**ARE YOU LOOKING AFTER SOMEONE WITH DEMENTIA?**

If so, both you and the person you care for will probably need help to cope with the symptoms and changes in behaviour. But you’re not alone, as help is out there.

It’s a good idea to make sure you’re registered as a carer with your GP so that the practice is aware of the situation, and their social prescriber may be able to help. You can also apply to social services for a free carer’s assessment to see what might make your life easier, which could include things like:

* some respite care to give you a break
* help with taxi fares
* help with gardening and housework
* exercise classes to relieve stress and be with other people
* information about local support groups
* advice about benefit for carers.

They could also tell you about relevant training courses. These might cover:

* making your home dementia-friendly
* how best to communicate with someone who has dementia
* advice on food-related issues and problems
* advice on dealing with toilet difficulties and personal hygiene
* managing sleep problems.

It’s also very important that you look after yourself, because your needs matter too. Sharing your feelings of stress with someone can really help. Maybe family and friends can spend an hour or two with the person you care for, or take them out to an activilty, dementia café or even a singing café that meets weekly in Coalville, Shepshed and Ashby libraries.

Finally, there are charities and voluntary organisations which have helplines and websites for advice. Some of these are:

* Alzheimer’s Society’s Dementia Connect support line on 0333 150 3456
* Age UK Advice Line on 0800 678 1602 (free)
* Independent Age Helpline on 0800 319 6789
* Dementia UK’s Admiral Nurse Dementia Helpline on 0800 888 6678 (free)
* Carers Direct Helpline on 0300 123 1053 (free)
* Carers UK Helpline on 0800 808 7777 (free)
* Dementia Carers Count has a virtual carers’ centre that provides a range of online support and resources
* Carers UK forum website
* Alzheimer’s Societ Dementia Talking Point online community
* The healthtalk.org.website.

*Sent by Dr Virmani and Dr Bedi’s patient participation group.*