

# United against dementia

*Sedgwick UK and the Alzheimer's Society*

CONTRIBUTORS:

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Every three minutes in the United Kingdom, someone develops dementia. Nearly one million people around the country are living with dementia today, and too many are facing the health and social challenges alone. In 2018, Sedgwick began our partnership with the Alzheimer's Society through the Insurance United Against Dementia initiative – joining in their vision for a world without dementia.

Jokes about forgetfulness or old age, whether they're purposely unkind or just thoughtless, and media stereotypes have only perpetuated a stigma surrounding the progressive, often misunderstood disease. Common misconceptions about the condition can prevent those living with it from seeking treatment, receiving a diagnosis or having critical discussions about their illness. But acknowledging dementia has never been more important: Today, it is the U.K.'s biggest killer.




## COMBATting DEMENTIA IN A COVID-19- ENVIRONMENT

Our most vulnerable communities, which include people living with dementia, have been uniquely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. More than a quarter of coronavirus deaths between March and June were people with dementia, and the largest increase in non-COVID deaths was in people with dementia. For several months, residents living inside care facilities weren't allowed visitors; in many places, restrictions remain.

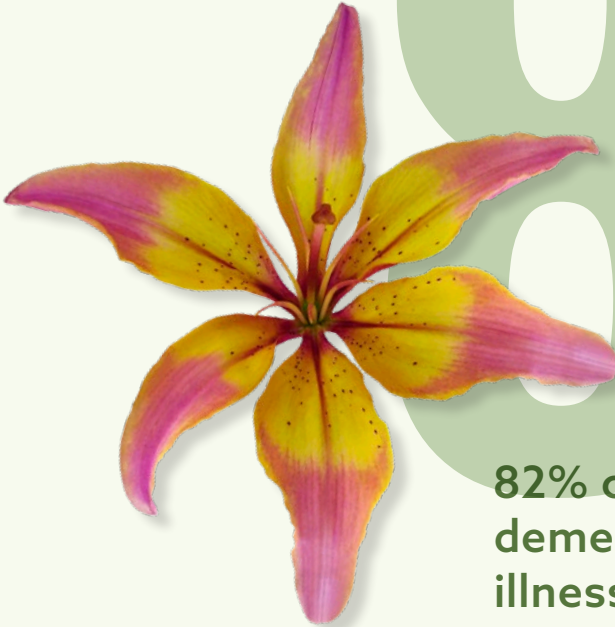
Dementia patients, for whom routines are often so important to helping them know what to expect and to allow for a sense of control, have had to adjust to changes in their daily schedules and potentially unfamiliar staff as facilities introduced rotating shifts.

Between these disruptions to their routines and the isolation that comes from limited social contact, it's understandable that a person's condition would decline. In fact, 82% of people either living with dementia or caring for someone with the illness reported

worsening symptoms of the person with dementia. Adding to the disruption for many organizations is a decrease in on-site volunteers and a new reliance on virtual assistance. Sedgwick's in-person fundraising events for the Alzheimer's Society may have temporarily paused, but we quickly came to understand that making a difference has more to do with presence than proximity.



**92 million**  
Unpaid caregivers provided an additional 92 million hours of care to loved ones with dementia over the past six months.



**82%**  
82% of people — either living with dementia or caring for someone with the illness — reported a deterioration in the symptoms of the person with dementia.

## BRINGING COMPASSION AND PATIENCE TO CLAIMS

Kristine McIlroy, a liability adjuster at Sedgwick, primarily manages claims for care facilities. She has relatives directly impacted by Alzheimer's; because of her personal connection to dementia, Kristine is committed to learning more about and bringing awareness to this important cause. After participating in an Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Friends training session, Kristine gained a new perspective on the condition and what life is like on a daily basis for someone with dementia, giving her the opportunity to educate others and bring a more compassionate and patient approach to the claims process.

These sessions have continued to run throughout the pandemic, and across the U.K., nearly 400 Sedgwick colleagues have become Dementia Friends.

Through her time as a Dementia Friend, Kristine learned that a resident in a dementia care facility may see an object on the ground, such as a doormat, as a "black hole" or something they need to step over; this has led to falls and injuries. Learning about specific experiences like this equipped Kristine with the knowledge she needs to interact with the residents she meets during on-site visits. But behind-the-scenes work like Kristine's is only a small part of Sedgwick's involvement with the Alzheimer's Society.

As a customer care manager, Kristina Bahari manages claims that involve vulnerable customers, some of whom are elderly, have a mental health condition or live with dementia. Working on various assignments, Kristina found that many of these claimants don't have a support system they can depend on. She wants to change that. Since joining the Companion Calls Program within the Alzheimer's Society, Kristina has made meaningful connections with several people around the U.K. living with dementia. Paul is one such friend. Every week, Kristina calls Paul so he can talk about whatever's on his mind – anything from the weather to his favorite soap opera. She can also act as a sounding board for Paul, and by being a constant in his life she's able to help him keep his spirits up even when life gets challenging.

## MAKING THE WORLD MORE INCLUSIVE AND DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY

Our customer care for vulnerable customers project is centered on a simple, but incredibly important, philosophy: By asking the right questions and making the claims process simple and straightforward, we can reduce complexity and offer better support. After a flood, for example, a claimant with dementia may struggle to remember details like which paint color they chose to refurbish the walls. Our team can help by creating a mood board to refresh a claimant's memory, or hanging a wall calendar to track dates and times contractors will be onsite.

Our shared purpose has always been – and continues to be – to take care of people. Through our partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, Sedgwick's colleagues have found new ways to support our most vulnerable communities. We're taking every opportunity to educate our organization, adapt our services, develop new solutions and advocate for every single person we come in contact with. Because caring counts.

For additional resources, please visit the [Alzheimer's Society's website](#). You can also read more about Sedgwick's past involvement with World Alzheimer's Day on our [blog](#).



**Kristina Bahari (left) and Kristine McIlroy (right) have gained new perspectives while volunteering for the Alzheimer's Society.**