

Setting Up and Promoting a Dementia Carers Support Group

Key Steps as shared at the 'Moving Forward Group' bold Blether with Lorna Bunney

1. Start Small and Be Community-Centered

Begin informally, even in a local library, café, or community center.

Offer a **safe, comfortable, and guilt-free space** for unpaid carers, people living with dementia, and those adjusting after bereavement.

2. Be Clear on Purpose

Clearly state that the group is for unpaid carers.

Use trusted referrals (like link workers) to find initial participants.

3. Promote Through Local Channels

Libraries, community noticeboards, Facebook, and word-of-mouth are effective.

Highlight peer-to-peer support benefits.

4. Stay Flexible and Member-Led

Activities should be **fluid and member-driven**, balancing fun social trips with emotional support.

Allow carers to naturally move to a "moving forward" group when ready.

5. Support Connection Beyond Meetings

Set up a **WhatsApp group** (or another simple method) for ongoing peer support, with clear guidelines.

Consider using a work phone for managing group communications.

6. Keep Costs Low and Manage Funding Creatively

A donation box ("piggy bank") model works well.

Apply for small grants (e.g., Age Scotland peer-to-peer grants) and partner with dementia-friendly organizations.

Formally register as a charity if aiming for longer-term sustainability.

7. Handle Growth and Waiting Lists Carefully

Start a waiting list when needed.

Maintain group size to ensure intimacy and quality support.

8. Support the Emotional Journey

Recognize the emotional challenges: guilt, identity loss, isolation.

Offer practical ways to reconnect with self and community after caring roles end.

9. Celebrate and Value Every Story

Every carer's journey is unique. Peer reassurance, acceptance, and flexible support are crucial.

Explore creative projects (like storytelling, photography, or workshops) to build connections.