

This advice for **Group Coordinators** was taken from the Alzheimer's Society, Age UK and personal experience. You're already doing the right thing by noticing and wanting to help.

Here are the most supportive steps people usually take:

Start with care, not labels

If you bring it up, keep it about specific moments, not "dementia". Try: "I've noticed you've been struggling to remember names lately, is everything okay?" That feels less scary than jumping to a diagnosis.

Encourage a doctor's check-in

Memory issues can come from lots of things: stress, poor sleep, thyroid issues, meds, vitamin B12 deficiency, depression, etc. Only a doctor can sort that out. Offer to help book the appointment or go with them if they're nervous.

Adjust how you interact

While they figure things out:

- Be patient with repeated questions. Answer like it's the first time.
- Use short sentences and give them time to respond.
- Keep routines consistent. Changes can be confusing.
- Don't argue if they misremember. Redirect instead: "Maybe we're mixing up two stories. Want some tea?"

Look out for safety

If you notice things like getting lost on familiar routes, or trouble managing within the group, that's when family or a GP needs to get involved sooner.

Take care of yourself too

Watching a group member or friend change is draining. You can't be their only support. When someone's actions start disrupting group dynamics, the goal is to protect both your members' dignity and the group's ability to function. A few things that usually help:

Reduce triggers in the moment

Dementia often makes noisy, fast-paced, or competitive activities harder. If the disruption happens during those parts:

- Sit them near a calm person who can gently guide them.
- Give them a specific, simple role: handing out materials, holding something, etc. Having a “job” reduces anxiety
- Cut down background noise/distractions if you can.

Have a one point person

If 5 people are all correcting them, it is overwhelming. Agree in the group that 1-2 people will do the gentle redirecting. Others can just go with the flow. Keeps it consistent for them.

Reframe “disruption” for the group

A quick quiet word with others helps: “She’s having some memory issues lately. When she interrupts, let’s just roll with it and I’ll steer us back.” or “I’ve noticed (Name) is struggling to follow the flow lately. Could we try X next time?” Good organizers can adapt without making it obvious. Don’t diagnose her.

Most people are way more patient once they understand it’s not rudeness.

Still address the bigger picture

The group stuff is a symptom. The earlier they get checked by a GP, the more options they have. If you’re close enough, you could say: “The group misses when you’re relaxed like last month. Maybe the doctor could check if something’s making things harder?”

This is tough because you’re balancing loyalty to her with responsibility to the group. You’re not being mean for noticing the impact.

The Alzheimer’s Society at 0333 150 3456 for advice, even if you’re just a friend. They’re used to this exact situation.

