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Home ▶ Courses ▶ Collections ▶ Social Partnerships Network courses ▶ NNCO_HCA ▶ Section 3 ▶ Your healthcare practice
▶ 5 Awareness of mental health, ...

[View downloads](#)

[View as single page](#)

< Course content

General ▼

Course overview ▼

Section 1 ▼

Section 2 ▼

Section 3 ▲

Your healthcare practice

Introduction

Learning outcomes

1 Privacy and dignity

2 Fluids and nutrition

3 Health and safety in your workplace

3.1 Infection prevention and control

4 Basic life support

5 Awareness of mental health, dementia and learning disability

What you have learned in this section

Further information (optional)

Section 3 quiz

References

Acknowledgements

Section 3 quiz

Section 4 ▼



Introducing practical healthcare

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5 Awareness of mental health, dementia and learning disability

Around one in four adults has at least one mental health need at any time, and in the next 20 years the number of British people expected to suffer from dementia will grow by 40 per cent. Even though you might not be working in a setting specifically caring for people with mental health conditions, dementia and learning disabilities, it is still important to have some awareness of the signs and symptoms. This will help you to show compassion and care when you observe any behaviour that seems unusual or difficult to understand, and to be aware of the need to consult more experienced staff about behaviours if necessary.

Activity 5

Allow about 30 minutes

The next video will raise your awareness of the needs of people with dementia. It explains certain features of the public space of a residential home especially designed for people with dementia. As you watch it, write down any points about the design that make life easier for the residents.

This video is provided for use within the course only.



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The Lodge: public space

You can type text here, but this facility requires a free OU account. [Sign in or register.](#)

The three most common types of mental health problem that you might encounter in your role are:

1. **depression:** a common mental disorder that causes people to experience depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy, and poor concentration, which can be mild or very severe
2. **anxiety:** when people cannot control their worries
3. **dementia:** a decline in mental ability which affects memory, thinking, problem-solving, concentration and perception. This includes Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia.

You are probably less likely to encounter **psychosis**, which is when a person interprets events differently from those around them, including experiencing hallucinations, delusions or flight of ideas (MIND, 2015). It is less common and might be part of **bipolar disorder** (a mood disorder also known as manic depression) or **schizophrenia** (a psychotic disorder where people interpret reality abnormally). You might also meet patients who have a **learning**

Next steps ▼

Resources ▼

disability, which is where people have a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information and to learn new skills (Department of Health, 2001).

If you think that someone is developing symptoms of a mental health problem or dementia, or if you think that the support needs associated with their learning disability need reassessing, you should record this information and pass it on. Who you inform and how will depend on your workplace guidelines and your role. For more information on mental health, dementia or end of life care, visit the short course for carers entitled '[Caring for adults](#)'.

Tip: hold Ctrl and click a link to open it in a new tab. [\(Hide tip\)](#)

Case study: Lynne

Lynne has been managed by mental health services for many years with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, and it has been extremely important to her to have access to the right professionals and support throughout this time. She has been fortunate in having a consistent social worker contact to help her through, who stays in touch with her on a regular three-weekly basis. They have grown to know each other well and have developed a supportive relationship. A similarly supportive relationship with her consultant has allowed for consistency of care and an understanding of her history. Lynne says that maintaining a line between the professional and patient, whilst having mutual respect and understanding of each other has been an important feature of her care. Lynne also described being treated with dignity and being allowed to grow, rather than feeling restricted by her mental health issues. During one of her bouts in hospital with depression she gained great confidence from leading a group. This is a good example of a long-term mental illness being managed effectively whilst living largely in the community through person-centred care.

About this course

15 hours study

Level 0: Beginner

Course description

Course rewards

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[◀ Previous](#)

[Next ▶](#)

4 Basic life support

What you have learned in this section



For further information, take a look at our frequently asked questions which may give you the support you need.

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[Back to top](#)

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