>1</b>			
77	18. Hit or miss	2	<b>1</b>	2	2		2
78	19. Colour bingo	2	2	2	<b>1</b>		2
79	20. Dates – orientation	2	2	2	2	<b>1</b>	
80	21. Memory card match	2	2	2	2		<b>1</b>
81	22. Dice – know me	2	<b>1</b>	2	2		
83	23. Knitting wool connections	2	<b>1</b>	2	<b>1</b>		
84	24. Favourite things	2	<b>1</b>	2	2		
85	25. Hydration	2	<b>1</b>	2	2		
86	26. Reminiscence	<b>1</b>	2	2	2	2	
87	27. What's in a name?	2	<b>1</b>	2	2	2	
88	28. Learning names of people	2	2	2	<b>1</b>		2
89	29. Who am I?	2	2	2	<b>1</b>		
90	30. Personalised word searches and crosswords	2	<b>1</b>	2	2		2
91	31. Wrapped present	2	2	2	<b>1</b>		
92	32. Creative writing exercise 1	2	2	2	2		<b>1</b>
94	33. Creative writing exercise 2	2	2	2	2		<b>1</b>
96	34. Music	2	2	2	2		<b>1</b>
97	35. Photograph match and albums	2	2	2	<b>1</b>		
98	36. Losing things	2	2	2	2	<b>1</b>	2
100	37. Birthdays	<b>1</b>	2	2	2		
102	38. Ceramic bowls	2	2	2	2	2	<b>1</b>
103	39. Newspapers and orientation	2	2	2	<b>1</b>		
104	40. Orientation in and outside the building	2	2	2	2	<b>1</b>	
106	41. Photographs and memories	<b>1</b>	2	2	2		
107	42. What makes a community?	2	2	2	2	<b>1</b>	
108	43. Problem pages	2	2	2	2	<b>1</b>	
109	44. How is the group going?	2	2	<b>1</b>	2		
110	45. Being prepared	2	2	2	2	<b>1</b>	
112	46. Understanding technology	2	2	2	2	<b>1</b>	
113	47. The senses	2	2	2	<b>1</b>	2	
115	48. What makes a place home?	2	2	2	2	<b>1</b>	
116	49. When someone has died	<b>1</b>	2	2	2	2	
117	50. Healthy eating	2	2	2	<b>1</b>	2	

# Warm-up activities

## 1 | Ball game

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** A ball – soft (e.g. foam) and football-sized

**Method** Throw the ball and get the person to say their name when they catch it – i.e. “My name is...”. Do this several times so that each group member has said their name three or four times.

Move on by saying “My name is...and I am throwing to ...”. Explain that it doesn’t matter if they don’t recall the name: they can ask the person if they do not know it.

**Tips** To adapt, add a sentence to fit into the topic you are using for the main activity; for example, if using the theme of clothing you may wish to say, “My name is ...and if I was given £50 for clothes I would buy ...”.

People with visual impairment can be passed the ball (“...and I’m giving it to”). They can then pass the ball to someone they are sat next to and the person who takes it says their own name.

This is a good activity to use at the very start of the group sessions and for the first few weeks.

This is a good activity to use when there is a new member in the group, so as to introduce them to others.

This activity can seem to be patronising, but from experience the reaction from groups has been very positive.

## 2 | I'm thinking of something

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 30 minutes

**You Will Need** No essential equipment, but it might be helpful to have a list of nouns to use (e.g. cup, sheep, egg), just in case you can't think of anything!

**Method** Start by saying "I'm thinking of an object...". Describe the object you are thinking of; the aim is for the group to try and guess what it is. Give one short description at a time and allow people to guess.

Example: it has a handle [pause], it is wooden [pause], it is larger than me, it has a window, it is something you came in through [answer: door].

First, describe something that is in the room (a bit like 'I Spy'). When people are confident with the rules, make it more difficult by choosing things that are anywhere, e.g. an elephant. In this case, start by saying "I'm thinking of something and it is outside the room...".

### 3 | Pass the bomb – easy and hard

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** 'Pass the Bomb' game (see below)

Flip chart and pen (optional)

**If running the harder version of this, you will also need:**

A receptacle (e.g. a hat or bowl) and pre-prepared suggestions for topics, which are written on paper and placed in the receptacle

- Method**
1. Ensure everyone can reach the person next to them easily (in order to 'pass the bomb').
  2. Before you start, show the 'bomb' to the group and explain that it is like a timer that will randomly 'go off'; with the timer 'on', pass it around so that people can see how it works.
  3. Introduce the day's theme, e.g. food. Pass the bomb around the room as fast as possible, the aim being not to have it when it goes off; the person holding it when it goes off has to name something to do with the chosen topic, e.g. the name of a vegetable or fruit.
  4. If this is too hard for the person it lands on, then choose one person holding it OR the person either side of them to give an answer.
  5. Write the name of the vegetable on the flip chart as an aide to what has already been said. Repeat the activity for vegetables a few times before moving onto another topic.
  6. After a while, the person holding the bomb chooses the next food group to be used, for example a type of meat, OR takes a folded piece of paper from the hat/bowl with the next topic about food (or the group suggests the next theme).

**Tips** 'Pass the Bomb' is available on Amazon via Gibson toys.  
This has been one of the most popular activities in all groups.

Points 5 and 6 can be omitted to make the game easier to play.

**For the harder version** – as the bomb is passed around, each person has to name the chosen subject before passing it onto the next person. When the bomb goes off, the person left holding it suggests the next topic (e.g. board games) or, if preferred, takes a suggested idea from the receptacle.

Any other topic can be used to fit in with the week's theme, e.g. girls' names, different letters, dogs' names, musical instruments, etc.

## 4 | Make a word

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 10 minutes

**You Will Need** Two sets of letters, one with consonants and one with vowels. These can be Scrabble letters in bags OR two piles of cards with letters on, such as from the games Lexicon or Slam.

A flip chart and pen.

Two or three dice (optional: these are used to decide how many words the group must try and make).

**Method** Someone takes a letter from one pile or bag.

Write this letter on the board.

The next person takes a letter from the other bag or pile.

Write this letter on the board.

Challenge the group to make as many words as possible that include the two letters. Alternatively, throw the dice to decide how many words need to be made – e.g. if six and three are thrown, then nine words are to be made.

Example: the letters 'S' and 'A' are selected. Then words that could be made include 'sand', 'also', 'ask', 'answer', 'sample'. If you have dice, roll them to find how many words you should aim to make.

**Tips:** The game can be made harder using more than two letters, or increasing the number of challenges by using three dice.

## 5 | Introductory song warm-up

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** Confidence in singing aloud solo.

Knowledge of everyone's names

To check co-facilitators know what you are doing and that they will help to involve members in repeating lines you sing

- Method**
1. Seat the group in a circle.
  2. Explain to the group that you are going to do an introduction song and that when you have sung a line you would like everyone to repeat it.
  - 3 Standing in the middle of the group, sing to the football tune "Nice one, Cyril", but using the names of individual group members. Use your arm to indicate and face individual group members as you sing to them, e.g., "Welcome Shelia" [pause and whole group repeats the line], "Hello Sam, good day Bobby and welcome to Clive..." Continue this until the whole group has been introduced.

**Tips** You do not have to be a good singer to do this; you just need to be confident and willing to be slightly embarrassed and to have fun!

You can choose this activity to close the group as well: "Goodbye...farewell... goodbye...and cheerio to...", using the same tune.

If you are confident in doing this and the group enjoy it, it can be a good way to introduce everyone as the weekly warm-up routine.



## 6 Music warm-up 2

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** Confidence in singing

- Method**
1. Explain that the group is going to sing but that to warm up you are going to stretch some face muscles.
  2. Ask everyone to rub their hands together as hard as they can to ensure they are warm.
  3. Get everyone to place the palms of their hands over their cheeks to enjoy the warmth for a few seconds.
  4. Next, using both hands (and demonstrate as you do this), ask them to gently rub their necks and move slowly up to the chin, the cheeks and, in nice slow circular movements using fingertips, gradually massage all the face muscles, smoothing up and out as the forehead is reached.
  5. Next, stretch the facial movements: open the mouth as wide as possible and close (suggest they pretend to be a goldfish). Do this two or three times. Then, get them to open their mouth a little and, as they do, purse their lips and let out an “ooo” sound, gradually getting louder until their mouth is wide open; allow time for fun and some laughter as this is done – it’s meant to be enjoyable!
  6. Next, ask them to smile as wide as they can and with an “eeee” sound as they do so.
  7. Change between the “eee” sound and the “ooo” sound a few times.
  8. Now, to exercise the tongue, start with a short scale: “La la la la la la la”. Vary the pitch and scale for this, gradually going higher or lower, depending on what the group can manage.

Move onto the main singing activity, singing using either prepared song books, a musician, or taped music.

**Tips** Don’t be afraid to look slightly foolish: it allows others to do so as well!

Make sure you have your co-facilitators on board to join in and to encourage others.

## 7 | Pass the touch

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** Nothing!

If progressing on to the imaginary object part, you may wish to prepare some suggested objects, each written on separate pieces of paper and placed in a receptacle (e.g. an egg, a watch, a hat, a scarf).

- Method**
1. Ensure that each person can reach and touch the person next to them on either side.
  2. Depending on the ability of the group, pass around different touches.  
**Example:** pass around a tap on the shoulder; ask them to pass it on to the next person until it reaches the start. Other touches could include a tap on the knee, a handshake, a stroke of the arm, or, if people are comfortable, all holding hands and passing a hand squeeze around.
  3. Progress to an imaginary object: explain you are holding an imaginary object in your hand (without saying what it is), e.g. a small bird or a pencil. Pass it onto the next person, asking people to guess what it is. Then pass it onto someone else.  
**Example:** with a hairbrush you might pretend to hold it in your hand and brush your hair with it before passing it to the next person.
  4. Others may be able to think of an imaginary object to pass around. As they could have difficulty thinking of something, have a few suggestions already on folded pieces of paper for them to choose. If people are able and happy with holding hands for the squeeze, do this a number of times, altering the number of squeezes before passing it on (e.g. squeeze someone's hand three times and ask them to do the same for the person next to them). See how many squeezes come back. Alter the direction.

**Tips** **Caution:** be aware of whether any people in your group have issues with being touched by others or particular people in the group.

**Case example:** this is an easy and well-liked warm-up; many enjoy the physical contact of being touched in a friendly way. Where people have difficulty participating, often another group member has offered support and help.

## 8 | Would you rather...?

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 10 minutes

**You Will Need** The pre-written list (Appendix 5) of “Would you rather...?” questions.

A ball or bean bag, and a bucket or target (the target can be something as simple as an A4 sheet of paper on the floor onto which the bean bag is thrown).

- Method**
1. In turns, throw the ball into the bucket or bean bag onto the target.
  2. When the target is hit, the facilitator reads out one of the “Would you rather...?” questions from the list.

**Tips** This warm-up offers a yes/no choice, so is suited to people who have difficulty with speech or with making more complex decisions.

Some ‘Would you rather...?’ questions are easier than others. Grade the question depending on a person’s ability. Alternatively, do it in pairs and discuss.

## 9 Heads or tails coin game

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** A coin (preferably a large one)

A small selection of prizes (or use the coin/s that you have used in the game).

- Method**
1. Explain you are going to toss the coin and see if it lands on heads or tails.
  2. Everyone guesses which way it will land – and they demonstrate their decision (e.g. if you think it will be heads, put your hands on your head; if you think tails, put your hands underneath your bottom). Make sure there is always at least one person who chooses differently!
  3. Toss the coin – if it lands heads then all those that guessed tails are out. Continue play until there is only one person left who has called correctly – they are the winner!
  4. Play two or three times.

**Tips** Help may be needed initially to check who is still in the game, depending on the size of the group.

## 10 Numbers 1

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** No equipment required.

- Method**
1. Ensure there is enough room for people to make a circular movement with both arms without hitting anyone.
  2. Find out if people are left or right handed by asking them to put the hand that they write with in the air.
  3. Ask them then to swap arms and use their non-dominant hand to write a large number one in the air; then move on to write a number two, and so on. You can do this by writing small and then letting the numbers grow larger so that number nine is written using the whole arm and shoulder, as large as possible.

**Tips** Be aware of those with restricted movement or pain. Make sure people move within a pain-free zone.

Ask the group to choose a number for others to write.

Ask people to guess what the number you are writing is.

Change hands and use the dominant hand.

If using this as an exercise session, use other parts of the body (e.g. elbow, foot, leg).

Use both hands at once to do 11, 22, 33, 44 and so on.

Discuss favourite numbers, door numbers, dates of birth – draw these numbers in the air for people to guess.

## 11 Numbers 2

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** No equipment is needed, but you should have a knowledge of your times tables (download times table sheet if needed!).

Large dice (optional – see tips).

- Method**
1. Start the group with everyone tapping out a rhythm; ensure everyone can do this. Not too fast, do this sequence: tap left knee with left hand, then right knee with right hand and then clap hands together. Practice until the whole group is able to do this as best they can. Repeat and get a rhythm.
  2. Graduate this to introducing numbers – counting from 1 to 30 (left knee) 1, (right knee) 2 (clap). Note: you don't say 'left knee', just the numbers.
  3. Start with the two-times table using the same rhythm: "one times two is two" (tap left knee), "two times two is four" (tap right knee), "three times two is six (clap), etc.
  4. Move onto other times tables, asking the group for suggestions as to which number to try.

**Tips:** Throw the dice and use the number they show as the next times table.

Some people can be quite anxious about numbers, so ensure that the group remains light hearted and fun, and not a 'test'.

You may find this works well for people with speech problems because of the rhythmic pattern.

## 12 Expressions

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** A list of different expressions (e.g. fear, anger, happy, shock, surprise, anxiety, confusion, shame, tiredness, love).

- Method**
1. Start with a few warm-up stretches (e.g. pretending to yawn really wide and stretching arms wide as if just waking up).
  2. Warm up the facial muscles by getting everyone to touch their own faces in gentle circular movements, starting with the neck and moving gradually over the chin, cheeks, nose and up to the forehead. Imagine you are smoothing out all the wrinkles and tension as you do so.
  3. Demonstrate an expression and ask the group to guess what it is. Then see if anyone can think of another expression for the group to guess – have a list ready for people to choose from, written down on pieces of paper. Once someone has done their ‘expression’, ask the group to copy.  
**Ideas:** fear, anger, happy, shock, surprise, anxiety, shame, love.

**Tips** Interesting fact: we have roughly 43 muscles in our face and it takes more muscles to frown than it does to smile.

Facial expression is a really important part of body language.

Depending on the ability of the group you may wish to do all the expressions yourself and get the group to copy them, or ask them to choose.

Be aware of those in the group who have Parkinson’s and as a result may have difficulty in managing facial expressions.

This activity can lead onto discussion about body language: e.g. how can we tell if someone is interested in what we are saying?

## 13 | Places

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** Ball (optional).

Flip chart and pen (optional).

Travel books or brochures (optional).

- Method**
1. Discuss where people's favourite places in the world are. This may be easiest to do by passing around a ball and the person holding it answering the question or, if they prefer, they can pass it on without answering.
  2. Make a list of the places named on the flip chart.
  3. Ask the person why they chose the place (e.g. memories of a particular time, friends, family, a beautiful view).

**Tips** To make this easier, have lots of pictures of different places and get people to choose their favourite. Discuss the pictures.



## 14 Colour

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 20 minutes

**You Will Need** A colour chart from a DIY paint shop.

Plenty of space between the chairs.

- Method**
1. Sit group in a circle.
  2. Start with a few warm-up stretches – pretend you are painting a picture of the person facing you. Using your painting arm, do a large circle for the face, and using your wrist and fine finger movements, draw in features. Move on to perhaps ‘paint’ other objects using the group’s suggestions.
  3. Get the group to think of as many colours as they can, asking them to name their favourite.
  4. Make the colours more specific – e.g. if someone has said blue think of ‘types’ of blue, such as sky blue, baby blue etc. Do the same with yellow, and so on.
  5. Read out names of colours from the colour chart and ask them what colour they think it is e.g. “porridge”.
  6. Have differently coloured papers available (or paint cards). Decide as a group what name they would give the colour it has (e.g. gun grey).

## 15 Letters on the floor

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** Large cards with around 10 different letters of the alphabet written on them in large print.

A bean bag.

A list of nouns that begin with each of the 10 letters.

- Method**
1. Place cards face up on the floor.
  2. Each member of the group takes it in turn to throw a bean bag and try to get it to land on one of the letters.
  3. If successful, make sure everyone in the group knows what the letter is. Hold it up for people to see.
  4. Explain that you are now going to describe something beginning with that letter.  
**Example for the letter L:** "It is white, it is fluffy, it lives in the countryside. It tastes nice with mint sauce..." Pause after each one or two clues until someone in the group guesses correctly (in this case, 'lamb').
  5. When guessed, the card is given to the person who threw the bean bag onto the letter.
  6. At the end of the session, see who has the most cards.

# Main activities - to get the group up and running

## 16 Setting ground rules

**Purpose** People are often marginalised and overlooked in taking responsibility, taking part in, or making decisions. This activity helps group members start to take responsibility for the group and to see it as **their** group.

**Prep level** Moderate

**Prep time** 5 minutes

**You will need** A flip chart and pen.

A selection of signs (e.g. road signs, no smoking sign) Optional: download from various websites e.g.: [www.gov.uk/traffic-signs](http://www.gov.uk/traffic-signs)

A typical set of ground rules for a group (see Appendix 6).

- Method**
1. Introduce the activity through talking generally about 'rules' we have in life. Get the group to think of some, e.g. not spitting in public. Alternatively, use the list of rules/signs prepared, asking what they mean.
  2. Discuss whether they agree with them or not – arguably, rules help us function as a society. Explain that in order to work as a group we need our own set of rules. The group is a small community – their community – what rules would be helpful?
  3. Discuss and write up suggestions for rules on the flip chart. People may have difficulty in thinking of ideas; one way of tackling this is to suggest a series of problems. **Example:** if someone is rude in the group, or falls asleep, or doesn't listen to others – what should be done?
  4. Work out from these what ground rules the group would like to have. **Example:** the group may decide its ok for someone to fall asleep, but as a rule it is also ok for others to gently wake them up.

**Tips** Allow plenty of time. You may wish to do this over a couple of weeks, making suggestions one week and then discussing these in more detail the following week.

It is important to ENJOY the group; it should be a place where people feel safe and not judged if they do not follow rules. Ensure the activity remains light and enjoyable.

Once the rules are agreed, have them printed out and easily accessible if you need to refer to them.

A way of adapting this activity would be to have a list of 'rules' which includes some unreasonable ones (e.g. 'no talking'), and then decide which ones to keep and which to get rid of. Discuss and vote: Yes/No/Maybe .

Make sure you have this activity early on in the life of a group, as it will be an aid to the successful running of subsequent groups.

## 17 What do we call our group?

**Purpose** This activity aims to help group members start to take responsibility for the group and to see it as **their** group. It uses long-term memory with familiar brand names and then moves on to help people feel a sense of belonging and identity with the group.

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 20 minutes

**You Will Need** A flip chart and pen.

A list of names of other groups (optional).

A list of brand names or packaging or pre-printed sheets with logos, such as Heinz, Andrex, etc. (about 10 or 15).

- Method**
1. Start the group by looking at the brand names and slogans – what is the product? You may discuss things such as how Heinz has numerous products whereas Weetabix is a single cereal.
  2. Things have names! Throughout our lives there are various groups we belong to: nursery, school, university. Think of as many as you can as a group and list these on the flip chart.
  3. Discuss positive and negative feelings associated with belonging to groups (e.g. being made to join a group as a child or being excluded).
  4. Names give a sense of identity, belonging and pride. The group needs a name.
  5. Make suggestions as a group – this could be relating to geographic location. See suggestions under tips.
  6. Write all the suggested names down in a list on the flip chart. Shortlist the ideas to two or three and then vote as a group, either by writing the two or three names down and asking people to vote with a ballot paper or putting up hands – do this in a way most suited to the group.
  7. Appreciate and acknowledge those who have thought up the names.
  8. Ensure anyone who did not have their name chosen for the group is ok about this before the group ends and that everyone feels appreciated.

**Tips:** Voting may take place in various ways, depending on the feelings and abilities (e.g. voting, deciding in pairs, having a ballot with top three names). If you cannot reach a decision, suggest the names are looked at the following week and discussed, and to try and make a decision at the start of the next group.

Suggested names of other groups are: Forget-me-not Club, Little Grey Cells, Memory Exercise Group, Golden Times, Golden Oldies, Happy Days Memory Group, Present Time, Active Minds, and names relating to geographic location or the name of the housing scheme.

## 18 Hit or miss

**Purpose** This helps group members share their different musical tastes. It is a non-threatening activity, and there are no right or wrong answers. Depending on the music, it can create many points of discussion and enable people to make social connections.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 45 minutes

**You Will Need** An iPad or smartphone, and a docking station.  
A variety of types of music downloaded.  
Cards with 'HIT' written on both sides and another set with 'MISS' written on both sides – enough for one per pair.  
A star shaped card with BONUS written on it (optional).  
Pictures of different singers or bands (optional).

- Method**
1. Discuss different types of music (e.g. classical, rap, soul) or discuss old TV programmes and ask if members remember Juke Box Jury. It was a popular show that ran from 1959–1967 with over 12 million viewers at one point. Hosted by David Jacobs, a panel of celebrities listened to new songs and judged whether they would be a 'hit' or a 'miss'. Explain that the group's own version is now going to be played.
  2. Ask the group to form pairs, or if preferred two teams. Each pair/team is then given one hit and one miss card and a bonus card (if included).
  3. Play music: whilst listening to the tune, each pair/team discusses whether or not they like the music. Music is stopped and each team/pair holds up the relevant card. Music can then be discussed – this can include memories it brings up, recognition of singer or genre. Information is often given on an iPad and this can be given as a prompt for discussion.
  4. If a pair/team enjoy the music a lot then a Bonus card can be played and the music is played for a longer period of time

**Tips** Make sure the music takes into account the different cultures and backgrounds of people in the group.

Music can be emotive, so be aware if someone becomes upset listening, and allow time and support for this.

Suggest to the group they start to make their list of favourite tunes; these can then be used as an introduction to be played in future groups as people arrive. People can also start to make their own favourite lists.

## 19 Colour bingo

**Purpose** This helps simple decision-making, fun and enjoyment. From quite an individual activity it can lead into a more general discussion on problem solving which can then be used to discuss and share problems.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 25 minutes

**You Will Need** One dice with colours instead of numbers (these are available through Amazon) and corresponding coloured pens.

A table for the group to sit around.

Small prize/prizes.

A4 size copies of this template:


- Method**
1. Each person is given a template (see Appendix 7).
  2. Each person colours in the boxes on their template. They can have more than one of the same colour if they choose. The dice is then rolled for a colour. If the player who rolled that dice has that colour then they tick it off in the box (or one of the boxes) that has that colour. The rest of the group can also tick off that colour in a box with that colour on their card. The dice is passed to the next person to roll. The first person to get their colour sheet completed wins the small prize.
  3. Discuss what you would use each colour for: a new car, a bicycle, flowers to give for a birthday present to your best friend, decorating a living room, bedroom, or kitchen, something to wear, bed linen, etc.
  4. Problem solving discussion regarding colour (see Appendix 8).

**Tips** To save time, you can write the colour in the boxes on the template.

It does not matter if more than one person has the same colour template – there can be joint winners. As long as they are not all the same!

Example:

RED	RED	RED	BLUE
GREEN	YELLOW	BLUE	BLUE

The problem part of this discussion can lead on to issues such as taste, respect, and how not to offend people.

## 20 | Dates – orientation

**Purpose** This enables people to share and look at coping strategies that they might use to help with remembering if they have memory problems.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 10 minutes

**You Will Need** Any visual aids to hand which relate to dates: calendars, diary, birthday cards, a newspaper.

- Method**
1. Discuss which dates are most important: birthdays, cultural and religious holidays, sporting events. You may wish to refer to a list online.
  2. Discuss other dates that are important, e.g. doctors' appointments, etc.
  3. What helps us remember dates? Ask the group to suggest ideas; for example, a useful idea from one group was to buy birthday cards and then write on the envelope the date of the person's birthday in the position where the stamp will go. Look at different strategies they use; for example, having a regular 'routine': every Monday is laundry day!
  4. Are there strategies that others use that people would find helpful? Discuss having (and making) a group calendar.  
**Examples:** using a whiteboard, alarm, post-it notes, having a knot in a hankie, message on the door, asking someone to phone before an appointment, not having too many things happen at once.

**Tips** If discussing birth dates some might not like others knowing their age. Equally, there may be dates that people would prefer not to remember; be sensitive to this.

It's worth checking whether cards are available to buy in the housing scheme manager's office.

Remember to have dates that reflect the diversity of your group, e.g. different faiths and countries.

## 21 | Memory card match

**Purpose** Fun and enjoyment. If people are used to playing card games (in the past or present), this is an easy game and can help with concentration.

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 10 minutes

**You Will Need** Two sets of different sized playing cards

Small prizes

Table

- Method**
1. The object of the game is to obtain as many matching pairs as possible.
  2. Use only one or two suits of cards from each pack (i.e. 13 or 26 cards; if using 26 use one black and one red suit).
  3. Place the larger set of playing card face down on the table.
  4. Distribute the smaller cards, giving two cards to each player. These are looked at by the player. Place remaining cards to the side in a deck.
  5. The first person starts play by turning over one of the face-down cards from the table and saying, as well as showing the group, what the card is, e.g. 'ace of hearts'. If someone has that card in their hand, they call out 'mine' and claim the card, matching it to the card they have in their hand and putting the pair down next to them on the table. They are then given another card from the remaining deck. If no one claims the card it is returned to be face-down on the table/floor in the same position, to be claimed later.
  6. If a person claims a card they are given another card from the small pack.
  7. The game resumes with the next person turning over a card from the table. If no one has this card (because it is still in the pack) then game continues with people turning over the cards on the table until the next person claims a match.
  8. The winner is the person who has managed to collect the most pairs.
  9. A small prize can be given.

**Tips** This game can be graded to be more difficult, depending on the ability of the group (e.g. more or less suits played or more cards given out initially).

To simplify the game, use picture snap playing cards (available from Amazon) rather than playing cards.



## 22 Dice – know me

**Purpose** An opportunity to discuss what things are important to people, to help them get to know each other and build up their own personal preferences. It can also be used for their care and support.

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 20 minutes

**You Will Need** Preferably a large blank dice that can be written on (available from Amazon), but if not then a large numbered dice.

A flip chart and pen, or a sheet for each person with six boxes (as for colour dice template (Activity19), see Appendix 7).

A list of suggestions as to what is important to people (see below).

- Method**
1. The group discusses and chooses the top six things that are important for people to know about someone if they were getting to know each other; for example, name, food they like/dislike, something they are proud of, favourite music or clothing, hobbies, etc.
  2. Write a collective list of the six most important things the group decide on. Write these on each face of the blank dice (or if using an ordinary dice allocate a number to it, for example 1 = name).
  3. EITHER, each person is given a piece of paper with the same template written on it, OR the flip chart is completed with people's names and preferences on it (see example below).

	1=food like	2=drink dislike	3=music	4=etc.	5=	6=
name						
name						

4. The dice is thrown by the first person; the topic is answered and that 'important thing' is ticked off their list (but no one else's) and filled in either on their paper or the flip chart. The dice is then passed to the next person to throw.
5. The object of the game is to see who can tick off all six boxes first; they then win the small prize.

**Tips** As facilitator, try to get the group to agree on the most important things. If there are more than six things identified you can play this game another time!

Encourage discussion throughout the activity.

Some people may need help filling in individual sheets.

The activity can be adapted by having a longer discussion about the topic when only one person has thrown the dice. Then, as that item has been discussed as a group, when someone throws the same number it need not be discussed again, but the facilitator can recap what people have said previously.

You can gather a lot of information that can then be used as a warm-up activity for the following week, asking, for example, who in the group likes Mozart, has three sugars in their tea, wears glasses (it does not matter if people guess themselves).

Example of a card:

What I like to be called	2. Favourite TV programme	3. Favourite cold drink
4. Food I hate	5. Music I like	6. Favourite fruit

## 23 Knitting wool connections

**Purpose** For the group to get to know each other and find out things they have in common. To promote discussion.

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 10 minutes

**You Will Need** A ball of knitting wool

A pre-prepared list of things that people might have in common (e.g. where they were born, an interest in sport, favourite food, who has great grandchildren, etc.).

- Method**
1. Explain that the group is going to make a 'web of connections' with the wool, by finding out what things people have in common.  
**Example:** liking sport. Ask if anyone likes sport. Pass the ball of wool to the person who does, keeping hold of the end. You may want to become more specific, e.g. I like tennis. Someone else might like football and someone else might also like football.
  2. The ball of wool is gradually passed across and around the room, forming a web.
  3. Make sure one of the facilitators does not join in so they can help pick up the ball of wool if it drops or becomes hard to reach someone.
  4. Ensure that each person keeps hold of the strand of the wool as it is unravelled and before they pass it across to someone else. Once sport has been covered (not everyone will join in with this if they don't like sport), move onto another subject.
  5. Depending on the size of the group, once everyone is holding at least two strands of the wool, start to wind the wool backwards. The two people who are winding it towards each other then try to remember what the connection was that they had between them.

## 24 Favourite Things or 'Imagine' (two similar activities described together)

**Purpose** Both these activities enable the group to get to know each other and find out things they have in common. To promote discussion.

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** A pre-written list of favourite things, e.g. flavour of ice cream, written individually on pieces of paper (see Appendix 9 for suggestions).

If doing the 'Imagine' activity, you will need a pre-written list of 'imagine' activities e.g. imagine if you were given £100 what would you buy (see Appendix 10 for suggestions).

A ball or bean bag, and a bucket or target (the target can be something as simple as an A4 sheet of paper on the floor which the bean bag is thrown onto).

- Method**
1. Take it in turns to throw the ball into the bucket or the bean bag onto the target.
  2. When the target or receptacle is hit, the person is given one of the slips of paper or given a topic from the list.
  3. Others can then discuss their 'Favourite' for that particular topic (or what they would do if using the 'Imagine' activity list).
  4. It is unlikely you will use more than five topics because this can create a lot of discussion.

**Tips** Depending on the level of ability of the group and preparation time, instead of individual pieces of paper you could have a list available for the facilitator to choose from.

## 25 Hydration – drinking enough fluids

**Purpose** For the group to get to recognise and discuss the importance of drinking enough fluids. To promote discussion on this and healthy lifestyles.

**Prep Level** Hard

**Prep Time** 25 minutes

**You Will Need** A flip chart and pen.

Eight plastic cups, plus an extra set of plastic cups, plus one cup per person.

A selection of non-fizzy waters and drinks, with different fruit flavours (including flavoured water).

- Method**
1. As a group, name as many hot and cold drinks as possible. Challenge the group to reach a certain number, e.g. 20 or 50, depending on the ability of the group. Write these down on the flip chart.
  2. Discuss the importance of fluids and the reason why it is important to drink enough.
  3. List and discuss as a group what happens if not enough fluids are drunk.
  4. Discuss how to tell if you are drinking enough or not (see website below).
  5. Give out plastic cups and guess how many should be drunk a day.
  6. Guess what % of the body is made up of water and what % of the brain is water (roughly 57% of the body and 73% of the brain).
  7. Referring back to the list, decide as a group which drinks are healthy and which are not.
  8. Discuss reasons why, in particular, older people are more at risk of dehydration – ask group and list (see website below). Discuss ways of combating this.
  9. As a group, write a list of 'top tips' for drinking more.
  10. Selecting one of the flavoured waters, pour a small amount into plastic cups and see if people can identify flavours – you may also wish to do this with other drinks.
  11. After the group, based on their tips write up handouts for people to be given at the start of next group.

**Tips:** Suggested website: [www.naturalhydrationcouncil.org.uk](http://www.naturalhydrationcouncil.org.uk)  
Prior to the group, check if the people are diabetic or have any allergies or intolerances.

## 26 Reminiscence

**Purpose** For the group to get to know each other and find out what they have in common, leading into a discussion about the past and present.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 40 minutes

**You Will Need** Topics of common interest to the group, e.g. hair, fashion, different decades, health, sport, etc.

Visual resources for the chosen topic – for example, if choosing holidays you might bring in maps, guidebooks, an atlas, tickets, foreign money, a jar of sand.

A bag or box to put the resources in.

- Method**
1. Use a warm-up activity such as ‘Pass the bomb’, relating it to the chosen reminiscence topic. Alternatively, do exercises, such as actions to do with transport (e.g. hoisting a sail, driving a lorry, riding a bicycle); you can demonstrate these and they can guess the task.
  2. Discuss how things have changed regarding the chosen topic, e.g. fashion.
  3. Using the objects, introduce the theme, possibly by getting people to guess what is in the bag or asking them to select an object of interest from the box. Focusing in on the chosen object, you can then discuss: what was it used for? Did anyone have one? Think of textures, colour, where, what, why, how. Expand on the topic; there are usually no right or wrong answers in reminiscence.

**Tips** To design the activity, take a topic, e.g. gardens, and then write the word in the middle of a piece of paper and think of as many items as possible; for example, seeds, flowers plants, tubs, wellington boots, soil, worms etc. With these items, you now have the start of your reminiscence box.

People often have strong sensory attachments to memories, so attempt to use visual elements, smell, taste, touch and hearing in the objects that you choose. However, remember that the sense of smell is often one of the first senses to decline as people age.

Avoid asking direct questions such as, ‘Who is this a picture of?’ Instead, ask ‘How do people feel about the royal family?’, ‘How does this person look to you?’

Be aware of those who may become upset; it helps to have some knowledge of a person’s life.

As people warm up to the topic it is often quite hard for people as they recall things to also listen to each other. Use strategies that enable everyone to share; for example, using the box of items for people to take things from and taking turns.

People may become quiet as they get lost in thought and recall memories – allow time for this.

## 27 | What's in a name?

**Purpose** For the group to get to know each other and discuss feelings around their names and identity.

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** Book of baby names with meanings (available from local library).

- Method**
1. Sit the group in a circle.
  2. After a warm-up using names (suggest activity 1, 3 or 5), start by asking if people know the meaning of their name.
  3. Look up in the names book the meaning of each member's name – discuss if they reflect the person.
  4. You may also wish to discuss:
    - Do people like their names?
    - Did they have a nickname?
    - How important is a name?
    - How did people get their names?
    - Any family stories relating to names.
    - Middle names and their meanings.
    - Origin of surnames.
    - Different names as a child.
    - If you could choose your name again, what would it be?
  5. This activity flows nicely into activities to remember each other's names, e.g. ball games, or a discussion as to whether people wish to have name badges.

**Tips** This activity could be expanded into craft sessions involving making name plates for doors, coasters, name badges, etc. although this would require more equipment.

## 28 Learning names of people

**Purpose** For the group to explore strategies for how to deal with situations when they forget names and the feelings associated with this. To help people understand they are not alone with this and to support each other.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 30 minutes

**You Will Need** A flip chart and pen.

- Method**
1. Discuss what makes it hard to learn names. Put the ideas on the flip chart; for example, situations where there are lots of people.
  2. Move on to discuss feelings evoked by not remembering – add these to the flip chart; for example, being embarrassed, anxious, withdrawn, etc.
  3. Look at the difficulties one at a time. Take time to discuss what methods people use to help themselves.
  4. Ask if the group would like a handout of suggestions. If so, prepare one for the next group when recapping the last meeting at the next meeting.

**Tips** Be prepared for strong emotions, as people may become upset. Acknowledge and reassure them. For some, it might be a recognition that they decide not to learn new names or choose to call people by a generic name such as 'love'. Discuss other names that they might call people or how to let people know they have memory problems.

Strategies might come up, such as having photos of group members, the use of name badges, or labelling home photos. Ensure post-group that there is time to implement these. Prompt the discussion if these ideas are not forthcoming.



## 29 Who am I?

**Purpose** For the group to get to know each other, stimulating observational skills, and finding common points of interest.

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 5 minutes

**You Will Need** General information about members that you have gained from previous groups (activity 23) or from observations.

- Method**
1. Explain to the group that you are going to describe someone that is in the room and that they have to guess who it is you are describing.  
**Example:** “They are wearing glasses, they are female, they are vegetarian and worked in a bank...”
  2. Continue with clues until the person is guessed – people may well guess themselves and that is fine.
  3. Once you have covered everyone in the group you can go on to describe famous people; for example, “He had six wives, he was a king, etc.” (King Henry 8<sup>th</sup>).

**Tips** The activity can be graded, depending on how well the group know each other.

The activity can be played as a team game or in pairs, with the pair or team having to guess.

## 30 Personal word searches and crosswords

**Purpose** For the group to get to know each other. For individuals to possibly find a new hobby/interest or to re-engage with one that they might have found was becoming difficult. To help with concentration

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 40 minutes

**You Will Need** Access to the Internet in preparation for the group. There are a number of educational websites which provide an opportunity for you to customise simple word searches and crosswords. The ones I have found most useful and easy to use are: [www.teachers-direct.co.uk/resources/wordsearches](http://www.teachers-direct.co.uk/resources/wordsearches) <http://tools.atozteacherstuff.com/word-search-maker/wordsearch.php>

Printed copies of the word searches and crosswords already made.

Knowledge of group members that has previously been shared.

**Example:** Doris has five children, and therefore your clue might be: 'she has five children'.

Pens for filling in answers.

- Method**
1. The group needs to be sitting at a table and in pairs to be given a copy of the worksheet.
  2. Explain that the sheet is personalised to members of the group and that all the crossword clues are members of the group.  
**Example:** the clue for one across might be 'He was once in the navy'. The group might not know the answer but hopefully the person to whom it refers will.

**Tips** Word searches can be individualised and graded in difficulty depending on the ability of individual group members.

This activity works well even with people at a moderate stage of dementia, provided they have some familiarity with word search games.

For those who enjoy the activity, it makes an easy handout to give people to do on their own between groups.

## 31 | Wrapped present

**Purpose** For the group to think around a theme, to aid orientation in time, and to help with concentration.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 45 minutes

**You Will Need** About six various objects of different sizes and material relating to the topic (e.g. if the topic chosen is kitchens, you might choose a wooden spoon, a bag of flour, and rubber gloves). Wrap up each item separately in decorative paper and label each parcel 1–6.

A large dice.

- Method**
1. Place items on the floor and explain that the parcels wrapped all follow a theme. You may wish to let people know what this theme is, or get the group to guess what the theme is as the game is played or at the end.
  2. Choose someone to throw the dice first.
  3. Whatever number they throw they have that parcel from the floor. Feeling through the paper they have to guess what is inside.
  4. The parcel is passed around the room for everyone to guess the contents – a consensus of opinion is reached and the parcel is passed back to the first person, who then opens it.
  5. Encourage discussion, asking questions regarding the object. For example, with flour: did people ever make their own bread? You could discuss types of flour, brand names, favourite foods that use flour.
  6. Move onto the next dice roll. If the person throws a number that has already been chosen, then the dice moves onto the next person. Continue playing until all 'presents' have been opened and discussed.

**Tips** If playing in teams then questions for discussion can also be wrapped in the paper.

This can be adapted by giving out a 'present' one at a time rather than using a dice.

This is a good activity to use following a theme, e.g. Christmas, or a topic such as transport.

## 32 Creative writing exercise 1

**Purpose** To work as a group in creating something and for individuals to possibly find a new hobby/interest or to re-engage with one that they might have found was becoming difficult. To help with concentration.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 30 minutes

**You Will Need** A4-sized colour photographs of three interesting- looking people (preferably not famous, but with strong emotions in their face, or performing an activity).

One copy for every pair in the group or one copy per person.

Pens, paper.

A flip chart and pen.

- Method**
1. Distribute the first photograph so that everyone can see it.
  2. Ask the group to imagine they had to describe the person in the photograph to a blind person in as much detail as possible. Are they male or female? What are they wearing? What age? Try and get as much detail as possible from everyone.
  3. Write these suggestions on the flip chart, collect the photos and move on to the next photograph. Repeat the above step before moving on to the third photograph.
  4. Decide, as a group, which of the three photographs you would like to write a story about.
  5. Redistribute the chosen photograph, and recap the notes you have made on the photograph so far.  
**Example:** She's female, about 20, looks sad. You can expand by deciding on a name, or where she is from. How does she feel? What has just happened to her? Write down notes and ideas, and then begin to write a story as a group.
  6. This can be done as a 'round', with each person taking it in turns to say a different sentence.  
**Example:** 'Maria was feeling sad. She had just broken up with her boyfriend Gary and...'
  7. Re-read the story several times as you go along to help people keep pace with the plot. Introduce more characters into the tale. Ask the questions: 'who', 'when', 'where', 'why', and 'how'. Most importantly, ask 'what happens next'!

8. Check that people are happy with the way the story is going.
9. Acknowledge the work and creative imagination people have put into the completed story. You may wish to finish with: 'what advice would you give to this person?', or 'is it someone you could see being a friend? If not, why not?'.
10. Read out the completed story.
11. Type and distribute it for the following week.

**Tips:** You may find that people identify with the feelings or situations that are created and that naturally leads to a discussion (e.g. times of achievement or sadness in one's own life that other people can relate to).

Some may have difficulty in relating to the imaginative aspect of the story but, as they have the photograph to relate to, they should still be able to contribute to the more factual side of the story (e.g. she was wearing a blue sundress).

If the group activity goes well, there are endless possibilities for writing stories, not just from people's photos but from other photographs: e.g. taking a photograph from a newspaper without the headline and making up what happened; or taking a headline without the article and deciding what it is about. If this is an activity the group enjoys, then you may wish to develop these stories into a group book.

## 33 Creative writing 2

**Purpose** To work as a group in creating something and for individuals to possibly find a new hobby/interest or to re-engage with one that they might have found was becoming difficult. To help with concentration.

**Prep Level** High

**Prep Time** 40 minutes

**You Will Need** Some poetry/prose, preferably extracts or poems that are familiar to the group you are working with; e.g. “Daffodils” by Wordsworth, “If” by Rudyard Kipling, Robert Burns (if Scottish), Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” speech, or Robert Frost.

The copies should be in large print to make it easier for people to read them.

- Method**
1. Start by discussing the poetry/prose. Ask if anyone had to learn poetry or read prose at school. Discuss these experiences and find out if anyone can recite what they learnt at school.
  2. Explain that poetry does not have to rhyme (a misconception often left over from school).
  3. Having read one of the poems, discuss as a group any thoughts people may have regarding it.
  4. Expand on this discussion to then make a group poem or piece of prose.
  5. Firstly, decide on a theme; this may evolve through discussion but if you are struggling to generate ideas, then a couple of suggestions are given below.

**Rainbows** – discuss the colours and add detailed descriptions; for instance, do the colours hold particular emotions or memories? Write all ideas down and then decide, as a group, which emotions to choose from the suggestions made.

**Start each line with the colour**, e.g. red like the post-box I passed on the way to school, and which creates a feeling of...

6. Read the poem or prose as you go along. If necessary, do this several times to remind the group what has been said and to check that they are happy with the content.
7. Once completed, type the poem out for the following week and give everyone a copy, with group members’ names written underneath. If they want, they can display this poem on the notice board.

**Tips:** Ensure you use at least one suggestion in the poem from each person. 'When I was little...' – Get the group to complete the sentence with different suggestions that involve a range of verbs, e.g. 'lived in', 'hoped', 'liked', 'played' etc. You can either ask the group for these kinds of verbs, or have them prepared. Write down all the suggestions that people give, e.g. 'When I was little, I lived in a house with a door that squeaked and a small back yard...'; 'When I was little, I hoped to be...'; 'When I was little, I dreamt of...'. Encourage people to be as descriptive as possible and write down all the suggestions given. Then, as a group, sort and create the poem finishing with perhaps advice to the younger generation, e.g. 'and now I am older and I say to the young...'.

Find out the week before if people have familiar poems they know and, if so, have these printed out and used in the group.

Allow time for discussion.

Use the questions: 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why' and 'how' to gather details.

Also make use of the senses: what did things feel like, look like, sound like, taste like, smell like?

## 34 Music

**Purpose** Enjoyment and reminiscence.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 30 minutes

**You Will Need** Someone who can play a musical instrument (and the instrument itself).

Knowledge of the types of music that the group enjoys (these will vary). Ensure the musician has a 'play list' of some of the favourites among the group, as well as a list of new songs.

Printed lyrics for some of the tunes.

- Method**
1. The musician may play a familiar tune, with the others guessing what the tune/song is. Encourage the group to sing along.
  2. To help the group learn new songs, sing one line and let the group repeat after you. Gradually introducing more lines – keep the songs upbeat and simple with a good rhythm.
  3. Introduce clapping or tapping to songs if people are unsure of the words or prefer not to sing.
  4. Ensure session ends on an upbeat or happy tune.

**Tips** Choose songs with strong rhythms and a repetitive chorus.

Songs can be very emotive: be sensitive if you notice someone becoming very quiet, tearful or upset.

Finding your musician: local places of worship often have musicians willing to give time or approach any Sixth Forms schools/colleges with music teachers who may be willing to come. Students needing voluntary work for the Duke of Edinburgh Award and may be willing to help. N.B. Ensure they understand the group should be participatory and the music relevant; this is not merely performing to an audience. Meet with them to discuss this.

Have a music system ready in case the musician does not turn up!

Useful website for finding musicians: <http://www.livemusicnow.org.uk>



## 35 Photograph match and albums

**Purpose** To help group participants remember each other and enjoy photographs that will be made into albums for an aide-memoire. This is a good strategy to use if they have memory problems.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 60 minutes

**You Will Need** Photographs of group members taken from previous group meetings.

The names of people written clearly on cards to act as captions for the photographs. Where there is more than one person in the photo, include both names.

A table in the centre of the circle.

A pocket album for each member of the group (optional).

- Method**
1. Place the cards with written names on the table face up.
  2. Place the photographs face down on the table.
  3. Take it in turns to turn a photograph face upwards; pass this around group for people to look at, and ask the person who turned it over to match the picture with names on the card.
  4. Place it back on the table, along with corresponding name card.
  5. Continue until all photographs have been turned over.
  6. Discuss as a group which photographs they like and make a note of this.
  7. Show the empty photo album and ask the group if they would like to start a photograph album of the group – or perhaps have one of their own or a group album. If so, help people decide which copies of the photos they would like and have those copies made. Also discuss if there are any staff photos that are wanted and if so, arrange to have these printed and captioned as a follow up group session of matching staff photographs to names.

**Tips** Check if permissions are required for taking and using these photographs.

Recommend 'albums' that have plastic pockets; Rymans stationery has a selection of these.

Talking photograph albums are also available for those with difficulty reading: [www.talkingproducts.com](http://www.talkingproducts.com)

## 36 Losing things

**Purpose** For the group to explore strategies of how to deal with times when they lose things and the feelings associated with this, to help people understand they are not alone with this issue and to support each other.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 30 minutes

**You Will Need** A flip chart and pen.

Drawstring bags. Before the group starts, put items into drawstring bags – one item per bag. Use items that often get lost, e.g. a TV remote control, keys, glasses, etc.

Information downloaded from the Time Out article on Baker Street's London Underground Lost Property (see reference below).

Key finder (see reference below).

- Method**
1. Without opening the different bags, pass them around and ask people to guess what is in them – depending on the group's ability, either pass these around the whole circle or give a bag to each person in turn. Once all the items are guessed, get them out of the bags so that everyone can see them and ask what they have in common, i.e. they are all things that we lose.
  2. Reassure the group – we all lose things sometimes. Give information on Baker Street station Lost Property office and some facts and figures regarding lost property (see below for web link). Ask the group if they can think of examples of when they have lost something; if there are other items, write these on the flip chart.
  3. Explore the feelings people have when losing things – add these to the flip chart and discuss.
  4. Discuss what makes us lose things: sometimes it's memory but sometimes it can be doing too much, not being organised, no routine, feeling tired, or not concentrating.
  5. Using two of the things on the list, discuss what can help us deal with these so that we manage losing things better, e.g. having a 'spare', keeping things in set places; having a key finder; asking for help; if it's not important, leaving it until it simply 'turns up'. Get the group to think of their own solutions to losing things.
  6. Write suggestions on the flip chart.
  7. Ask the group if it would be helpful to get/practice any of these things – this might then lead on to creating 'forget-me-not bowls' or issuing key finders (demonstrate how to use this).
  8. Ask if the group would like a handout of suggestions. If so, prepare this for the next group.

**Tips** Try to get the group to think of the ways in which they cope, but have ideas on hand to suggest if they do not.

Ref: <http://www.timeout.com/london/things-to-do/london-underground-lost-property> on facts about lost property.

Key finders: <http://www.atdementia.org.uk>

## 37 Birthdays

**Purpose** For the group to celebrate each other's birthdays, to think more about each other, and to reflect and discuss what is important in life.

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 10 minutes

**You Will Need** A flip chart and pen.

A birthday card (optional) or an A4 sheet of paper and a pen.

A summary of what the different zodiac signs mean and their dates.

Four sets of cards, comprising of 1) pictures of the star signs; 2) names of the star signs; 3) names of the group members; 4) a short summary of the supposed personality belonging to the star signs (easily found on websites, such as. <http://voices.yahoo.com/the-12-zodiac-signs-their-personality-types-2234639.html>).

A list of when people's birthdays are – the activity needs to take place on a date close to someone's birthday.

- Method**
1. Begin as a group by talking about the person whose birthday it is – you may wish to do a small introduction about them if people do not know or remember the person.
  2. Explain that you are each (or as a group) going to give a present to the person whose birthday it is. Ask them to imagine that they can give absolutely anything at all.
  3. Ask people to suggest things that they might give. This can be anything they think of, such as freedom from pain or a bunch of flowers! Record these on the flip chart.
  4. When everyone has had the opportunity 'to give', ask the person how he/she feels about the presents.
  5. Read out the list of suggested gifts as someone else writes it into the card or A4 paper.
  6. (Optional) Ask the person: "if there was only room in your bag to take one of those things home, what would it be?"
  7. Give the person the card or A4 piece of paper from the group to take back with them.
  8. This leads on to a discussion about what things are important in life (often the things we can't see, such as good health or friendship).

9. Move on to discuss when others' birthday are and list these. Discuss significant birthday dates (e.g. 21st), favourite birthdays or significant ones (remember, these may not always bring back good memories).
10. Lay out the zodiac cards from set one and two on the table. Spend time matching these, then add set three and finally the last set. Place these in front of people to whom they belong. If people wish, read them out and discuss if people agree with the comments made. If there are particular objections to birth signs, use birth stones instead: <http://www.almanac.com/content/birthstones-and-their-meanings>. Alternatively, Chinese new years could be used: <http://www.almanac.com/content/chinese-zodiac>
11. For additional discussion points, use the problem pages (Activity 43) regarding birthdays (see also Appendix 11).

## 38 Ceramic bowls (a two session activity)

**Purpose** For individuals to make something practical that can be used for keeping important items (e.g. keys) so they can easily be found.

**Prep Level** High

**Prep Time** 60 minutes

**You Will Need** Access to a local ceramic 'make-a-pot' shop (find these through internet). They supply all materials – ceramics, paints, etc. – and then fire it usually within a two-week period.

About £15 per person to cover costs.

A book of patterns, shapes, stencils, drawings of keys and other items people might wish to paint; flowers or other things people may wish to copy.

Pencils and sheets of paper with circles the same size of the bowl drawn on them.

Access to a sink and to water.

- Method**
1. Recap the “losing things” session (Activity 36 above), and the importance of routine and keeping items in the same place. Discuss reasons for making the bowls and items that might be kept in them.
  2. Discuss items people wish to draw on their bowl and practice these on the paper. Once people are happy with these, follow instructions from the ceramic shop as to how to paint bowls.

**Tips** For those whose dexterity is not good, glaze can be applied with sponges. They can still contribute to the design and decisions of what they wish to have put on the bowl by looking at pattern books. Drawings can be done for them and then they can paint it themselves.

## 39 Newspapers – orientation

**Purpose** To promote discussion on current affairs, and help orientation and expression of ideas.

**Prep level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 20 minutes

**You Will Need** Several copies of a daily newspaper.

Time to look through the paper before the group arrives and decide on a few observations or thoughts around some of the headlines.

Magnifying glasses (if people have visual impairments).

A stapler (if necessary) so that paper does not come apart.

**Method** Newspapers can be used in a variety of ways and easily adapted to meet group's needs. Below is a list of ways to use them:

1. Each person or pair is given a paper and asked to look up the date, weather, and sports. Play first to find.
2. What are the things that make up a newspaper?
3. Begin a general discussion. Do people have a favourite paper? Which section of the paper do they like?
4. Discussing headlines – start a general discussion about a topical issue.  
**Example:** An article on royalty can be used to work out the royal family tree. This may lead on to making one's own family tree.

...depending on what is in the paper this activity can lead anywhere!

## 40 Orientation inside and outside where you live

**Purpose** For individuals to discuss and take pro-active roles in enhancing the environment in which they live, both for their own benefit and for others.

**Prep Level** High

**Prep Time** 1 hour

**You Will Need** The King's Fund dementia friendly environmental assessment tool. Before the group meets, have a look at The King's Fund assessment tool that assesses whether care home environments are 'dementia friendly' (see below). Based on this information, use your own headings to make a checklist that is appropriate for the group to discuss in terms of the building where they live. The King's Fund audit checklist can be found at: [http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field\\_pdf/is-your-care-home-dementia-friendly-ehe-tool-kingsfund-mar13.pdf](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field_pdf/is-your-care-home-dementia-friendly-ehe-tool-kingsfund-mar13.pdf). See point 6 in particular, which deals specifically with orientation.

A pen.

Printed Google maps of local area (one per person).

A sample of a GPS system and help cards ([http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents\\_info.php?documentID=360](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=360)).

- Method**
1. After a warm-up (using Activity 3 and naming different rooms in a house or things found in a bedroom, kitchen etc.), start the discussion with a problem to solve (see Appendix 12: problem page).
  2. Discuss the times when people have got lost e.g. on holiday (focus on them getting lost, not losing others or things). What are the feelings when you get lost? What can help us not get lost?
  3. Distribute and discuss the checklist you have made earlier and get the group to think of a list of things that should be looked at.
  4. Discuss practical ways of improving things.
  5. If relevant to the group, move on to discuss geographical orientation outside the building. List things available in the local community and write these on the flip chart. Discuss places which people visit or go to, how the journey is made and what, if anything, stops people from going there. Discuss, as a group, what action plan a person might take to get somewhere.
  6. If the group is active in still going to the local community, you may wish to start a folder of useful resources or information, e.g. dial-a-ride, help cards and so on.
  7. Ask if the group would like a handout of suggestions. If so, prepare one for the next group. Some of the discussions may lead to 1:1 work.



**Tips** Let the manager know you are having this discussion and ensure they are happy with this happening. If possible, get them to join in or attend at the end. Discuss findings and a plan of action. Arrange for findings to be written up and discuss where and how they can be best distributed, e.g. the possibility of being presented at next tenants' meeting or inviting the manager to discuss these with the group.

Some people may not have problems and not wish to participate, but explain that in doing this, they may be helping others either in the group or future tenants.

Have some prior knowledge of what the local area has to offer.

Be aware of those who have been advised not to go out alone and discuss ways of enabling them to do so safely.

Be very aware of those who may say they go out but who, in reality, no longer do so.

## 41 Photographs and memories

**Purpose** For individuals to share important memories and to assist in reminding the group about others who may be away or no longer attending. To create a sense of community and belonging within the group.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 30 minutes

**You Will Need** To prepare the group for the task. The week before, ask people to bring along photographs, or if they have none, an object that is important to them.

A camera.

- Method**
1. Give each person time to show their photographs or special object around the group and explain who is on the photograph or why the object is important.
  2. Ask the group if they would like to have their photograph taken, either as a group or individually – take photos and use these for future group session that need photographs.

**Tips** Photos taken can be used in several ways, e.g. as a reminder to the group of someone who is perhaps not attending that week. Several copies can be made of individual photos and people in the group can start their own individual photo albums as prompting tools for use as reminders when they are not attending the group.

In a letter sent prior to group, remind people that you are doing this activity. Collect people early for the group so that you can, if necessary, ensure photos are brought to the session.

Check to see what the permission policy is for taking photographs.

Make sure the names of people are on the albums and on individual photos to act as prompts.

Use 'talking albums' for those no longer able to read. These are available from: [www.TalkingProducts.com](http://www.TalkingProducts.com)

## 42 | What makes a community? – places in the world

**Purpose** For the group to explore what makes a community or a sense of belonging and how this can occur with each other.

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 30 minutes

**You Will Need** A map of the world.

A map of Britain (optional).

A map of the local area (often available from the local council/library).

Sticky dots or pre-made labels with people's names.

- Method:**
1. As a group, start by thinking of lots of different countries and places. Start globally and then finish with local places.
  2. If using maps, use dots and labels to indicate where people come from and also any connections they may have with other places.
  3. Move on to discuss what things need to exist to make a community, e.g. shops, neighbours? What makes a place good to live in? Link this with the building orientation activity (Activity 40).

**Tips:** Be aware: favourite places may also bring up feelings of loss or regret at not being able to revisit them or still live there.

For a warm-up, have travel brochures or books available for people to browse through.

## 43 Problem pages

**Purpose** For the group to problem solve using their wisdom and experience and to support each other in sharing difficulties.

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 20 minutes

**You Will Need** Pre-prepared questions written and individually placed in envelopes (refer to Appendix 13, for A and B type problems).

An up-to-date newspaper or magazine that has a problem page to show the group.

- Method**
1. Discuss how through life we face challenges and may turn to others for help – have people come across problem pages in magazines before? The group has a combined wealth of [xx] years of living (roughly estimate how old the group is!).
  2. Show the envelopes and ask for a volunteer to choose an envelope. (Start with list A, which are more general problems.)
  3. The person opens an envelope and reads out the problem to the rest of the group (or gets someone to read it for them). After a period of thinking, the group then has the chance to answer with the advice/wisdom they would give.
  4. Once the group has warmed up to this, include problems similar to list B problems which are more focussed and may relate to problems the individuals in the group are facing or have faced in the recent past.
  5. Reaffirm the wisdom the group has, and summarise the solutions. Focus on the importance of sharing and talking to someone that you trust. The group can then discuss this generally as to whom/where they go to with their problems.

**Tips** Make the group aware of the ground rules and the need to respect different opinions, even if people don't necessarily agree with them. People may have very fixed ideas. Be prepared for conflict and how to handle this if people have extreme opinions.

## 44 | How is the group going?

**Purpose** To assist the participants in continuing to take responsibility for the group and to decide what should be happening within it.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 20 minutes

**You Will Need** A flip chart.

'Yes', 'No' or 'Don't know' cards printed (optional).

A printed list of topics or routines the group has done, including all aspects of the group sessions – ground rules, refreshments, etc.

- Method**
1. Start the group by recapping, as usual, what the purpose of the group is and the ground rules agreed. Stress that it is their group, not yours, and the need to make it the best group suitable for everyone.
  2. If people are able, get them to say what they like best about the group.
  3. Remind them of all the things that the group has done – the activities, discussions etc. Have these printed on a list and shared in pairs.
  4. Give out "YES" with a green tick (I liked), "NO" with a red cross (I didn't like) or "?" (I don't know) cards out to everyone, or do this in pairs.
  5. Ask for feedback on each group activity, requesting that people hold up the relevant card. They do not have to say anything, but may choose to, and can expand on what they did or didn't like about the activity or group. This can also cover the tea-breaks, whether people have had enough say as to what happens in the group, length, timing, and frequency of the group meetings, etc.

## 45 'Being prepared': talking about the future

**Purpose** For the group to look gently at the future, to be encouraged to take responsibility, and have control in making decisions about themselves.

**Prep Level** High

**Prep Time** 20 minutes

**You Will Need** A Scout or Guiding emblem/badge.

A medium holdall or small suitcase.

A small bean bag.

Personal preference sheets (see Appendix14).

Information sheets for people to take home on Lasting Powers of Attorney and wills. These can be found at: <http://dyingmatters.org/page/dying-matters-leaflets> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/lasting-power-of-attorney-forms>

- Method**
1. Show the emblem and motto of the Scout Movement: 'Be Prepared'. Discuss if anyone was a Brownie or Scout, etc. The motto usually meant having a piece of string and a sixpence in the top pocket!
  2. Discuss what we might prepare for throughout life; ask for ideas on this. They might include: going on holiday, moving house.
  3. As a group, choose one of these ideas and think through what plans you might have to put in place if, for example, moving house. Also discuss how things don't always go to plan.
  4. Move on to discuss what might happen now and how one might prepare for things, such as hospital admissions, and death.
  5. Discuss that accidents sadly happen and people do have to go into hospital. Being prepared with a 'hospital bag' for emergencies might help make the visit less traumatic – if you were going into hospital, what would you take?
  6. Place a small suitcase/bag in the centre of the room. Each person takes a turn to throw the bean bag into the suitcase and names something they would pack to take with them.
  7. Depending on the comfort of the group and the atmosphere, you may wish to move on to look at other future plans (for example, death). However, many may not want to discuss this openly; be very sensitive.

8. Give information on LPAs, advance care plans etc.; have this information on hand. Have the knowledge of where to signpost people to go to for more information if people need it. Some may wish to discuss these topics within the group itself and may have thoughts on what they would like added to care plans – allow time for this.
9. End the session by ensuring everyone is all right and request members to pass a pat on the back around the group, or a hand squeeze if appropriate (see Activity 7).

**Tips:** To make the group more light-hearted, the ‘bean bag into the bag’ game can also be played with a box and naming what you need to prepare if going to moving house. Alternately, you could use a suitcase for holiday purposes this time, and ask what people would carry for vacations.

Acknowledge the difficulty of the subject matter and the bravery of people in discussing it.

This is a difficult session to run; you may wish to keep it very light through discussion points 1–3 and only touching on the more difficult subjects if the mood of the group allows it.

Only attempt this activity if the group is well established and trusting of one another.

Know where to signpost if they wish to do an advance care plan.  
[www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents\\_info.php?documentID=143](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=143)

## 46 Understanding technology

**Purpose** For the group to discuss what might assist them in staying independent and safe, and to learn from each other and from the equipment shown.

**Prep Level** Easy

**Prep Time** 25 minutes

**You Will Need** Drawstring bags – one per member of the group.

A selection of small everyday items e.g. scissors, hairbrush, garlic press. Place each in a bag before group starts.

A selection of technology appropriate to group members that might assist them, e.g. key finder, lanyard, tablet box, night light, magi-plug, talking photo album (see below).

Bean bags and a bucket/receptacle.

- Method**
1. Each person is given a turn with three bean bags to throw into the bucket. If they succeed, they are then given a drawstring bag and have to guess what is inside. If they don't know, they share the drawstring bag with the person next to them and both guess.
  2. They then open the bag to see if they are correct. The game continues until all bags are open.
  3. Discussion: Technology is anything we use to help us in daily lives. We can it in the same way that someone with walking problems may use a stick or a person who is deaf may use a hearing aid. There is a range of equipment that can help memory problems. Which things do people use already?
  4. Pass around the 'memory aid' objects one at a time. People take it in turns to guess what they are, e.g. the magi-plug. Once everyone has had a guess, tell the group the correct answer and discuss the use of the object.
  5. Provide a handout sheet at the end as to where these products can be obtained. Some items may be available through the local memory clinic.

**Tips** This is more fun to do as a game but if time does not permit it, just hand round drawstring bags one at a time and omit stage 2.

Do not give/show too many objects at once. You may wish to do a theme for this activity – e.g. communication objects, losing things, or spread the session over a two-week period to allow adequate discussion time.

You may wish to invite someone from the local memory clinic to help run this session and bring products that are available.

Make sure objects are appropriate to group members. This is a largely tactile activity and therefore should not preclude people with visual impairments from participating.



## 47 | The senses

**Purpose** To enjoy, reminisce and discuss the senses. To help people get to know each other better, share, and also create the opportunity to contribute to an individual's life story preference books.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 45 minutes

**You Will Need** A bean bag

A drawstring bag with an object in each. This can be a soft or hard object but recognisable through touch, e.g. spoon, ball, stapler.

Plastic cups with different drinks in them – one glass per person of each flavour e.g. Innocent, 'Nesquik' or flavoured tea.

Small jars with distinct smells – e.g. ginger, vinegar.

An iPad with familiar tunes or noises pre-recorded, or a selection of items that make a noise: a bell, crisps, drum, tambourine.

Selection of different flavour crisps or chocolate for tasting on plates (with the flavour written on a label underneath the plate).

Five A4 sheets of paper with 'sound', 'taste', 'touch', 'hearing' and 'smell' written on each. (Optional: You may wish to illustrate and laminate these for future use.)

- Method**
1. Prepare for the session by putting drink cups and crisps on different plates. Have all items easily accessible. If using sound items, have these hidden from view in a bag.
  2. Discuss what the five senses are.
  3. Show the five A4 sheets on the floor as each sense is discussed.
  4. Take it in turns to throw a bean bag onto one of the pieces of paper. If the person succeeds in throwing the bean bag onto the paper, then choose an object from that category, e.g. taste = crisps. Ask them to taste and identify what flavour.
  5. Pass the plate around the whole group to see if others can identify or suggest what the flavour might be. Discuss. (People do not have to taste if they would prefer not to.)
  6. Continue the session with someone else throwing the bean bag onto another piece of paper.
  7. Lead game on to a discussion about the senses: have people's senses changed? What methods do they use to compensate? Discuss the need for regular appointments with the doctor and whether people bother with these or how people get to their appointments.

**Tips:** If preferred, have the sense A4 sheets lying face down and stacked in the centre, so that there is only one sheet of paper for people to throw on to. This makes the game harder for people in terms of throwing.

With age, senses often decline. In particular, the sense of smell is often not present in people with dementia. You may wish to discuss this as a group.

## 48 | What makes a place home?

**Purpose** For individuals to think about community and create a sense of belonging and understanding within the group.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 20 minutes

**You Will Need** A flip chart and a pen.

Several sayings to do with the home. These can be found at: [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic\\_home2.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_home2.html)

A copy of an Argos, Ikea or similar furniture catalogue (optional).

- Method**
1. Discuss the items people have in a house – focus on the essential rooms and their contents. List them (use Activity 3 with: ‘things found in a bedroom, bathroom, garden’).
  2. If wanted, and if the group is small, use the catalogues to look for furniture etc.
  3. Move on to discuss what makes a house a home – reminisce about places where people have lived. Often, it is not ‘things’ but the atmosphere and memories that make a home, e.g. familiar items, people, stress-free space, a place to relax, laughter, etc.
  4. Read and discuss quotes from the link above, e.g. “Home is where the heart is” and “home sweet home”.
  5. Read out a couple of ‘problems’ relating to ‘home’ and think of solutions as a group (see Appendix 12).
  6. As a group, you may like to write out an advice sheet for someone who is moving house.

**Tips** Be aware of those who have difficulty in feeling ‘at home’ where they now live. This activity can elicit feelings of sadness but others will have been through similar experiences and will offer support.

## 49 | When someone has died

**Purpose** For the group to acknowledge and mourn the loss of a group member and to give opportunity to discuss their own feelings about the future.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 15 minutes

**You Will Need** A photograph of the deceased person.

A sympathy card and a pen.

**Method** This gives the group the opportunity to grieve and, if they so wish, look at their own death/funeral requirements. It links with the “Be Prepared” activity. This group session happens when someone within the group dies.

1. Start the group by explaining who has died; some may be aware of this, others might be aware but have forgotten.
2. Pass the picture of the person around and allow people to discuss the recollections they may have of that person.
3. Suggest the signing of a card and pass this around if people should wish to sign.
4. Optional – progress to talking about funerals and ways in which they themselves might wish to be remembered.

**Tips** Some may wish only to do have a brief discussion about end of life issues and then move on to a more light-hearted activity. Be sensitive as to how the group is feeling and respond accordingly.

## 50 Healthy eating

**Purpose** For the group to recognise the importance of eating well.  
To promote discussion on this and on healthy lifestyles.

**Prep Level** Moderate

**Prep Time** 45 minutes

**You Will Need** Refer to the 'eat well' plate at: <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/goodfood/documents/eatwellplate.pdf>. Print out or draw a large copy of this. Also have copies of the plate printed for people to refer to and keep.

Drawstring bags, each with a different food from the 'eat-well plate', e.g. a tin of tuna (protein), pasta (carbohydrate), an apple (fruit), etc.

- Method**
1. Start with a warm-up activity that challenges the group to list as many vegetables as possible. You may wish to suggest a number and try and hit that target, e.g. 20. Depending on the groups' ability, move on to them naming fruit. Discuss what 'five a day' means (i.e. the importance of eating five portions of fruit or vegetables a day. See the link below for portion sizes). Discuss what people enjoy eating – make a note of these and possibly include them in future sessions as refreshments, e.g. mango or grapes.
  2. Distribute and look at the eat-well plate. Discuss what makes a healthy diet and the importance of it.
  3. Place the large eat-well plate on the floor.
  4. Have different foods placed in the drawstring bags. Pass around one at a time and ask people to guess what is in the bag. Once they guessed, open the bag and then decide which food group it belongs to on the 'eat well plate'. Alternately, if you have drawn a large copy of this, then place the food on the relevant section of the drawing. Recap the reason why each food group is important (e.g. dairy has calcium and is good for your bones) or not important (e.g. not having too much fat in diet).
  5. Alternatively, if you have drawn a large copy of the plate, have the same food products on a table for all to see. Throw a bean bag onto the large eat-well plate. Wherever the bag lands, get the person to either name something from that food group or choose something from the table that belongs to that category.

**Tips** People often enjoy discussing food – allow time for a discussion on this. You may also end up discussing the LACK of choice people now feel they have, and problems with enjoying food, etc. These may generate topics for further groups, such as problems with chewing or dentures, taste changes, etc.

For information on portion sizes, refer to: [http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/5ADAY/Documents/Downloads/5ADAY\\_portion\\_guide.pdf](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/5ADAY/Documents/Downloads/5ADAY_portion_guide.pdf)

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### **Suggested handout for someone helping with group on an ad hoc basis**

#### **Thank you for being able to help with the group this afternoon**

Ideally, it would be good to sit and discuss this with you but, as there is limited time, hopefully this explains your role in the group this afternoon.

The purpose of the group is to help people with a diagnosis of dementia or who are worried about memory problems to come together to share frustrations, knowledge and to look at ways of helping each other through activities, support, friendship and fun.

It would be really helpful if you could please:

- Help everyone to attend by encouraging them and collecting them from their flats.
- Help everyone attending to participate as much as possible.
- Join in all the activities yourself.
- Refrain from offering your opinion on issues, but rather ask others what their thoughts and ideas are.
- Appreciate, praise and thank individuals for their participation, where appropriate.
- Help make new members feel welcome.
- Watch out for anyone becoming uncomfortable, and deal with them in a sensitive way. For example, if it looks like some is getting upset or agitated, give them attention and, if appropriate and if they are no longer able to engage in the group, suggest you take them to a corner of the room or outside for a while.
- Assist people to find their way to and from the toilet if they need this.
- Leave with those who leave before the group ends, and ensure they are ok. Or chat with them. If appropriate, either return with them to their flat or encourage them to return to the group. If necessary, find another member of staff to be with them to enable you to return to the group.
- Ask if anyone says something you don't understand. It is likely others won't have understood or heard either.
- Remember that the group is optional and we do not 'make' people 'do' anything. It is important to encourage participation but also to allow people the choice of not participating.
- Be aware of the ground rules (see Appendix 6) and remind members of them if necessary (see below).
- Help keep the group to the allocated time of the meeting – don't be afraid to remind them if the group is over-running.
- Assist members, where appropriate, to take responsibility for the group. For example, making tea, collecting money or washing up.
- Help make and give out teas, coffees and any refreshments, or, where possible, enable group members to do this.
- After the group, help tenants back to their flats.
- Return to the group room afterwards for a quick chat about how the group went.

**Thank you very much for your help.**

## Appendix 2

### Choosing where you work – screening information on sheltered housing and extra care housing

Date of visit:	Assessed by:
Home: Address:  Borough:	Manager's name:  Phone number:  Email:
Type of home (e.g., EC or sheltered) and brief description:	Other contacts and numbers:
Number of flats:	

Report:

Manager/staff (Level of interest, expectations and understanding of peer support):
Number potential residents deemed suitable:
Carers likely to attend:
The groups are already provided and how well are they attended:
Whether residents go out much, and, if so, where:
Other groups/provisions 'brought in':
Environment:
Atmosphere on the initial visit (include heating/lighting as well as the feel of the place):
Suitable rooms:
On-site resources:
Local resources that people can access:
The places where most residents come from originally:
If there are people living locally who might be able to attend and benefit from the scheme:
Co-facilitator availability:
Availability of times to run group:
Sustainability after six months:
Turnover of residents:
Concerns to be addressed/aware of (to be written in bullet points): •
Summary:
Action plan (to be written in bullet points): •
Transport route for facilitators:



## Appendix 3

### Template for initial assessment and information of suitable group participants

Start with an introduction about yourself and the group. Provide an explanation of the group and its purpose.	
Would you be interested in attending?	
If so, may I chat to you a bit more about it and ask a few more questions?	
Flat No:	
Surname:	Sex:
First name:	Preferred name:
Tel:	Mobile:
Marital status:	Ethnicity:
DOB:	Age:
Communication needs identified (observation):	
First language:	
How well do you know this area?	
Where did you live before you came to live here? (This could be places as well as areas.)	
Roughly how long have you lived here?	
Do you know any of the other residents? Their names?	
Social history: family, upbringing, childhood, schooling, working life, home life, transport, friendships	
Lifestyle and interests: both past and present	
What are the things you enjoy/enjoyed doing on their own?	
Things you enjoy/enjoyed doing with others:	
Do you have much experience do you have of attending groups? e.g. faith groups, bridge, bingo, knitting club.	
Personal preferences for music, TV, sport, hobbies, interests, arts, literature, board games, outings, holidays, animals	
What are you most proud of in your life? Personal achievements and strengths	
How would you describe yourself?	
What makes you want to get up in the morning? Or not get up?	
Have you any concerns/fears/worries/frustrations? Money, health, family, the future?	
Have you noticed a change in yourself in the last six months? Physically, mentally	
Current routines:	
What days are you available?	
What other things do you currently do? Family visits, day centre, hairdresser	
Daily:	
Weekly:	

## Appendix 4

**Group programme for:** [place] .....

**Time:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Session:** [number] .....

**Theme for the week:** .....

Introduction and arrival Duration: approx. 10 minutes.	If possible, music. Welcome address. Arranging where people will sit. Possibly giving out name badges. Possibly reminding the group of ground rules. Probably reminding them of the purpose of the group.
Recap previous group session. Introduction as to what will be discussed/ done. Duration: 5–10 minutes	
Warm-up activity Duration: approx. 10–15 minutes.	Possibly including physical exercise. A mental stimulation activity, if possible, that is relevant to the main activity.
Main activity Duration: up to 30–45 minutes, depending on the group's concentration.	
Refreshment break Duration: 20 minutes.	Try and get volunteers from within group to help, e.g. handing out biscuits.
Discussion and recap of the activity Duration: 15 minutes.	Reflecting on points raised by members of the group.
Summary Duration: 5 minutes. Clearing up Duration: 10 minutes.	Asking for volunteers to help with the washing up.

Total time [between 1½- 2 hours]:

**Evaluation:** (This should be done as soon as possible after the group through discussion with the co-facilitator. Think of individuals within the group and their levels of participation, noting any pertinent comments and interactions made. Then discuss the group as a whole.)

What worked well? (Was there a reason for this?) .....

What did not so well? (Was there a reason for this?) .....

Learning reflection: .....

Action plan for the future: .....

## Appendix 5

### Suggestions for use with Activity 8

Would you rather...

- Be eaten by a crocodile or gorged by a bear?
- Spend a night in a haunted house or get stuck on a Ferris wheel?
- Eat a mustard and marmite sandwich or a jelly and sardine sandwich?
- Have a life supply of cakes or a life supply of books?
- Play cricket for England or star in a ballet?
- Sit in a bath of baked beans or shower with soup?
- Spend your life bare foot or only ever wear heels?
- Go to a fancy dress party dressed as a banana or as a gorilla?
- Eat a tube of toothpaste or swallow a paper clip?
- Star in a film or be a famous inventor?
- Be given flowers every day or a box of chocolates every week?
- Spend a day in the jungle or in the arctic?
- Have a chimpanzee or a parrot as a pet?
- Be able to play the trumpet or the harp?

## Appendix 6

### Suggestions for the ground rules for discussions

- To try and listen to each other.
- To try and not interrupt or talk over someone.
- To have fun.
- To share.
- To laugh or to cry if you feel like it.
- To respect each other.
- To pay for the refreshments.
- To finish the group on time.

## Appendix 7

Template for Activities 19 and 22 [to be filled in during the activity]


## Appendix 8

### Suggestions for Activity 19

Dear Group,

My husband is superstitious and has never let me wear green, as it is 'unlucky'. Next year, my son is getting married and has found out that the bridesmaids' dresses are green. I stupidly told my husband and he is now refusing to go to the wedding. Should I ask my daughter-in-law to change the dresses? It is causing much tension and unhappiness in the family.

Dear Group,

When we came home from holiday, we found my son and daughter-in-law had redecorated our living room as a surprise. It is so kind of them, but I cannot STAND the wallpaper they have chosen and now hate sitting in the room as it is so garish. I would like to redecorate, but don't feel I can hurt their feelings – what should I do?

## Appendix 9

### Suggestions for Activity 24

What is your favourite...

Name?	Piece of clothing?
Fruit?	TV or radio programme?
Sandwich filling?	Method of travelling?
Sweet?	Holiday destination?
Place?	Flavour of ice cream?
Time of your life?	Thing about Christmas?
Sport?	Way to spend time?
Person?	Place in London?
Film or film star?	Type of biscuits?
Season?	Type of pie?
Flower?	Fruit?
Colour?	Pudding?
Object in your flat?	Smell/fragrance?
Was your favourite lesson?	Song/carol?
Cold drink?	Famous person?
Hot drink?	Football team?
Newspaper or magazine?	Member of the royal family?
Season?	Time of day?
Board game?	Thing about yourself?
Smell?	Topping on toast?
Home remedy?	Book?
Quote or wise saying?	Domestic animal?
Painting or artist?	Wild animal?
Piece of music?	Bird?
Recipe?	Piece of jewellery?

## Appendix 10

### Suggestions for Activity 24

Imagine:

- Being given £100 and three minutes to spend it. What would you buy?
- You have three things to rescue from your flat. What would they be?
- You are able to go anywhere in the world. Where would you choose?
- You could have any domestic animal. What would you choose?
- You could be any wild animal. What would you be?
- You could live your life over again. What job would you choose?
- You could have a smart meal out with all expenses paid. Where would you go? Who would you go with?
- You could travel in any mode of transport. What would it be?
- You are stuck in a book shop for the day. What would you read?

## Appendix 11

### Suggestions for Activity 37

Dear Group,

My mother has always bought presents for our cousins, nephews, etc. (there are about 45 of them!). Now, however, she is housebound and is asking me to buy and send them. I really don't have the time to look around, but I realise this is important for her. How can I persuade her not to do this?

## Appendix 12

### Suggestions for Activity 40

Dear Group,

I have recently moved to live in sheltered housing. It is very friendly, but I keep getting lost. All the floors look the same and I keep forgetting what my door number is. Can you suggest what might help me?

Dear Group,

I have just moved to live in sheltered housing. I am finding it a big change and I miss my independence, although I realise that I was not coping very well before and that I could not live where I was. How can I feel more at home? I feel everyone else knows each other really well and that I am an outsider.

Dear Group,

I recently re-married and my new husband moved into what had been my home. He wants to get rid of a lot of my things, but I don't want him to as they have strong memories of my late husband. What should we do?

Dear Group,

I have moved to live in sheltered accommodation after living 58 years in my own home. It feels very strange. How can I make it feel more like home? I feel as if I am just a visitor.

## Appendix 13

### Suggestions for Activity 43

Problems have been divided up into two groups: the problems in (A) are general problems, and those in (B) relate mainly to the problems faced by people in later life or living with dementia.

#### Drinking problem (A)

Dear Group,

I married last year. Overall I am happy, but my husband drinks heavily, and when we go out socially he becomes loud and horrible. Afterwards, he never remembers what has happened and promises not to do it again, but then he does. I dread going out with him even though I used to enjoy going out with him. What should I do?

#### Child problem (A)

Dear Group,

I am ten years old. Last year my mum and dad got divorced. We moved house. I had to move school. I have no friends and I hate my new home. Mum seems happy now; I do not want to upset her by letting her know how unhappy I am. Dad has got a new girlfriend so I can't live with him anymore. Should I tell my mum how I feel?

#### Teenage problem (A)

Dear Group,

I started dating a boy last year. I really thought I loved him, but as soon as we had sex he dumped me. I have just found out I am pregnant. I don't know what to do. My mum will kill me when she finds out. My life is ruined and I feel like killing myself. I am so stupid. What should I do?

#### Affair (A)

Dear Group,

My wife works full time. Recently, my wife has started to say she needs to work later at her job. One day she did not come home until after 10pm. She smelt of drink. When I asked her about it she said a few of them had gone on to the pub for a brief chat after work. I think she is starting to see someone else. Should I challenge her on this?

#### Loneliness (B)

Dear Group,

My husband died six years ago and I moved to live close to my son, but now he has been given a good job abroad and is moving. I never really wanted to leave my home town. I feel that I have lost everything. I was always close to my son but now we seem to argue all the time. I cannot afford to move back to my old town. What should I do?

### **Deafness (B)**

Dear Group,

I have always been independent but now, at 80 years old, I am finding it hard to cope because of hearing loss. I was always 'the life and soul of the party' and very popular. Now people ignore me; I miss what is being said and what is going on and can no longer chat like I used to on the phone. I found out close friends had a get together for the day and I was not invited. I feel so hurt by this. Should I speak to them about it?

### **Have I got dementia? (B)**

Dear Group,

I am really scared that I am losing my memory. Last week, I had a visitor and did not know who it was. They were really upset, and so was I when I realised it was my granddaughter. If I go to the doctor I am scared I might be put away. What should I do?

### **My friend (B)**

Dear Group,

My friend has started to repeat herself a lot when we chat and keeps asking me what the time is when we are out. We have known each other for a long time but she is starting to annoy me. Should I stop being friends with her?

### **Toilet (B)**

Dear Group,

A few months ago when I went out to the shops in the cold weather I needed the toilet so much that I wet myself. This was the worst moment of my life. Now when friends ask me out for the day I daren't go in case I have another accident, but I think they feel I am being unfriendly. I feel so lonely. What should I do?

### **Memory (B)**

Dear Group,

I have come to terms with the fact that my memory is failing. What I am struggling with is everyone else's attitude to me. My daughter seems to think that just because I have dementia I can no longer make decisions, and she is treating me like a child. What can I do about this?

### **Visiting the doctor (B)**

Dear Group,

When I visit the doctors I prefer to have my wife with me in order to listen to the things the doctor has to say, but he now speaks to my wife instead of me, and they both talk as if I am not present. This is really annoying me. What should I do?



## Appendix 14

### Activity 45 - Suggestions for a Personal Preference sheet

The Personal Preferences of [name].....

#### If I go into hospital as an emergency I [delete as appropriate]:

Would like other tenants and staff to know as soon as possible.  
Would not like others to know.  
Would like/not like to have visitors.  
Am happy to share the details of why I have gone into hospital.  
Do not want people to know why I am in hospital.  
Have prepared a 'hospital bag' which is .....  
(state location), which I would like to be taken into hospital with me.  
Other.....

#### When I die, I would like people to remember me by [delete as appropriate]:

Sending a card to my family.  
Being put in a book of remembrance.  
The cortège passing by my home and for people to show their respect as it passes.  
I prefer to leave these decisions to.....  
I would like the following hymns/songs at my funeral.....  
I also leave the decisions of songs, hymns and readings to my family.  
Thank you for respecting my wishes and preferences.  
The person I trust most to carry out my wishes is .....  
Signed.....Date .....

## Appendix 15

### Basic toolkit for all the activities

Each group activity lists what equipment you will need. The most frequently used items are as follows:

- Flip chart, flip chart paper and pens
- Small bean bags for throwing
- Hold-all bag or bucket
- Drawstring bags
- Access to a smartphone or iPad, and a docking station
- Different genres of music (preferably on smartphone or iPad)
- Soft ball – football sized
- Access to a computer and the internet
- 'Pass the Bomb' game
- Name badges or sticky labels
- Large sized dice
- Large sized playing cards
- Coloured dice
- Blank faced dice and marker pen
- Variety of small prizes
- Small items of equipment such as plastic cups or a baby name book will also be required for individual activities

## Appendix 16

### Where to get the equipment for the activities

#### Name: Pass the Bomb

<b>Description:</b>	This is a game available in both a children and an adult version. Only the actual black plastic round ball is used and once the red button on the base is pressed it emits a ticking sound which at random times then creates an exploding noise. NB: game requires batteries and Phillips screwdriver to operate. Batteries are not supplied with the game.
<b>Available from:</b>	<a href="http://www.gibsonsgames.co.uk/pass-the-bomb">www.gibsonsgames.co.uk/pass-the-bomb</a> , WH Smiths, toy stores, Amazon.
<b>Manufactured by:</b>	Gibsons
<b>Estimated cost:</b>	Various versions – travel edition is the cheapest at approx. £12.  NB: this game is now also available as a Christmas pudding and card game of suggested topics.

#### Name: Talking photograph albums

<b>Description:</b>	Talking Albums, photograph albums which speak
<b>Available from:</b>	<a href="http://www.TalkingProducts.com">www.TalkingProducts.com</a>
<b>Address:</b>	Talking products Ltd, Unit C8, The Premier Centre, Abbey Park Industrial Est., Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 9DG
<b>Telephone:</b>	01794 278327
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:info@talkingproducts.com">info@talkingproducts.com</a>
<b>Estimated cost:</b>	£18–23

#### Name: Small bean bags for throwing

<b>Description:</b>	Small different coloured bags 13x11cm
<b>Available from:</b>	<a href="http://www.tumbletots.co.uk">www.tumbletots.co.uk</a> and through Amazon or <a href="http://www.activitiestoshare.co.uk">www.activitiestoshare.co.uk</a>
<b>Tumble Tots telephone:</b>	0121 585 7003
<b>Estimated cost:</b>	£4.49 for four bean bags
<b>Activities to share telephone:</b>	01227 362858
<b>Estimated cost:</b>	£9.95 for 12 bean bags Also bean bags with scarves attached – 6 for £12.95

#### Name: Drawstring bags

<b>Description:</b>	Small bags (shoe bag sized) approx. 41x37cm
<b>Available from:</b>	Amazon
<b>Estimated cost:</b>	99p each

### **Name: Large sized dice**

<b>Description:</b>	Foam dice sized between 4x4x4cm up to 145x145x145mm
<b>Available from:</b>	Sports Warehouse (EDIN) Limited, 24–26 Coburg Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6HB
<b>Telephone:</b>	Freephone 0800783 5011 or <a href="http://www.actvitiestoshare.co.uk">www.actvitiestoshare.co.uk</a>
<b>Telephone:</b>	01227 362858
<b>Estimated cost:</b>	£7 per dice

### **Name: Coloured face dice**

<b>Description:</b>	Dice with colours instead of numbers on the faces (red, blue, green, purple, yellow and orange), small sizes only 16x16x16mm
<b>Available from:</b>	Amazon (big cherry)
<b>Estimated cost:</b>	54p each or £3.55 for 10

### **Name: Extra large blank faced dice**

<b>Description:</b>	Large face blank dice so that you can write your own questions or letters on the sides. (Small ones are also available.)
<b>Available from:</b>	Amazon (eduscience)
<b>Estimated cost:</b>	£16.99

### **Name: Large sized playing cards**

<b>Description:</b>	Playing cards which are two sizes larger than standard size playing cards
<b>Available from:</b>	<a href="http://www.rnib.org.uk">www.rnib.org.uk</a> and Amazon
<b>Estimated cost:</b>	£3–£4

### **Name: Blank faced playing cards**

<b>Description:</b>	Playing cards with one side blank to enable you to write your own message or question on it.
<b>Available from:</b>	Amazon (Witzgs)
<b>Estimated cost:</b>	£2.29 for 200

### **Name: Playing cards with letters on**

<b>Description:</b>	Standard sized cards with letters written on them
<b>Available from:</b>	Amazon (Witzgs)
<b>Estimated cost:</b>	£1.59

## Appendix 17

### Recommended websites

#### For further general information and fact sheets see:

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk>

<http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/factsheets>

<http://www.alzscot.org>

<http://www.innovationsindementia.org.uk>

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk>

#### For information on amplification aids:

Action on Hearing Loss: [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

#### For information on activities:

<http://www.elderlyactivities.co.uk/category/reading-and-writing-activities>

Daily sparkle: [www.dailysparkle.co.uk](http://www.dailysparkle.co.uk)

National Association for Providers of Activities for older people (NAPA): <http://www.napa-activities.co.uk/>

Source for finding musicians: <http://www.livemusicnow.org.uk>

Quotes on different topics: <http://www.brainyquote.com>

#### Making your own crosswords and word searches:

[www.teachers-direct.co.uk/resources/wordsearches](http://www.teachers-direct.co.uk/resources/wordsearches)

<http://tools.atozteacherstuff.com/word-search-maker/wordsearch.php>

Poetry and creative writing: <http://www.alzpoetry.com/>

Reminiscence: [www.age-exchange.org.uk](http://www.age-exchange.org.uk)

#### For information on technology, general aids and equipment:

<http://www.atdementia.org.uk>

<http://www.dlf.org.uk>

#### For information on preparing for the future and power of attorney:

<http://dyingmatters.org/page/dying-matters-leaflets>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/lasting-power-of-attorney-forms>





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[twitter.com/mhf\\_tweets](https://twitter.com/mhf_tweets)  
[mentalhealth.org.uk/newsletter](http://mentalhealth.org.uk/newsletter)

Including the



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people with  
learning disabilities

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Company Registration No. 2350846

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