



THE ALZHEIMER  
SOCIETY *of* IRELAND

# Practical steps to support your independence

A guide on how assistive technology can help  
people with dementia and their families





“This booklet is for people with dementia and their families. People with mild cognitive impairment and people who are experiencing memory problems may also find this booklet helpful.”

# Contents

Acknowledgements	page 2
About this booklet	page 3
How can assistive technology help?	page 4
Examples of how assistive technology can help	page 5
Stay safe	page 12
Get automatic help with 'telecare'	page 14
Staying safe out and about	page 18
Making decisions about assistive technology	page 20
Where to find assistive technology	page 22
Useful contacts	page 26



THE ALZHEIMER  
SOCIETY *of* IRELAND



# Acknowledgements

## Acknowledgements

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland would like to thank all the members of the Southern Dementia Working Group for their expert input, time and commitment to this project.

We would also like to thank Emma O'Brien, occupational therapist, Memory Technology Library, South Tipperary General Hospital, for her expertise, time and dedication to developing the content for this resource.

This project was supported by a grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies.

# About this booklet

## About this booklet

Assistive technology can be a product, gadget or system that:

- helps you with memory and recall;
- supports you to continue doing what you want to do;
- promotes your independence; and
- helps you to manage risks and feel safe at home.

Assistive technology can be a very simple product and it can also be a highly technical gadget.

## Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for people with dementia and their families. People with mild cognitive impairment and people who are experiencing memory problems may also find this booklet helpful. In this booklet we:

- explain what assistive technology is;
- give examples of how assistive technology can help you with daily life; and
- tell you where you can go and who you can speak to about accessing assistive technology.

# How can assistive technology help?

## How can assistive technology help?

Assistive technology can:

- help you to live more independently;
- provide support and reassurance; and
- reduce the risk of accidents.

### Assistive technology can help you to do things like:

Remember days, dates and time.
Find things.
Take your medication on time.
Keep in touch with family and friends.
Continue to do things that you have always done.
Let you know if the gas is left on.
Let you know if a tap is left running.
Raise an alarm.
Let people know where you are if you become lost or disorientated.

### Different technologies will suit different people

We are all unique. Assistive technology will not suit everyone. You may need to try different options to find the solution that suits you.

Assistive technology has lots of benefits, but it also has limitations. It can never replace human contact and will not eliminate risk. Some technology can be expensive.

It is important to get advice about assistive technology.

### The following sections will give you:

- examples of assistive technology and how they can help; and
- contact details of people who can advise you about what might work for you.



# Examples of how assistive technology can help

## Assistive technology can help you be independent

The following are simple steps you can take to help you to manage daily life. You can combine these steps with technology. These include the following:

### Routine

Use routines and daily habits so that you have a structure to your day. This will help you remember what you need to do.

### Keep things in the same place

Put things you use regularly in the same place where they are easy to see. This will help you to keep track of things like your keys, glasses or diary.

### Use lists

Make lists or keep a diary to help you keep track of the things you need to do, or have already done. Keep the lists in a place that is easy to see or that you check every day – so that it becomes part of your daily routine

### Use a notice board or calendar

Many people find it helpful to have in their kitchen a:

- wipe-clean board;
- blackboard; or
- wall calendar.

You and your family can write down important things about any particular day, and you can then check this easily.



The following pages provide a selection of assistive technologies that also help you to plan and manage your day and to keep your independence.

## Clocks and calendars with assistive technology

There are a variety of clocks with calendars that can help you keep track of time, days and months. These can be used with a notice board and a diary and together they can help you manage:

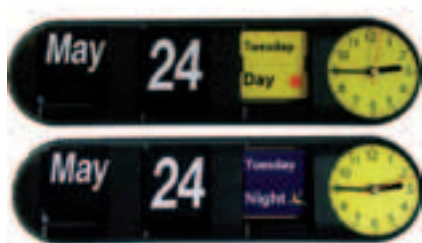
- appointments,
- social occasions, and
- day-to-day tasks, for example, 'Tuesday is bin collection day'.

### Calendar flip clock

The Clairmont calendar flip clock in this picture is analogue, which means it uses the traditional clock hands to show the time. It automatically changes every day and clearly shows:

- the day,
- the date,
- the time, and
- whether it's day or night.

The yellow contrasting background makes it easy to see and read.



### Day, date and time clock

This DayClox is a digital format clock and tells you:

- the day,
- the date,
- the time, and
- whether it's day or night.

The time can be displayed in 12-hour or 24-hour mode. The screen dims at night time.



### Day, date and time clock

This MemRabel Clock is a calendar clock, similar to the DayClox.

It has more features. For example it can play pre-recorded messages at times set by you or your family. These messages might be a reminder to take medication, or to take the bins out. It can play up to 20 messages a day.







## Prompts and reminders

Assistive technology products that give you prompts and reminders, can help you stay independent and support you as you go about your daily life.

They can be of particular use if you find you:

- forget where you put things;
- forget to do things; and
- have difficulty remembering how to do certain things.

There are simple steps you can take to help you manage, these include the following:

### To-do notes

Use sticky-backed notes to help remind you:

- what you have to do; or
- how to do something.

Put the notes near where you need them. For example:

- near an appliance; or
- on a remote control.

### Pictures and signs

A simple picture can be useful to prompt you to remember where certain items are, for example, you might put an image of socks on your sock drawer. A sign beside the cooker can be a reminder to switch off the mains switch when finished cooking.

### Checklists

A checklist can be another good way to prompt you to complete a task. For example, a list of things to do before bed.

## Assistive technology can help with prompts and reminders

The following are assistive technologies that you can use with other things in this booklet to help you plan and manage your day and to keep your independence.

### Item finder

For those of you who might occasionally lose your keys, wallet or phone, this locating device called Loc8tor will direct you to the missing item.

It can find things that are up to 122 metres (400 feet) away.



### Voice prompter

The BIME Wander reminder is a motion sensor that can play a pre-recorded message when you pass by it.

This can be helpful for when you leave the house and you worry you will forget your keys. The message can simply play 'Remember your keys'.

This product also comes with a timer so it can play a pre-recorded message at certain times during the day.



### Automatic pill dispenser

The Pivotell automatic pill dispenser is helpful for reminding you when to take your medication. It can be programmed to sound an alarm up to four times daily.

There are a variety of medication dispensers and alarms available.



### Talking tiles

Some people may experience challenges completing a routine task like putting a load of washing on.

A 'talking tile' allows you to record a message with the steps in a task. You place the tile where you need it, for example, beside your washing machine. If you would like a prompt, you press the tile to hear the message.



## Use assistive technology to be connected, entertained and informed

Another key part to everyone's day is enjoyment and keeping in touch with our families and friends. Dementia can bring challenges because some regular items in our homes can become difficult to use.

Assistive technology can help. The following is a selection of products available. There are more options and pages 22-25 tells you how to find other examples and page 26 tells you who you can speak to about these technologies.

### Simple remote control

The Doro remote control is helpful if you find your TV remote complicated to use. The Doro remote control has a small number of large buttons with clear symbols. It can be programmed to all major brands of:

- televisions,
- videos,
- DVD players, and
- set-top boxes.



### One-button radio

If you find you get the buttons and dials on your radio mixed up, then maybe a one-button radio will suit you.

You can set the channel and volume to where you want it and simply press the yellow button to turn it on or off.

If you have a number of radio stations you like to listen to, you can set the numbers to the stations you want and you just press the number to find your station.



## Use assistive technology to be connected, entertained and informed

### Easy to use mobile phone

It can become complicated to use a mobile phone. The Doro mobile phone has large buttons and allows for four numbers to be put into the phone.

This means you can contact those numbers easily and your family can contact you when you are out and about.



### Easy to use home phone

The Doro Memory Plus 319i makes it really easy to contact your loved ones.

You can place a picture of your loved one on a button and pre-programme that button so it dials the number of the person in the picture. The large buttons, images, signals and sounds makes it easy to use.







“ Your life changes around a bit once you get the right tools... that’s given me a good quality of life now...”

# Stay safe

## Stay safe

Safety is vital for us all. The changes dementia can bring may cause you to worry about your safety around the house and when you are out and about. You may find you feel less confident about managing at home and when you leave the house.

### Keep everyday activities safe with the help of technology

Assistive technologies have been used for safety at home for generations. For example, smoke detectors and house alarms. Below you can see examples of assistive technologies that you can use in your home or when you are about and about.

#### Cooker guard

The Innohome cooker guard protects you from leaving the cooker on too long. It can detect when your cooker overheats and will turn off the cooker before toxic gases are released or fire breaks out.



#### Countdown timer switch

The MasterPlug countdown timer switch is very useful if you find you forget to plug out appliances that are dangerous to leave plugged in, like an iron or deep fat fryer. The countdown timer will turn power off if an appliance is left on too long.

There are other devices you can use to make sure that something is turned on at certain times each day, like a lamp in the evening.





## Keep everyday activities safe with the help of technology

### Bath plug

The Magiplug is a special bath plug. As your bath fills, the Magiplug recognises when there is enough water in the bath. If the water goes over this level, the Magiplug releases the plug and allows the water to flow out preventing flooding.

It is very useful if you find yourself running a bath and something distracts you, like the phone rings. You may forget the tap is running.



### Bath alarm

The Brother Max bath alarm is useful if you sometimes forget to test the water temperature of a bath. It will sound an alarm if the temperature is below or above the range set by you and your family.



### Motion-sensor night light

If you wake at night and get out of bed, the Lifemax motion-sensor night light will sense your movement and a light will come on allowing you to walk safely.

The light will stay lit for one minute unless it detects more movement.

You can put these sensors anywhere in your home.



“ Lots of people tell me they keep losing things. A simple item locator, along with setting up a routine, can be a great solution and remove lots of stress.”

– Emma, occupational therapist

# Get automatic help with 'telecare'

## Get automatic help with 'telecare'

Telecare means a system of supports and alarms that are connected to a monitoring centre. A monitoring centre automatically receives alerts, through the normal phone line, from certain items in your home that are electronically linked to it. When the monitoring centre receives the alert, they call your family or the emergency services. They provide this service 24-hours, 7 days a week.

Telecare can be as basic as having a smoke detector connected to a monitoring service. Telecare can also monitor your home in other ways. Telecare can support and help you to live well at home.

### How do household devices work with 'telecare'?

A 'base unit' is connected to a phone line in your home. All the devices listed below can send a signal to this unit which then automatically phones an alarm to the monitoring centre. It works like this:

- the device sets off an alarm (for example, carbon monoxide detector);
- the base unit in your home receives the alarm and sends it to your phone line;
- your phone line sends the alarm to the monitoring centre; and
- the monitoring centre receives the alarm and alerts your family or emergency services.

### Sometimes you don't need a monitoring centre

Some telecare assistive technologies can be used without connecting to the monitoring centre. Instead, they can directly alert a family member if an alarm is activated.





## **Assist Ireland can tell you which companies provide telecare**

There are a number of companies that provide telecare in Ireland. Assist Ireland has a list of these companies, you will find contact details on page 26.

It is always a good idea to speak to a number of companies that provide a service so you can choose the one that suits you best.

When you decide to get telecare devices, you, your family and the telecare company reach an agreement about what happens if an alarm is activated. For example, it may be agreed that if an alert is activated:

- the monitoring centre calls you first to ensure everything is okay; and
- if they can't reach you, they can contact your family to let them know which alarm has gone off.

This can provide peace of mind to both you and your family if you ever need help in your home.

## Examples of telecare devices

### Telecare devices you may find useful

#### Automatic falls detector

This device automatically detects falls 24 hours a day. It also has a panic button if you need to call for assistance.

It is useful for people living on their own.

If you fall, this type of detector will alert the monitoring centre, who can arrange for help to come to you.



#### Carbon monoxide detector

This will detect carbon monoxide in the home and send an alert to the monitoring centre. This may be useful if you find it confusing to distinguish between alarms.



#### A gas detector

A gas detector will monitor gas leaks.

One of these detectors can sound an alarm within the house to alert you, and send an alert to the monitoring centre. The centre will notify emergency services and family.



#### Property exiting sensors

This sensor is placed at the exit doors of the house.

It can be switched on during certain hours, for example at night time.

If you get up feeling confused or disorientated during the night and you go to leave the house, the sensor will alert family members that you have left your home.







# Staying safe out and about

## Staying safe out and about

It is important to stay independent in your everyday life, especially after a diagnosis of dementia. You can do this by:

- using routines,
- adapting activities, and
- using assistive technologies.

### When out on your own

You and your family may be concerned about your safety if you are out of the house on your own. There may be a concern that you:

- become disorientated and are unable to find your way home; or
- have a fall and are unable to get up.

Some people with dementia feel less confident when they are out. This can stop them from continuing to do the things they like to do.

Some family members feel very stressed when their loved one with dementia is out of the house on their own.

### 'Location devices' and 'safer walking devices'

Wearing a piece of technology that can identify where you are can help you to continue going out. This technology is called a 'location device' or a 'safer walking device'. It can give you and your family peace of mind because, if you need help, you can be found.

These devices use Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to find you. This is the same technology that is used to find phones and cars.

There are a variety of these technologies available and new products come on the market all the time. This technology can come in different forms including:

- a phone;
- a pendant;
- a watch;
- an attachment for a belt; and
- insoles for your shoe.





### Find out about your device

Like any technology, location devices have benefits and limitations.

It is important that you and your family understand things about the device like:

- what it is;
- what it will do;
- what it will not do;
- how to maintain it; and
- how much it costs.

### Talk to your family

If you are thinking about getting a location device:

- talk to your family about it; and
- seek expert advice.

“ You can still lead an active life, physically and socially.”

# Making decisions about assistive technology

## Making decisions about assistive technology

### How can I decide about assistive technology?

Everyone is different. There is no one solution that will suit everyone.

While assistive technology will not work on its own, it can be part of the plan you make to help you and your family to live well with dementia.

### When making decisions about assistive technology:

#### Talk to family and experts

It is important that you and your family talk about assistive technology and the possible role it can have. Expert advice can help you all to identify options and to understand the benefits and limitations of different products.

#### What do you want?

Decide what you want to continue to do and what is important to you.

#### What is frustrating you?

Talk about things you are finding difficult or frustrating.

#### What are your worries?

Highlight things that you worry about. For example, are you concerned that you may become disorientated or lost when out and about?

#### What do others think?

Ask your family and friends for their input, and if they have any concerns.

#### What can help you?

Find out what assistive technology might help you. You can explore a number of websites that are for people with dementia and their families. See pages 22-26.


#### Where can you get expert advice?

Talk to experts about assistive technology. There are a number of technology libraries and resource rooms in Ireland. You can visit these to see examples of assistive technology and get expert advice. See page 22 for contact details

You can also speak to an occupational therapist. See page 26 for contact details.

You can also speak to an occupational therapist. See pages 26 for contact details.





“ I carry a notebook and diary with me every day. I write down things I need to do. I also write down little prompts to help me to remember the names of the people I will see that day.”

# Where to find assistive technology

## Where to find assistive technology

The following websites for people with dementia and their families are useful because they:

- list different products;
- explain how they can help; and
- tell you where you can buy them.

### Dementia Circle

Dementia Circle finds, tests and shares products to help people living with dementia to stay independent for longer.

The service is provided through Alzheimer Scotland. It contains videos and stories from people with dementia about their experience with technology.

It also has factsheets to help you identify what might work for you.

Visit:  
[www.dementiacircle.org](http://www.dementiacircle.org)

### AT Dementia

AT Dementia provides information on assistive technology for people with dementia.

The website is based in the UK and includes a directory of products and suppliers. It also has a guide for people with dementia and their families to help you to identify technology that might help.

Visit:  
[www.atdementia.org.uk](http://www.atdementia.org.uk)

### Assist Ireland

This website is provided by the Citizens Information Board in Ireland. It contains information on:

- assistive technology;
- mobility aids; and
- appliances.

It includes a directory of products and suppliers. This website has a list of telecare providers in Ireland. Information sheets about different products are also available.

You can contact Assist Ireland by phoning 0761 079 2500; or emailing [support@assistireland.ie](mailto:support@assistireland.ie)

Visit:  
[www.assistireland.ie](http://www.assistireland.ie)



## Memory libraries in Ireland

### Memory libraries and memory resource rooms

There are a number of 'memory libraries' and 'resource rooms' which have assistive technology products on display.

### Visit your memory library or memory resource room

You can arrange to visit a memory library or resource room to see a range of products and how they work. You can also access expert advice about assistive technology.

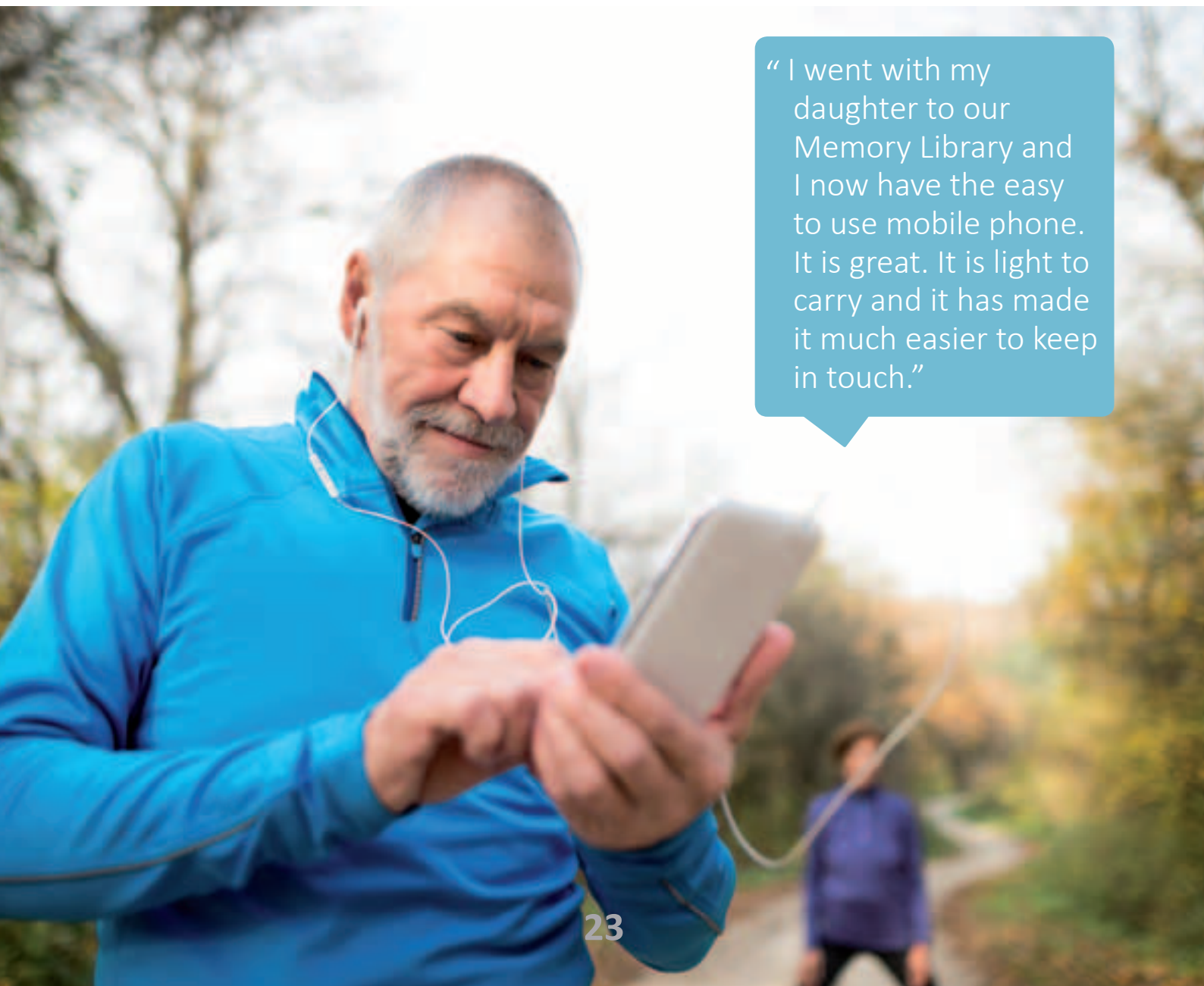
In some memory libraries you may be able to borrow equipment to see if it works for you before you buy it.

### Talk to a healthcare professional

Talk to a healthcare professional, usually an occupational therapist, who can advise you about the options available and talk to you about your specific situation.

To contact an occupational therapist in the Health Service Executive, HSE

- contact your local HSE Health Office, see page 26 for contact details
- speak to your public health nurse
- speak to your doctor



“ I went with my daughter to our Memory Library and I now have the easy to use mobile phone. It is great. It is light to carry and it has made it much easier to keep in touch.”

## Memory libraries in Ireland

### Dublin

#### The Memory Harbour

Clonskeagh Hospital Grounds  
Clonskeagh  
Dublin 6

**Phone:** 01 268 0392

**Email:** joan.fitzpatrick@hse.ie

### Carlow

#### Memory Resource Room

Sacred Heart Hospital  
Old Dublin Road  
Carlow

**Phone:** 059 913 6492

### Cork

#### The Memory Resource Room

Mallow Primary Health Care Centre  
Mallow  
Co Cork

**Phone:** 022 58700

**Email:** info@crystalproject.ie

**Web:** www.crystalproject.ie

### Kilkenny

#### Memory Cottage

Day Centre, St Columba's Hospital  
Thomastown  
Co Kilkenny

**Contact:** Joan McDonald or Heather Purcell

**Phone:** 056 775 4825 or 087 904 2967

### Roscommon

#### Roscommon Primary Care

Ballypheasan  
Roscommon

**Phone:** 090 663 7500

### Tipperary

#### The Memory Technology Library

South Tipperary General Hospital Grounds  
Clonmel  
Co Tipperary

**Phone:** 052 617 7080

**Email:** EmmaM.O'Brien@hse.ie

**Web:** www.southtipperarydementia.ie

Contact a memory library or resource room to arrange a time to visit.

You can find memory libraries in

- Dublin
- Carlow
- Cork
- Kilkenny
- Roscommon
- Tipperary





## More memory libraries due to open

The National Dementia Office and the Health Service Executive (HSE) are working to make sure that more memory libraries and memory resource rooms are opened in Ireland.

As they are opened, the locations and contact details will be available

→ on [www.understandtogether.ie](http://www.understandtogether.ie)

→ by calling the Alzheimer Society of Ireland's National Helpline at 1800 341 341.



# Useful contacts

## Useful contacts

### The Alzheimer Society of Ireland

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland provides information, advice and a range of dementia-specific specialist services throughout Ireland, including:

- dementia advisers;
- social clubs;
- Alzheimer cafes;
- home care; and
- day care.

**Freephone helpline:** 1800 341 341

Monday to Friday 10am to 5pm

Saturday 10am to 4pm

**Email:** [helpline@alzheimer.ie](mailto:helpline@alzheimer.ie)

**Visit:** [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

### Health Service Executive

For information about supports like occupational therapy, contact your Local Health Office. You can also speak to your doctor or public health nurse about a referral to an occupational therapist.

**Phone:** 1850 24 1850

**Email:** [hselive@hse.ie](mailto:hselive@hse.ie)

**Visit:** [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

### Assist Ireland

Assist Ireland provides information about:

- daily living aids;
- mobility aids; and
- assistive technology.

A directory of products and suppliers are listed on the website.

**Phone:** 0761 097200

**Email:** [support@assistireland.ie](mailto:support@assistireland.ie)

**Visit:** [www.assistireland.ie](http://www.assistireland.ie)

### Understand Together

Understand Together is a public support, awareness and information campaign led by the HSE working with The Alzheimer Society of Ireland and Genio. The website includes information about dementia supports and services in Ireland.

**Visit:** [www.understandtogether.ie](http://www.understandtogether.ie)

## Disclaimer

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, ASI, has prepared this booklet for the benefit of people interested in assistive technology. It is for general information purposes only. ASI does not recommend or approve any of the products, technology and or providers listed. ASI is also not responsible for and does not make any representations about any of these. While ASI has taken great care in preparing this booklet, it is not liable for any inaccuracies, errors, omissions or misleading information in the booklet.



“I kept leaving the house without my keys. I visited a memory library and the occupational therapist was great, I got one of the voice prompters. Every time I walk past it by the front door it says: ‘have you got your keys?’. It’s a great help.”

## Other publications you may find useful include:

I have dementia...How do I plan for the future?

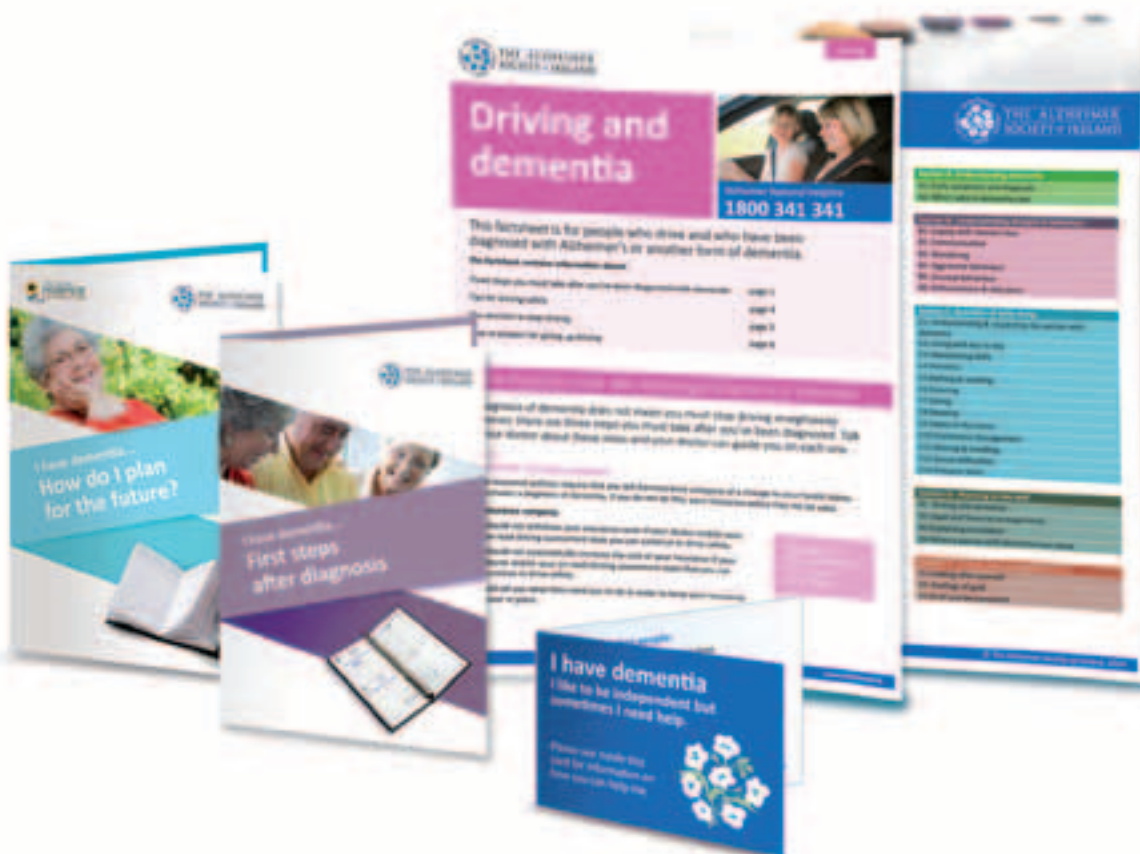
I have dementia...First steps after diagnosis

Driving and dementia

Practical tips for living well with dementia

HelpCard: for people with dementia when out and about

**For your free copy call  
1800 341 341**





**National Helpline:** 1800 341 341  
**Email:** [helpline@alzheimer.ie](mailto:helpline@alzheimer.ie)  
**Website:** [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)



THE ALZHEIMER  
SOCIETY *of* IRELAND