

Wanting to Leave the House

Some people with dementia might struggle to understand why they are spending more time at home. Or they might be struggling to recognise where they are as 'home.' This confusion can become worse at dusk, known as 'Sundowning'.

The carers we work with have had some success with the following strategies. They can help the person with dementia to feel more at ease, which might make them less inclined to want to leave the house.

1. Try to identify the times of day when this behaviour occurs and plan activities around that time. Activities and exercise can reduce anxiety, agitation, and restlessness. (Alzheimer's Association 2019)
2. Put coats and bags away in cupboards rather than keeping them near the door. Some people with dementia find these items 'trigger' their desire to leave; seeing them makes them feel as if they are about to go out.
3. Hang a curtain rail above the door and pull the curtain when appropriate. Hiding the door can stop someone with dementia wanting to open it.
4. Involving the person in household tasks and the daily routine is helpful. Asking them to do simple jobs such as folding washing or laying the table can help them feel included. Thanking the person for their help will make them feel appreciated and needed, which might help them to feel calmer and reduce their desire to leave.
5. Ask the person about the place they want to go and listen carefully to what they say. Try not to correct them but reassure them that they are safe where they are. Speaking to them about previous homes and the memories they made there can help them to feel reassured.
6. If a person is determined to leave the house then go out together. Take a short walk and chat about things you see along the way to divert them from their previous anxiety. When you get back home emphasise this by saying for example "Here we are" or "Back home again".

If you need any help or guidance, want to find out about other activities and services, or just need someone to talk to who understands your situation, Dementia Friendly Keighley is here for you.

You can call us on **07452 773788** between **10am and 2pm daily**, text (**SMS**) or **WhatsApp 'CALL BACK'** on the same number or leave a message outside of these hours and we will call back as soon as possible. Please note: Times and days of our activities and services are subject to change, so please call for up to date information.

