

National Ambulance
LGBT Network



Supporting Patients with Dementia

Examples of good practice
in Ambulance Services

Supporting Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual, Trans* staff, patients
and communities

A partnership of UK Ambulance
Services

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Chairperson
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Introduction



At the second annual National Ambulance LGBT Network conference we will raise the issue that care for people with dementia could be improved.

The question is how? Having raised the issue, this pack is designed to identify some best practice guidance and showcase some of the many examples of good practice that currently exist in our services.

I am very grateful to all the people who contributed to this project and hope you will take some time to inform yourself and help improve the experience for our patients and their relatives.

Alistair Gunn
Chair, National Ambulance LGBT Network

Acknowledgements

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Building Inclusive Services



The main cohort of patients cared for by our services are the elderly and vulnerable. Despite this, each one has a life story and we have always aimed to provide a service that meets the needs of each individual.

Recent research suggests many people, and services, do not recognise older people as having a sexuality. For LGBT people this can be compounded and elderly LGBT people are more likely to experience social isolation.

Stonewall's 'LGBT People in Later Life' document offers the following recommendations to frontline services (edited):

- Health care staff shouldn't assume patient's sexual orientation.
- Health care staff should understand the particular health needs of LGBT people.
- Health care staff should use open language when talking to patients to give older lesbian, gay and bisexual people confidence to be open about their sexual orientation.
- Patient environments should be made more welcoming by displaying images, information posters and materials that include lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

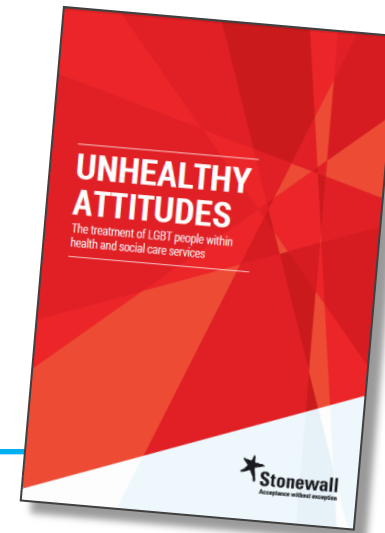


Research



Our recent health report **Unhealthy Attitudes** also shows that a large proportion of healthcare staff are not confidently equipped with the necessary skills to provide thorough care for LGBT people, elderly or otherwise.

Unhealthy Attitudes, Stonewall, 2015



Both Stonewall and Age UK provide information and research on the issues faced by elderly LGBT people.



What is Dementia?

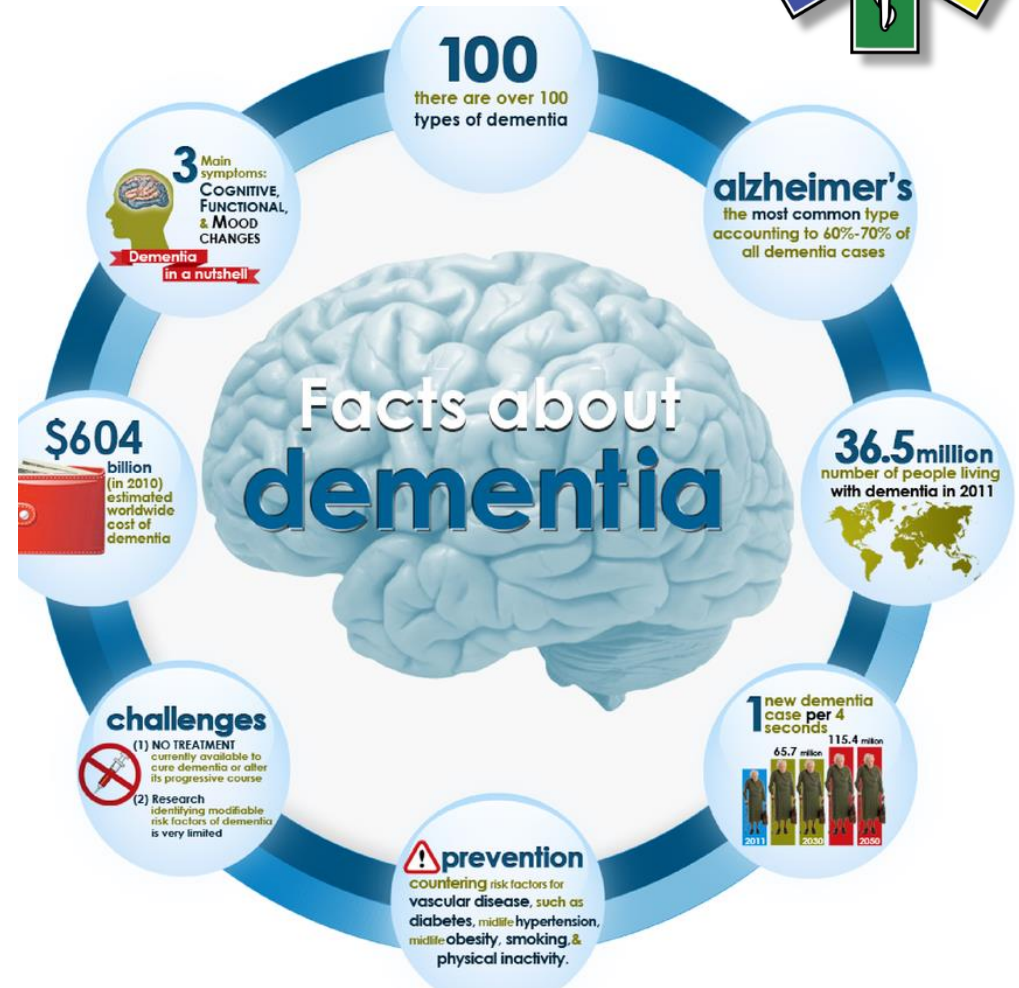


The word '**dementia**' describes a set of symptoms that may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language.

Dementia is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease or a series of strokes.

Dementia is progressive, which means the symptoms will gradually get worse.

Dementia not only impacts on the person with the condition, but also partners, family and friends.



Alzheimer's Society Guidance



The Alzheimer's Society have produced some comprehensive guidance specifically for supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people with dementia.

Tips for supporting an LGBT person with Dementia:

- Treat the person as an individual and respect their wishes.
- Talk to the person about letting those who are important to them know that they have dementia. This will help them to understand what is happening and to support both the person and you.
- Talk to the person about how they want to express themselves to others – for example, they may identify as a bisexual man, or a transwoman – and make sure they feel supported to make the decision.
- Support the person to be open about their gender identity or sexual orientation with whoever they choose to be. If there is anyone they don't want to tell, respect this too.
- Talk to the person about their wishes as early as possible – around treatment and care, other needs and who they want to make decisions. Make sure these wishes are recorded, to help ensure they are met later on when the person is no longer able to make decisions.

The LGBT Context



All the regular advice should be considered, together with the additional difficulties LGBT people experience accessing services

Avoid assumptions about people... remember everyone has a sexuality and older people can be LGBT too!

Consider the people around the patient and their relationship to them. Dementia can be a lonely experience for them too, particularly if we don't acknowledge their true relationship.

Many LGBT people suffer social isolation in later life, and sometimes because they can not talk about their life or acknowledge their true identity.

27 July 1967

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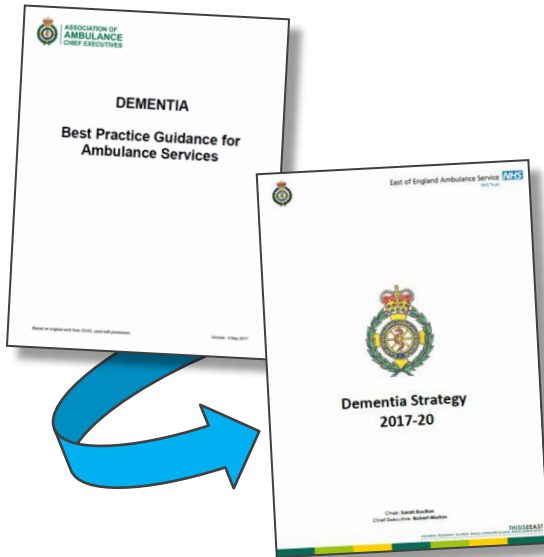
Fifty years ago homosexual acts between men was decriminalised. Before then being gay was considered illegal, and could see you prosecuted and even put in prison.

Remember some older people will have experienced this time and still feel the stigma. Dementia and memory loss can mean people remember the past more than the present.





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East of England Ambulance Service is one of the first services to put together their Dementia Strategy, building on the five identified areas of best practice.

The Association of Ambulance Chief Executive's guidance identifies five 'best practice aims' for Ambulance Services:

1. Deliver person centred care that supports the patient living with dementia.
2. Develop a skilled and effective workforce able to champion compassionate person centred care and recognise the early signs of dementia.
3. Modernise our approaches to communicating by seeking and acting on feedback from people living with dementia and their carers to improve the quality of service we provide.
4. Become dementia friendly organisations with environments and processes that cause no avoidable harm to patients living with dementia.
5. Develop effective partnerships with local agencies (police, fire, health, social care, third sector) to improve care and outcomes.

London Training DVD



London Ambulance Service has produced a training DVD aimed to share best practice for ambulance staff supporting people living with dementia.

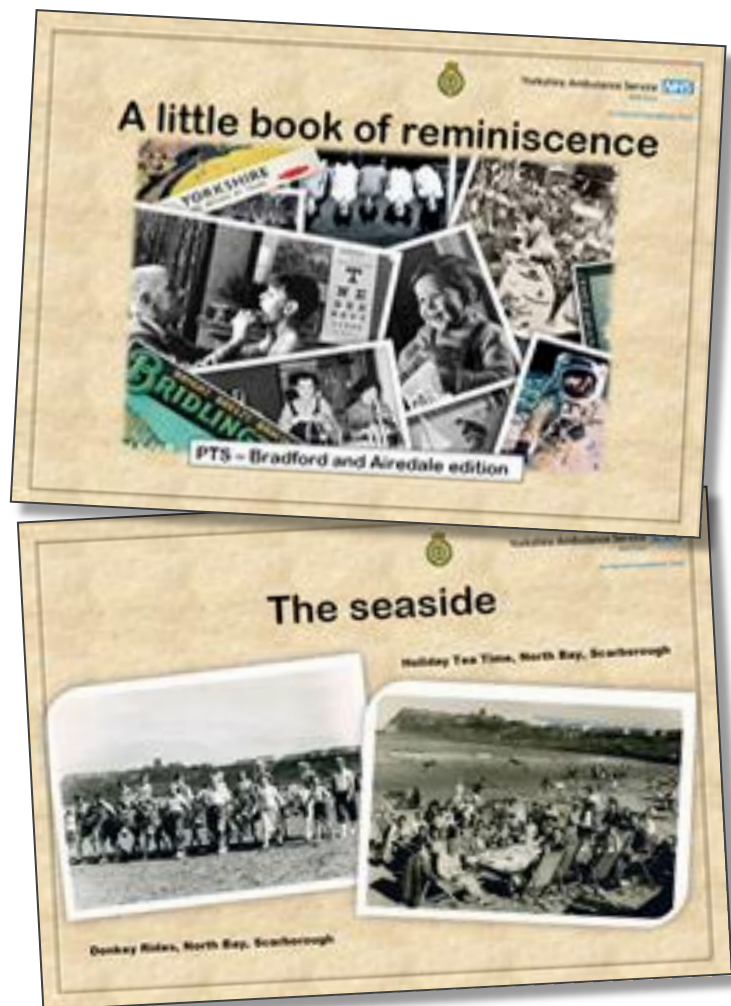
The DVD is divided into four short films as follows:

- Understanding people's reality in dementia care
- Positively responding in dementia care
- Creating relationships in dementia care
- Acting on safeguarding in dementia care

The film includes people's actual lived experience from four people living with, or supporting people with, dementia.



Yorkshire Books of Reminiscence



Yorkshire Ambulance was the first service to achieve the Dementia Friendly kitemark in 2013. To achieve this a number of initiatives were put into place, including incorporating features into new vehicles and Patient Reception Centres within hospitals.

One initiative that proved popular was introducing 'books of reminiscence' into vehicles. Because short term memory is often eroded, having pictures of old times helps to stimulate conversation and memories.

The books of reminiscence have been highly effective on board patient transport vehicles.



North West Poster Campaign

North West Ambulance Service have developed an informative poster offering an insight into the needs of people living with dementia.

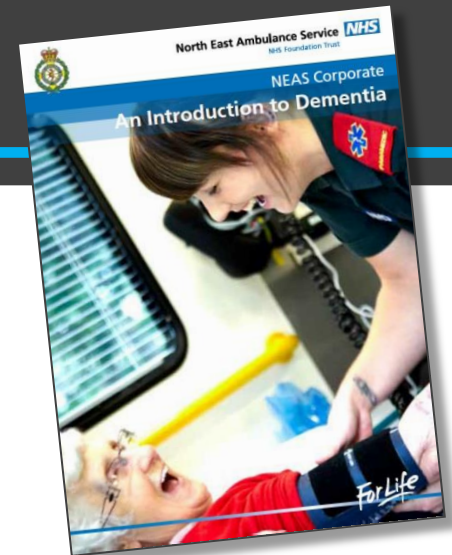
Produced in consultation with the Dementia Action Alliance, the quotes explain simply how ambulance staff can provide effective care.



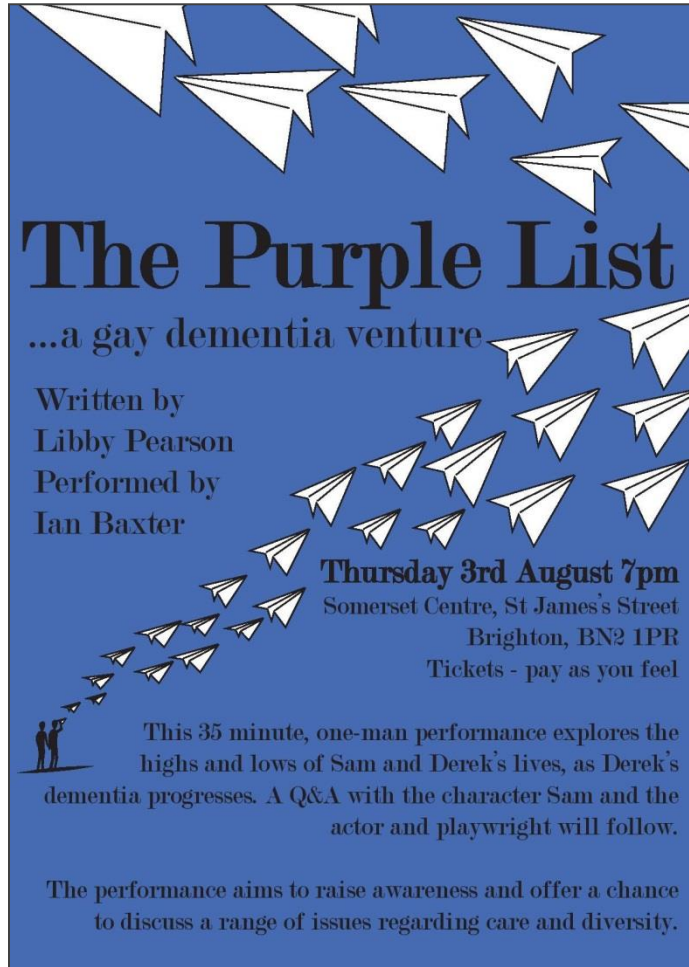
North East Education Resource

The North East Ambulance Service provides a very comprehensive guide to dementia and is aimed at emergency, patient transport and NHS 111 staff.

Many services offer similar resources or have access to distance learning courses which are useful to operational staff.



Conference Performance



The Purple List is a 35 minute one-man show, which provides a very different insight into living with dementia. The condition is viewed through the eyes of a same-sex partner, who describes the progression and issues faced linking with health and social care facilities.

Sometime candid, sometimes sad, and always thought provoking, this play makes an excellent training exercise. The company also invite audiences to question the character after the main performance and can offer a range of follow up activities to suit your organisation's needs.

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Practical Advice



- **Be informed.** Take advantage of the many learning resources that are available within ambulance services. There are other distance learning courses available for people who want to develop their understanding further.
- Remember that older and vulnerable have a sexuality and this is not always easy to define. **Avoid making assumptions** and use gender neutral titles when referring to partners.
- People with dementia may not understand what is being said, but may understand any emotions being expressed. This can include frustration and anger. This can also cause people to relive negative experiences from the past. **Always be patient and caring.**
- Touch can feel very threatening if you don't understand what is happening. Avoid unnecessary contact and **always take time to explain** what is happening beforehand.

