

Supplementary Information Sheet 2

Review and Promote Dementia Friendly Environments

Some quite small changes can have a major impact on improving accessibility for people with dementia. Clear signs and lighting can be fitted easily and at minimal cost. Others will involve more investment and should be considered as budgets allow or when fixtures and fittings are being replaced.

If you are involved in major refurbishments, or are building internal or external environments, more detailed information is available to help you make those internal and external environments dementia friendly. We can provide a checklist to facilitate this.

Use the check list below to examine the public areas in your building. Remember to check corridors as well as room interiors. E.g. people will follow a sign to find the toilet but when exiting they may not remember which door they came in by. A simple 'way out' sign on that internal door will help.

Checklist:

Quiet Space:

- Do you have a quiet space to take someone who might be feeling anxious or confused? A few minutes spent in a quieter corner with a supportive person might be all that's needed to continue the transaction or activity

Signage:

- Are your signs clear, in bold face with good contrast between text and background?
- Is there a contrast between the sign and the surface it is mounted on? This will allow the person to recognise it as a sign.
- Are the signs fixed to the doors they refer to? - They should not be on adjacent surfaces if at all possible.
- Are signs at eye level and well-lit?
- Are signs highly stylized or use abstract images or icons as representations? (These should be avoided).
- Are signs placed at key decision points for someone who is trying to navigate your premises for the first time? - People with dementia may need such signs every time they come to your building.
- Are signs for toilets and exits clear? - These are particularly important.
- Are glass doors clearly marked?

Lighting:

- Are entrances well-lit and make as much use of natural light as possible?
- Are there pools of bright light or deep shadows (these should be avoided)?

Flooring:

- Are there any highly reflective or slippery floor surfaces? - the reflective surfaces can cause confusion.
- Do you have bold patterned carpets? - plain or mottled surfaces are better; patterns can cause problems to people with perceptual problems.
- Are differences in floor finishes flush rather than stepped - changes in floor surfaces can be confusing for those with perceptual problems. If there is also a step present you may introduce a trip hazard.

Changing rooms and toilets:

- Do you have a changing room (where applicable) where an opposite sex carer or partner can help if required? If not, are staff briefed in how to meet this need sensitively.
- Do you have a unisex toilet or other facility which would allow someone to have assistance without causing them or other user's embarrassment?
- Toilet seats that are of a contrasting colour to the walls and rest of the toilet are easier to see if someone has visual problems.

Seating:

- In larger premises - do you have seating area, especially in areas where people are waiting? This can be a big help.
- Does any seating look like seating? People with dementia will find simple styles better e.g. a wooden bench would be preferable to an abstract metal Z-shaped bench.

Navigation:

- Research shows that people with dementia use "landmarks" to navigate their way around, both inside and outside. The more attractive and interesting the landmark (e.g. a painting, or a plant) the easier it is to use. Have you had a good look round and thought about how you could use such landmarks?

Other issues:

- This list is not exhaustive. Other unexpected things can cause problems, for example reflections in mirrors and shiny surfaces can be confusing. If possible speak to people living with dementia and ask them how easy/difficult it is for them to use your premises.

We would like to acknowledge **Innovations in Dementia**, a Community Interest Company, whose original checklist formed the basis of the checklist in this document. The original can be found in the guide '**Developing dementia friendly communities**' which was written on behalf of the Local Government Association. Copies of the original guide can be found on the internet.

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