

Memory Box Toolkit

What is a memory box?

A memory box is a collection of images, and objects which represent a person's interests and history. These could be items from key moments in their life, such as a medal or a baby's wristband or items to represent their home or work life for example a photograph of their street or a work tool.



Why create a memory box?

Creating a memory box for someone diagnosed with dementia can have a range of benefits for both the person with dementia and their relatives. These include:

- Feeling a sense of inclusion.
- Stimulating conversation between someone diagnosed with dementia and their relatives.
- Creating new memories of your loved ones.
- Providing relatives with a greater understanding of their family's past.
- Creating a calming effect on someone diagnosed with dementia.
- Using a variety of senses such as touch, which the person diagnosed with dementia will begin to rely on.
- Reflecting on fond memories which will give those involved a greater sense of wellbeing.
- Increasing creativity which may lead on to new or re-discovered hobbies for the person diagnosed with dementia.
- Stimulating the part of the brain which stores feelings and memories which helps someone diagnosed with dementia make sense of the world around them.

How do I create a memory box?

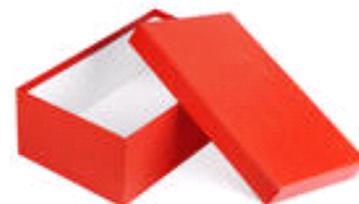
You can create a memory box on behalf of someone or you could make it together.

1. Choose a container for the items

This could be a box or a bag. It can be as fancy or as plain as you want. You might choose an ornate wooden box or a battered suitcase or shoebox.

Top Tips:

- Choose something which is easy to lift.
- Pick a container which will fit on someone's lap or on a small table.
- Ensure it will securely hold the items without them spilling out.
- Make sure the container will wear well.
- Check that it can be opened easily and any compartments suit the dexterity of the user.



2. Select the items

When choosing items to go in the memory box think about what is important to the person you're making it for. What have been the key moments in their life? What did they enjoy? What are their happiest memories?

Top Tips:

- Try to select items which stimulate different senses e.g. touch, smell, sight, sound and taste.
 - Avoid items which smell of food which aren't edible, as someone diagnosed with dementia may try to eat this e.g. soap.
 - Touch is a powerful sense so consider the textures of objects. Avoid items which are hard to grip.
- Consider how safe an item is. Try to avoid sharp or heavy objects.
- Focus on items which are linked to positive memories.
- Consider the uniqueness of an item. If it is irreplaceable, leave it out.
- Images can become worn with use. Consider photocopying and laminating it to protect it.
- Labeling items will help the person diagnosed with dementia to recognise the item and its significance. An alternative to labeling would be creating a contents list for the memory box with a description next to each item.
- If you have a lot of items don't try to fit them into one box. Instead you could produce memory boxes on different themes. For example you could create a box about the person's hobbies and another one about their children.



How do I use a memory box?

Look through the memory box with your relative and discuss the different items.

Top Tips:

- Encourage your relative to hold each item.
- Ask the person diagnosed with dementia to share what the object makes them think of.
- Discuss how it feels e.g. bumpy, rough, smooth, or soft.
- Talk about what memories your relative associates with it.

How can Northamptonshire Libraries help me create a memory box?

There are a number of ways that we can help you to create a thought provoking memory box for your relative:

- Provide you with access to historic images, maps and press cuttings relating to Northamptonshire at the Discover area at Northamptonshire Central Library.
- Photocopy photographs at any of our 36 libraries. [Charges apply.](#)
- Some libraries have laminators which you can use to protect your photographs. [Charges apply.](#)

Useful contacts

Alzheimer's Society Northamptonshire	01832 736670	www.alzheimers.org.uk	northamptonshire@alzheimers.org.uk
Northamptonshire Carers	01933 677837	www.northamptonshire-carers.org	carers@northamptonshire-carers.org
Age UK Northamptonshire	01604 611200	ageuk.org.uk/northamptonshire	northamptonshire@ageuknorthants.org.uk
Northamptonshire Libraries	0300 1261000	www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/libraryservice	