Don’t forget about me
Developing a person-centred approach to caring for people with dementia within a hospice setting
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Background
Dementia currently affects around 88,000 people in Scotland1. With an ageing population and improvement in diagnosis this figure is set to double by 20311.

The National Dementia Strategy2 sets the requirement for all health and social care organisations to improve dementia care. As palliative care strives to care for all, regardless of diagnosis, culture or background it is essential that hospices are able to care for those living with & dying from dementia3.

St Columba’s Hospice embraces the challenge of providing a safe engaging environment for individuals with dementia requiring specialist palliative care.

Practice Development
A multi-disciplinary working group was formed to develop a person-centred care plan for patients with dementia and/or other cognitive impairment.

A workshop facilitated by a dementia specialist was attended by all group members and a critical review of the literature undertaken1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9.

A person-centred care plan was developed which guides clinical staff to consider effective communication with the person and family; the impact of the environment on the person; the importance of meaningful activities; tools to support physical care and symptom management and when to seek guidance from external professionals. The care plan is designed to work flexibly so some or all of the elements can be used.

The Care Plan

**Effective communication with the person and family**

Completion of our ‘About Me’ document4 which helps staff to get to know the person

**Guidance from external professionals in dementia**

Seeking advice, support or formal assessment from specialist dementia services when required

**The impact of the environment of the person**

For example by the use of personal familiar items, orientation aids, clear signage and ensuring the environment is neither under nor over stimulating

**The importance of meaningful activity**

Resources are available to support explorations of activities which may be enjoyed by the person. For example art materials, taking books and games

**Tools to support physical care and symptom management**

A range of these may be used:

- Visual numerical pain scale on yellow background
- Memory book local5
- SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) scale for depression6
- Food diary
- ABL (Activity, Behaviour, Location) incident tool

Supporting practice and future developments

The implementation of the care plan has been supported by dementia awareness sessions for all clinical staff and a full day workshop for those with a further interest. Support to use the care plan in practice is provided by key members of the working group. An initial informal review has taken place and adoptions made. A formal evaluation is planned to guide future developments and to ensure sustainability of this essential work.

*Adapted from the Alzheimer’s Society ‘This is Me’ toolhesive8

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References
8. Dementia Services Development Centre and University of Stirling. 2014. Supporting people with dementia: understanding and responding to the situation. University of Stirling: Dementia Services Development Centre.