



Providing social care and social support services for dementia and ageing during COVID-19 Workshop summary

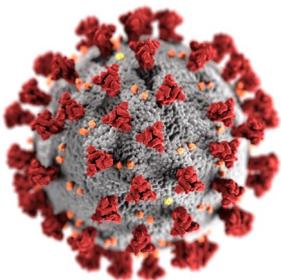
What do we mean by social support services?

- Day care centres
- Support groups
- Social activities (i.e. singing and dancing groups)
- Respite care
- Befriending and accompanying services
- Meal deliveries
- Paid home care

Difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic

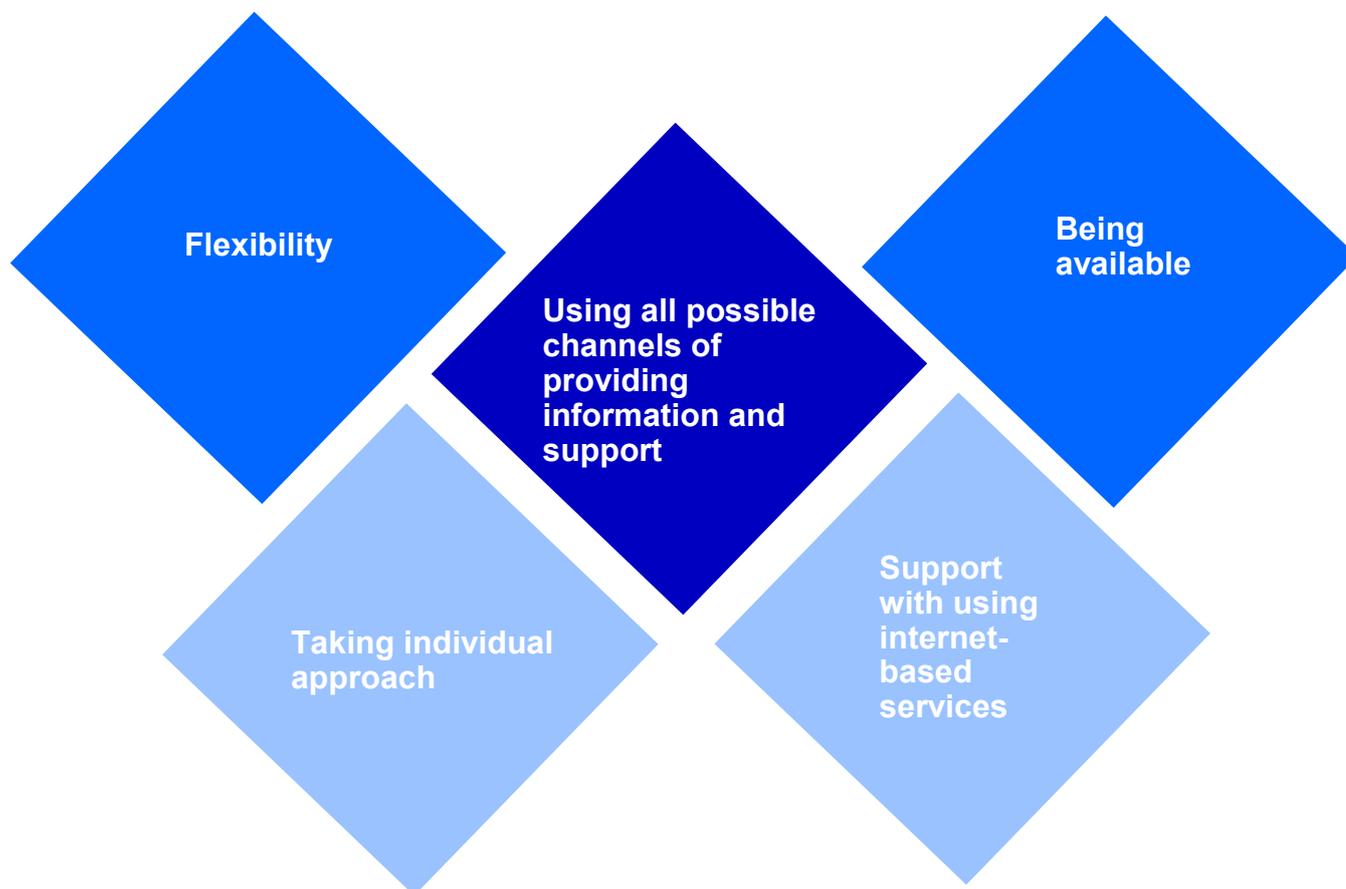
Many services had to close down since March 2020 and could not provide any face-to-face support. Few services have adapted in providing some form of remote support, but are limited by low access to and usage of digital technologies in people living with dementia and older adults. People living with dementia who are in the more severe stages can struggle setting up zoom and skype calls for example. Dementia subtype can also pose a challenge, as people may struggle with vision problems.

As a result, many people living with dementia, unpaid carers, and older adults were suddenly faced with having their social support removed from one day to the next, whilst being constrained to their own home. Unpaid carers reported this led to faster deterioration of their relative's dementia.¹ Lack of access to social support services was also linked to poorer mental health.²



5 key approaches for adapting social support services during COVID-19

Our workshop included clinicians, third sector organisations, unpaid carers, and wider social support service providers. In group and joint discussion, we generated some key approaches for adapting social support services for dementia and ageing during the ongoing pandemic.



Flexibility

As a service provider, be flexible in your approach of how people wish to interact and receive support.

Using all possible channels of providing information and support

Using the internet, youtube videos, telephone, letters, emails, zoom and skype meetings and face-to-face where safely possible

Being available

Be easily approachable

Taking individual approach

Some people with dementia, carers, and older adults might prefer internet-based support, whereas others might prefer support via phone for example

Support with using internet-based services

Many people with dementia and some older adults might not feel confident in using the internet, or lack access. If they wish to receive digital support though, they need to be supported where possible in setting this up.

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¹ Giebel C, Cannon J, Hanna K, et al. Impact of COVID-19 related social support service closures on people with dementia and unpaid carers: a qualitative study. *Aging & Mental Health* 2020, doi: 10.1080/13607863.2020.1822292

² Giebel C, Lord K, Cooper C, et al. A UK survey of COVID-19 related social support service closures and their effects on older people, people with dementia, and carers. *International journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 2020; doi: 10.1002/gps.5434

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