

# Walk in our Footprints: A Dementia Carer's Journey

DEMENTIA CARERS CAMPAIGN NETWORK



THE ALZHEIMER  
SOCIETY *of* IRELAND

# Concern About a Loved One

“My wife Helen had an energetic, lively personality, with a great smile and a ready laugh. She was in her mid-fifties when we began to notice a gradual change in her. She lost weight, even though she seemed to be eating normally, she also became noticeably quieter. Sometimes, I found it difficult to locate ordinary household items like coffee, tea, sugar, and when I did discover them, they were not in their usual places. While exasperating at times, during those early days I learned to develop more patience and to accept that Helen’s actions were not intentional.”

**Richard Dolan**



Richard with his wife Helen,  
in the early stages of dementia

Listen to Richard’s full story on [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

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These Alzheimer Society of Ireland factsheets and booklets may be relevant to you. We post copies of these information resources free of charge to family carers, just call **1800 341 341**.

- Early symptoms and diagnosis
- Practical tips for coping with memory loss

If you would like to speak to someone, our free and confidential Helpline is available six days a week, please call 1800 341 341.

# Visit to the Doctor and Diagnosis

“I got a call from the doctor. I pulled over and asked him about the results of the test. He said, and I will never forget it, “Philip’s brain is considerably atrophied.” I don’t remember much about the rest of the conversation as I was shaking and weeping at the same time. When the conversation finished I sat in the car dazed. I really knew nothing about dementia except the negative stereotypes and instinctively I knew the key to helping me come to terms with this diagnosis was knowledge.”

**Annie McGuinness**



Annie with her husband Philip

Listen to Annie’s full story on [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

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- Living with dementia: an introduction for family members
- I have dementia...First steps after diagnosis

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# Early Stages of Dementia: Post-Diagnostic Supports

“From day one I encouraged Derek to maintain his independence as much as possible; he made a will, decided on Power of Attorney and got his affairs in order. I believe what would be ideal for a person with early onset Alzheimer’s is to have a ‘buddy system’. I know Derek has faded over the last four years, but it is a slow, gradual change. He is a fantastic partner, so I’m not prepared to have his life taken over and all his independence taken away.”

**Paddy Crosbie**



Paddy with his husband Derek

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- Looking after yourself as a carer
- Legal and financial arrangement

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# Middle Stages of Dementia: Condition Management

“My father and I work together to care for my mum. He is 81, she is 68 and I am 33. At the moment she is losing her ability to communicate clearly. Her words are completely jumbled most of the time. Due to stress and fear she needs someone to be with her all of the time. Breaks are so vital for releasing the tension. I try to go to the gym several times during the week. I also try to visit my friends. Our daily routine of getting out walking and meeting people is beneficial for her and me.”

**Micheál Rowsome**



Micheál with his mother Kate

Listen to Micheál's full story on [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

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- Understanding changes in behaviour – communication
- Loss and grief when a family member has dementia

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# Later Stages of Dementia: Care in the Community and in Long-Term Residential Care

“With Mum’s dementia, because of the form it took, there came a time when home was no longer a suitable environment for her; her needs could no longer be met there. She was unhappy, uncomfortable and unsafe. This was a huge decision to make. I will always feel sad that Mum is not in her own home, but I know that we are doing our outmost to make sure that she is well cared for, comfortable and that she feels our love for her every day.”

**Nuala Ryan**

Listen to Nuala’s full story on [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

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- Activities of daily living – moving and handling
- We also have information to assist you in choosing a nursing home. This is available through our Helpline or by emailing **helpline@alzheimer.ie**

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# Following the Loss of a Loved One with Dementia

“I spent eight years caring for my father until he passed away from vascular dementia. It is a massive void when the person you spent so long caring for is suddenly gone. You miss the camaraderie of the other carers and people you get to know so well when you regularly visit day centres and social clubs; suddenly this support network is gone, as is the person who relied on you so much. My advice to anyone taking on a full-time caring role is to find out what your rights are, claim everything you are entitled to.”

**Ray Cregan**



Ray with his father Paddy

Listen to Ray's full story on [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

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- Grieving following the death of someone with dementia

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# The Alzheimer Society of Ireland

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland works across the country in the heart of local communities providing dementia specific services and supports and advocating for the rights and needs of all people living with dementia and their carers. We work to ensure the voice of people with dementia and family carers are heard.

## Dementia Carers Campaign Network

The Dementia Carers Campaign Network is open to anyone in the Republic of Ireland who has experience caring for someone with dementia. It is a national campaigning group, raising awareness of issues facing families affected by dementia and lobbying for policy change. If you would like further information about the Dementia Carers Campaign Network please contact us.



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



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Email: [advocacy@alzheimer.ie](mailto:advocacy@alzheimer.ie)

Alzheimer National Helpline: **1800 341 341**



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