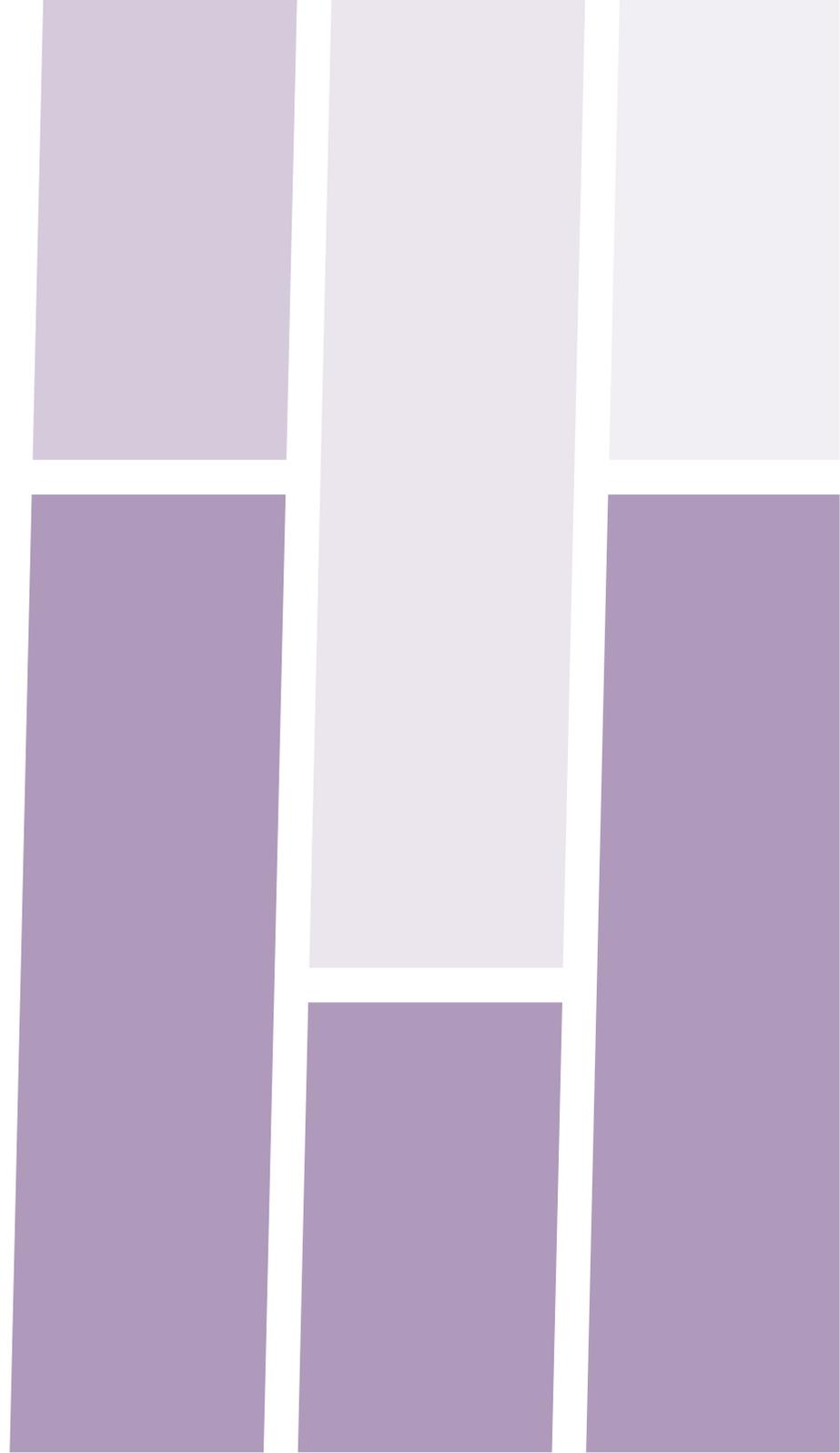


North Lincolnshire

Safeguarding Adult Learning

Briefing: Gradual transition to a care home for a person living with advancing dementia

January 2021



Introduction

At some point, carers may have difficulty continuing to provide care at home, or those who live alone can no longer live on their own safely, and consideration may have to be given to the possibility of the person living with dementia moving into residential care.

After a discharge from a stay in hospital, health and social care professionals should work together to support the person to return home wherever possible. There may be some occasions when a person living with dementia needs to transition from hospital to a care home setting, usually for a further period of reablement and assessment.

Recognising that it is a difficult time for people and their families/carers when making this decision and choosing a care home, it is important that information, advice/guidance and support from professionals is available and accessible. To make the transition into the care home as comfortable as possible for the person and their family it should be well planned and gradual.

An understanding of dementia and how it deteriorates

Different types of dementia can affect people differently, and everyone will experience symptoms in their own way. However, there are some common early symptoms that may appear some time before a diagnosis of dementia. These include:

- Memory loss
- Difficulty concentrating
- Finding it hard to carry out familiar daily tasks (for example, confusion over money when shopping)
- Struggling to follow a conversation or find the right words
- Being confused about time and place
- Mood changes

These symptoms are often mild and may get worse very gradually. It's often termed 'mild cognitive impairment' (MCI), as the symptoms are not severe enough to be diagnosed as dementia.

These symptoms might not be noticed at first. In some people, these symptoms will remain the same and not worsen. But some people with MCI will go on to develop dementia. More details can be found on the [NHS website](#).

When is the right time to consider moving into a care home?

It can be hard to know when the time is right for a person living with dementia to move into a care home and who should make the decision, if the person cannot make it themselves.

People living with dementia might need to make the move into a care home because their dementia has progressed and the family or carer is no longer able to support the person and, after a review of all other options, their care needs can no longer be met at home.

We need to prepare and provide information to people living with dementia and their family carers about common transitions into care and this should occur before, during and after transitions.

Family carers are integral to the care of people living with dementia and it is therefore important to understand their need for information about common transitions, including across community and care settings, such as a GP practice or voluntary and community service and information contained on health and social care websites.

Advanced planning

Professionals should offer early and ongoing opportunities for people living with dementia, and people involved in their care, to discuss the following:

- The benefits of planning ahead
- Lasting power of attorney - LPA (for health and welfare decision and property and financial affairs decisions)
- An advance statement about their wishes, preferences, beliefs and values regarding their future care
- Advance decisions to refuse treatment
- Their preferences for place of care and place of death

Transitions in care are often unplanned and stressful, not just for the person living with dementia, but the family as well. When a person has to move between care settings there is a risk of the following; breakdown in communication, confusion about medication, lack of follow-up care, inaccuracies in information exchange, ineffective coordination of care between care providers and inadequate patient and caregiver preparation.

Advanced planning continued...

If the wishes of the person living with dementia are known (e.g. the issue was discussed or recorded in the context of advanced care planning), or they are still able to discuss the matter, this can be helpful, but there is sometimes a discrepancy between their previously expressed wishes.

There may also be a discrepancy between promises made by carers (e.g. to provide care at home or to organise residential care when the condition of the person living with dementia deteriorates beyond a certain point) and their current wishes.

Moreover, problems arise when the person living with dementia refuses consent or objects to moving into residential care when this is necessary.

In such cases, any move must be in accordance with legislation, including the [Care Act](#) and [Mental Capacity Act](#), designed to protect their rights.

Preparation and conversation about what could happen and choices

It is acknowledged that moving from one's own home into a care home is a major life transformation for people, particularly if it is unplanned, but with appropriate planning and support from care staff, a good quality of life can ultimately be achieved by both residents and relatives.

Ideally, we would have the time to prepare for a move into a care home. This can involve:

- Taking time to look at various placements, visiting to see what they are like
- Considering a trial period or day visit before moving in
- Exploring with the person what home comforts they might like to take, i.e. photos, music and keepsakes, and
- Discussion on how they will keep in touch with family and friends. If visiting is not possible face to face, then technology can be used to stay in touch and the care home should support this.

Preparation and conversation about what could happen and choices continued

Try to be positive about the move, and the benefits it may have for the person, give them as much choice as possible, and let them feel that they have control. This can be a very difficult (and often guilt ridden) time for the carer and support from family, friends and professionals is very important.

Anyone with concerns about a relative experiencing symptoms of dementia is entitled to ask for a care needs assessment from social services. An assessment is carried out regardless of whether the person will be funding their own care or entitled to adult social care funding.

Preparation and conversation about what could happen and choices continued...

Make sure the care home has all the information they need about the person. This might include:

- Care plans, including any preferred routines, and advance care plans
- A person-centred passport, detailing preferences and routines, family background, making it easier for staff to know a person's likes and dislikes and a little more about them, examples are [‘This is me’](#), [My Life](#).
- Communication and accessibility needs
- Current medicines
- Housing issues
- Preferred places of care.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a care assessment will provide a comprehensive care needs plan which will help people and their carers understand the options available to meet the person's care needs. Professionals should support people and their families to use this knowledge to effectively research their care options and support the gradual transition to a care home if required.

It takes a team of professionals from across health and social care, to safely manage transitions in care for persons living with dementia. The evidence supports that when health care team members effectively communicate with each other across care settings and with caregivers, people living with dementia can be supported to safely transition.

Care homes must gain a good understanding of a person's needs and all professionals should work together to support a gradual transition to a care home wherever possible.

Information about care homes can be obtained via the CQC website www.cqc.org.uk