

East of England Memory Options Leaflet – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why has this leaflet been produced now?

- The number of recorded dementia diagnoses is significantly lower than pre-Covid 19 pandemic levels.
- In England, between February 2020 and July 2020, it is estimated that there were 7,590 fewer patients referred to memory services than was predicted. If we fail to identify these people there is a risk that they will not access essential healthcare and support, that caring relationships will be strained, and that further pressure will be placed on crisis support services during an already very challenging Covid-19 winter period.

2. Who has produced this leaflet?

- NHSE/I formed a 'Regional Thinking Group' of professionals to achieve deliverables to address key challenges for older people's mental health and dementia during the pandemic
- A Memory Assessment Service (MAS) Sub-group of the Regional Thinking Group formed, including clinicians from memory services, commissioners and voluntary sector representation
- The MAS Sub-group worked with people living with dementia and their carers, through the Alzheimer's Society, to co-produce this leaflet

3. What does the leaflet aim to achieve?

- a. Inform patients that memory services are open
- b. Encourage patients with concerns about their memory to come forward
- c. Inform patients that there are a range of options available regarding how a memory assessment can be conducted during the pandemic to reassure patients that their local services can respond flexibly to their individual needs
- d. Promote remote/virtual memory assessment more positively (in response to patient feedback requesting this)

4. Are all four options for memory assessment available?

- The four options in the leaflet may not be available in all local areas, and local offers will change over time in light of circumstances. The purpose is not to give specific information about what is or isn't available locally, but to illustrate that services can respond flexibly during covid-19 to meet individual needs, and that patients can feel reassured about seeking the help they need.
- There may be some cases in which one or more options is not appropriate for some patients, this will be agreed on a case by case through discussion between the patient/ carer and memory service staff

5. How do I direct patients to local support that may be available?

- There is a blank space on the back page of the leaflet where details of local support service contacts can be written
- You may have locally produced leaflets on support services which can be given alongside this leaflet
- If you are unsure of what is available, the Alzheimer's Society Dementia Connect Helpline number is on the back page of the leaflet. This number can be called by you, or the patient, and this service can provide advice and information on local services

6. Is it safe to be promoting face to face appointments?

- All face to face appointments are being conducted in line with social distancing and infection control guidelines, including screening for Covid-19 upon entry to clinic settings

7. What are the benefits of a patient being assessed for dementia?

- Having an assessment for dementia as early as possible has a number of benefits:
 - ruling out other medical conditions that may have similar symptoms, such as depression, chest and urinary tract infections, severe constipation, thyroid problems and vitamin deficiencies
 - ruling out other possible causes of confusion such as poor sight or hearing, emotional changes and upsets (for example, moving house or bereavement), or the side effects of certain drugs (or drug combinations) the patient may be taking for other conditions
 - having an explanation as to why the patient is experiencing their symptoms, so that they can focus on managing them
 - getting access to any treatments that may be needed, as well as any relevant information, advice and support (emotional, practical, legal and financial).