Your Care

Thoughtful care, from our family to yours.

When It’s Time:

Supporting Your Loved One to Stop Driving



When It’s Time:

If you’re reading this, you’re probably facing one of the hardest moments in dementia care.

Maybe your mum got lost driving home from the shops last week. Maybe your dad’s car has a new scrape he can’t quite explain. Or maybe you’ve just started wondering if it’s time. You’re not overreacting. And you’re not alone.

When someone you love begins to show signs of dementia, one of the most emotional conversations you’ll ever have is about driving. For many people, driving isn’t just transport. It’s freedom, pride, and independence. It’s part of who they are.

But as memory and judgement change, driving can quietly shift from independence to risk. Taking away the keys outright often leads to distress, confusion, or conflict.

At Your Care, we’ve seen this again and again. Families doing their best, trying to protect someone they love, without taking away their dignity.

That’s why we’ve written this guide: to help you handle this moment with calm, care, and understanding, and to share the gentle approaches that have truly worked for families like yours.

Why It Matters

When someone has dementia, their ability to drive safely often declines before they realise it.

Reaction times slow. Judgement changes. Familiar routes suddenly feel confusing.

This isn’t about age. It’s about safety. For your loved one, and for others on the road.

There’s something important many families don’t know. When someone is diagnosed with dementia, the DVLA must be informed. It’s not about punishment. It’s the law, and it’s there to keep everyone safe.

If this is new to you, that’s OK. You’re learning, just as countless families have before you.

This is your first step in helping someone you love stay safe, and helping yourself feel at peace with the choices ahead.

Frank's Story: Finding a Way That Worked

Let's talk about Frank. Frank was a car man through and through. Every weekend you'd find him in his garage, elbow-deep in an engine. He loved everything about cars. The smell, the noise, the freedom.

When Frank was diagnosed with dementia, things didn't change overnight. He still drove for a while without any problems. But slowly, little things started to happen. He'd drive to the park, forget he'd taken the car, and walk home.

The next day, he'd find the garage empty and ring the police to report it stolen.

After a few of these moments, his family knew something had to change.

But how do you tell someone whose whole identity is tied to their car that they can't drive anymore?

They couldn't just take away the keys. That would have broken his heart. So they got creative. They quietly removed a small part from under the bonnet.

The car looked fine. The keys were still on the hook. But it wouldn't start.

When Frank noticed, they simply said: "Oh yes, Dad, remember? The mechanic's coming tomorrow to have a look."

A week later: "He's been, just waiting on the parts now."

No confrontation. No tears. No blame.

Just calm reassurance, and a story that kept him safe.

It worked for years.

Frank still visited his garage. Still tinkered under the bonnet. He felt in control. And his family could finally breathe again.

That's the kind of approach this guide will help you find. One that keeps your loved one safe without breaking their spirit.



Starting the Conversation

When it's time to talk, timing and tone matter most.

Choose your moment

Wait for a calm, quiet time, not after an argument or when they're tired.

Lead with love

"Dad, I'm worried about you. I love you, and I want to make sure you're safe."

Use gentle examples

"Last week you said you couldn't remember the way home from Jean's. That must have felt really unsettling."

Keep it about care, not blame.

Involve professionals carefully

Families often think saying "the GP says you can't drive anymore" will help. It rarely does. It can make them feel blamed or powerless. Instead, use one of the gentle stories in the next section. Ones that work with your loved one's reality, not against it.

Acknowledge the loss

"I know this feels like losing your independence. That's not what we want. We just want to help you stay safe and still do the things you love."

> "I miss those Sunday drives."
> "We can still do them. I'll drive this time."

That's the truth. You're not taking something away. You're helping them hold on to their freedom in new, safer ways.



Gentle Storylines That Work

Over the years, we've seen certain approaches make all the difference. Here are a few gentle, believable stories that families have used successfully and kindly.

1. The Insurance Story

"The renewal came through, Dad, and you won't believe it. Nearly £3,000 this year! They've changed the rules for older drivers. Ridiculous, isn't it?"

Why it works:

- The "bad guy" is the insurance company, not you
- It's believable, everyone complains about insurance costs
- It removes choice while preserving dignity

2. The Road Tax Story

"You know what the government's like, Mum, they've hiked the tax for petrol cars again. Nearly £1,000 a year now unless it's electric. Remember the old tax discs at the post office? All online now, such a faff."

Why it works:

- Feels real and nostalgic
- Offers a practical, not personal, reason
- Gives time and space before driving stops altogether

3. The Mechanical Fault Story (Frank's Way)

"The garage says they can't get the part. It's coming from Germany." Or: "They found another problem while fixing it."

Why it works:

- Keeps the car visible, bringing comfort
- Avoids the sense of loss
- Allows you to extend the story gently over time

Frank's family used this one for years. It gave him peace and gave them safety.

Gentle Storylines That Work

4. The MOT or DVLA Story

“The MOT’s expired, and the garage is so backed up.” Or: “DVLA changed their system again. We’re waiting on new paperwork.”

Why it works:

- Bureaucratic and believable
- Reduces tension
- Can last for weeks or months naturally

5. The Petrol Price Story

“Petrol’s nearly £2 a litre now, Dad. We’ve worked out it’s cheaper to get taxis for appointments. Let’s try it for a month and see how it goes.”

Why it works:

- Practical and money-minded
- Sounds like teamwork, not control
- Keeps them involved in the decision

6. The “Let’s Share” Story

“Your car’s not been used much. We thought [family member] could borrow it for a while. They’ll bring it back when you need it.” Then later: “They’re still using it, but we’ll take you wherever you want to go.”

Why it works:

- Positive and generous
- Keeps ownership intact
- Creates gentle distance without confrontation

Once you pick a story, keep it consistent.

If you switch, make it seamless: “The insurance came through, but now the MOT’s delayed.”

And remember, avoid mentioning dementia. It can feel frightening or insulting.

Focus instead on reassurance, calm, and dignity.

Other Strategies That Help

1. The Parking Test

If you can, move the car out of sight. A friend's garage, around the corner, or somewhere safe.

For many people, out of sight means out of mind.

Try this:

- Move it for a week or two
- If they don't mention it, you may be able to sell it
- If they ask once and accept your answer, keep the story simple
- If they're distressed, bring it back and try another approach

Keep responses calm:
"It's at the garage. They found something and are fixing it."

2. The "You're the Navigator Now" Approach

When you're driving them places, keep them involved:

- "You know this route best. Tell me when to turn."
- "You be my lookout on this side."

Why it works:

- Keeps them engaged and valued
- Helps them feel capable
- Turns loss into a new role

Personality Type	Best Story	Why it works
Practical, money-conscious	Insurance, Tax, or Petrol	Logical and relatable
Mechanically minded	Mechanical Fault	Protects pride
Detail-oriented	MOT or DVLA	Bureaucratic and believable
Still likes to be involved	Navigator	Keeps connection
Becoming forgetful	Parking Test	Gentle and low-stress
Helpful and generous	"Let's Share"	Feels kind and positive

The Legal Side

(The Bit You Can't Skip)

Let's be honest about the rules, not to worry you, but to help you stay safe legally and financially.

In the UK, anyone diagnosed with dementia must inform the driving agency:

- DVLA in England and Wales
- DVA in Northern Ireland

If they don't, they can be fined up to £1,000.

If they keep driving, their insurance becomes invalid.

If they were in an accident, they could face serious consequences, even prosecution.

What happens next

Once notified, the agency will ask the GP for a medical report.

They'll then either:

- Revoke the licence
- Issue a short-term licence with regular reviews
- Ask for a driving assessment

Some people choose to stop driving and return their licence voluntarily. That's often the calmest path.

If your loved one refuses, the GP can report it on their behalf, and you can too, confidentially.

How to frame it kindly

"The DVLA just likes to review licences once people reach a certain age. It's completely normal."

Do the legal part quietly and with care. Then focus on handling the emotional side in whatever way works best for your family.

You can find detailed guidance here:

Alzheimer's Society: Driving and Dementia

DVLA: Dementia and Driving

Creating New Routines

Stopping driving isn't just about giving something up. It's about replacing what's lost.

Think about what driving gave them:

- Freedom
- Purpose
- Connection

Then rebuild those in new ways.

Replace what driving meant

- If it was social, plan coffee catch-ups or gentle outings
- If it was independence, involve them in choosing where to go next
- If it was purpose, give them a new role such as navigator, organiser, or co-planner

Build new rhythms

Predictable routines help:

- Tuesday coffee at the café
- Thursday trip to the garden centre
- Sunday lunch out

Predictability brings calm. And if providing all that feels hard, that's OK. That's what help is for.

At Your Care, our dementia-trained carers don't just offer practical support. They bring companionship, conversation, and connection.

We can help with:

- Outings and appointments
- Daily routines
- Social visits
- Specialist dementia care

No pressure. Just a friendly chat about what could make life a little easier.

Final Thoughts

This is one of the hardest transitions a family can face. There's no easy way, but there are gentler ones.

You're not taking away their life. You're protecting it, with love, patience, and understanding.

Frank's family found a way to keep him safe without taking away what he loved most. And so can you.

Sometimes the kindest thing isn't strict honesty. It's emotional honesty. It's choosing calm over confrontation. Peace over panic. Dignity over distress.

Whatever story or strategy you choose, keep it consistent and kind. You're not deceiving them. You're protecting their peace of mind.

Your Care

Thoughtful care, from our family to yours.

If you'd like to talk about what might work for your family:

Call us on 0117 947 7422

Visit your-careuk.co.uk

Email admin@your-careuk.co.uk

You don't have to face this alone. We're always here to listen.

