

Making Royal Greenwich a dementia-friendly Borough

A toolkit for business



www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk


ROYAL *borough of*
GREENWICH

Foreword



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Services.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich is committed to offering a good quality of life to everyone who lives and works in the borough.

People with dementia face many challenges as they attempt to engage with everyday life and 'fit into' the environment around them.

We know that many local businesses share our commitment to supporting people with dementia.

We have therefore developed this toolkit to help local businesses and organisations adapt their systems and environments – with the aim of helping to create more dementia friendly businesses and to make Greenwich a dementia friendly borough.

This toolkit aims to help businesses provide an environment that helps people with dementia to feel safe and to find their way around the places where they live, work, shop and visit. It includes a checklist to help you provide an environment that is welcoming to people with dementia and their carers.

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What is dementia?

Dementia is a progressive illness that starts off with very mild symptoms and gets worse over time. Early diagnosis can help identify the correct care and support for a person with dementia and those caring for them. This helps enable people with dementia to live in the community longer.

There are many forms of dementia, but they are all diseases of the brain which can cause:

- Problems with memory
- Problems with everyday tasks, like handling money
- Problems with communication and language
- Problems with perception and reasoning
- Problems with judgment and understanding
- Problems with thinking speed and mental agility
- Problems articulating needs and emotions
- Mood changes

Dementia currently affects some 800,000 people in the UK. The majority of those (91.8%) are over the age of 65, but some are younger (8.2%). (*NHS Choices, 2013*)

The prevalence rates for dementia in the UK are:
- 40-64 years: 1 in 1400 - 70-79 years: 1 in 25
- 65-69 years: 1 in 100 - 80+ years: 1 in 6
(*Alzheimer's Society, 2013*)

For information on the local and national organisations that support people with dementia go to: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/dementia



A dementia friendly environment

A dementia friendly environment is a place where the society or community acts consciously to ensure that people with dementia (along with all of its citizens) are respected, empowered, engaged and embraced into the whole. (Local Government Association, 2012)

A dementia friendly community

To be dementia friendly, a community works to become a place:

- in which it is possible for people with dementia and their families to live a good life
- where people with dementia are enabled to live as independently as possible and to continue to be part of their community
- where people with dementia and their families are met with understanding and given support where necessary.

Key things that can make a difference:

- the physical environment
- local facilities
- support services
- social networks
- local groups.



The dementia toolkit

It is not easy to spot a person with dementia. Some people with dementia will tell you if they are having problems, and how you can help. But most will not. Some people carry a card which explains their condition and how you might help.

Here are some of the steps that businesses can take to make things easier for people with dementia:

- **Raise your awareness of dementia**

People with dementia (and their families) say that it is the attitude of those they encounter in their communities which has the biggest impact on their lives in their community.

- **Support your customers**

A basic understanding of the impact of dementia and how to support people can make a huge difference to the experience of the customer or client and to that of the staff involved. Therefore, good 'people skills' and a strong focus on 'customer care' are key attributes when it comes to supporting customers or clients who have dementia.

- **Raise understanding among staff**

You can help your staff to be aware of customers doing or saying things which might suggest they are having problems caused by dementia:

- They (your customer or client) might look a bit lost or confused
- They might appear to be searching for something they can't find
- They might be looking like they don't know what to do next
- They might appear to have problems handling or understanding their money, or how to use their card
- They might find self-service facilities hard to understand
- Their speech may be hard to understand
- They might appear to have problems understanding what you are saying
- They might forget to pay for things they have picked up

There are all sorts of reasons why people might be having these problems that are nothing to do with dementia. In general, the younger the person appears to be, the less likely it is that their behaviour is dementia related. But remember, younger people can have dementia too.



The Alzheimer's Society can offer high quality training based on best practice in dementia care, providing staff teams with common skills and knowledge in dementia. They work with organisations responsible for the care and support of people with dementia in health and social care, as well as community based organisations whose staff may have contact with people with dementia.

For more information or to discuss any of your training requirements in further detail, contact the Alzheimer's Training Team on 01904 633581 or email: dementiatraining@alzheimers.org.uk

- **Make your information dementia friendly**

At the very least you should make sure that you use 'Plain English' and 'understandable symbols' in all your literature and make your website as accessible as possible to people with disabilities.

Try to ensure your literature is:

- visually inviting
- logically organised
- understandable on the first reading.

- **Have a look around your building and facilities** – are they dementia friendly?

There are often some very simple changes that services, organisations and businesses can make which make the environment much easier for people with dementia. You will find these in the next section of the toolkit.

- **Ask people with dementia for their views**

You may already know people with dementia (or their carer). If so, that is a great place to start. People with dementia (or their carer) will often be able to tell you very directly which aspects of your service, business or organisation they find easy to use, and which present barriers to them. If you don't know anyone with dementia, then contact the Alzheimer's Society, who might be able to arrange for people with dementia (and/or their carers) to visit and let you know what they think.

- **Become a 'friend'**

People with dementia sometimes need a helping hand to go about their daily lives and feel included in their local community. By becoming 'Dementia Friends' or 'Dementia Champions' your staff can develop their understanding of dementia and the small things they can do that can make a difference to people living with dementia - from helping someone find the right bus to spreading the word about dementia.

Kindness, common sense, using good communication skills and a smile also go a very long way in minimising the stress and anxiety a person with dementia might experience.

The Alzheimer's Society aims to create a network of a million Dementia Friends across England by 2015.

For more about becoming a Dementia Friend or Dementia Friend Champion, visit: www.dementiafriends.org.uk

- **Create a 'memory-aware' card scheme** and display a 'Memory Aware' kitemark in your organisation.

The card gives the person's name, address and a person to contact for emergencies. You can adapt the Alzheimer's Society's leaflet 'This Is Me' - available at: www.alzheimers.org.uk



The dementia checklist

Steps that businesses can take to promote a dementia friendly environment¹

There is a lot that can be done to make the environment easier for people with dementia to find their way around. This includes making signage and directional information simple, clear and uncluttered, improving lighting and making good use of colour contrast.

Here are some of the changes that you can consider and which can have a major impact on improving accessibility for people with dementia.

Navigation

Good navigation design makes for comfortable environments so people feel at ease and are able to visit, use and enjoy places and spaces of their choice. Those caring for someone with dementia will also feel more at ease about their family member using your service if you can show that you are aware of risks and hazards and have things in place to minimise these.

Research shows that people with dementia use 'landmarks' to navigate their way around, both inside and outside. The more attractive and interesting the 'landmark' (which could be a painting, or a plant or bold signage) the easier it is to use it as a landmark. Therefore, the following design guidance is useful:

- Try to have rooms and spaces that meet older people's expectations of what such rooms should look like - in terms of scale, layout, fittings, décor, furniture and furnishings (particularly important in residential & nursing care homes and shared living accommodation).
- Try to ensure that the design of your building is recognisable and familiar to people with dementia; features should be designed so their use is obvious and unambiguous – this is not a case of traditional versus modern design or using a particular style or historical era but clarity of good design.
- Always have accessible and clutter-free environments that enable people to enter, use and move around a space easily.

¹Local Government Association, 2012

Have things within easy reach, and where there is a need for certain items to be out of reach, make sure there is someone readily available to help people to reach things they need.

- Try to have plain, clear colour contrasts between walls and floors; between handrails and walls; between doors and walls; have different coloured sanitation ware to the bathroom/WC walls and floors; make sure toilet seats are obvious as well as flush handles and basin taps; generally make sure all furniture stands out from walls and floors.
- Try to use plain doors, although the use of camouflaged doors can prevent people with dementia from entering unsafe areas.
- Make sure that any outside enclosed spaces are easy to navigate, are overlooked and have flat, nonslip, plain paving, raised beds, seating and shelter, flat topography and no trip hazards.



Signage

Good signage can help people find their way around inside and outside a service, organisation or business premises. This can reduce the feeling of disorientation that those with dementia at times experience. The signage can also improve safety as it helps those with dementia get to where they want to go easier, resulting in fewer falls and reduced disorientation; and also meaning they might not go into dangerous areas that are unsupervised. Proper use of signage can help people feel a greater degree of independence and dignity as they can make their way around the premises to the correct areas unaided. This can dramatically boost their self-

Bedroom



Kitchen



Bathroom and toilet



confidence which leads to improved well-being.

Large signs should be used to distinguish rooms or specific areas and to give direction. These bespoke/customised signs can use well known images to depict the use of a room, area or to let a person be aware where a directional sign is leading.

The signs should be tough, non-reflective and waterproof especially when used outdoors. Bold lettering and easily recognised images on a brightly coloured background help communicate with the person with dementia and increases their independence.

Good clear signage in residential care & nursing homes and other health and social care buildings is a benefit



to all. It helps people, especially those with dementia, learning disabilities or sight problems, to function more effectively. This in turn means they have a better quality of life and make fewer demands on staff working in these facilities.

Key points to bear in mind:

- Signs should be clear, in bold face with good contrast between text and background.
- There should be a contrast between the sign and the surface on which it is mounted.
- Signs used on door should be fixed to the doors they refer to – not on adjacent surfaces.

- Signs should be at eye level and well-lit.
- Try to avoid using highly stylised or abstract images or icons as representations on signage.
- Think about placing signs at key decision points for someone who is trying to navigate your premises for the first time.
- Signs for toilets and exits are particularly important.
- Make sure that glass doors are clearly marked to avoid collisions.

Lighting

- Entrances should be well-lit and make as much use of natural light as possible.
- Try to avoid creating pools of bright light or deep shadows.
- In residential care and accommodation based facilities, high-intensity levels of natural light indoors can positively affect sleep, mood and behaviour.
- Large windows, glazed doors, roof lights, atria, light tunnels, curtains, blinds and anti-glare, non-reflective glass are all features that can help people with dementia.

Flooring

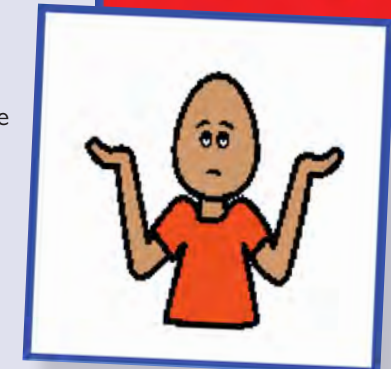
- Avoid highly reflective and slippery floor surfaces. Flooring and pathways that are plain, non-reflective, wide, flat, smooth and non-slip, in clear colour and textural contrast to walls and doors are advantageous for people with dementia.
- Changes in floor finish and level should be flush. Try to avoid changes in level, and where this is unavoidable make sure you provide a choice of steps and ramp (to a maximum gradient 1:20).
- Try to make sure flooring and paving are made of flat, plain, non-slip materials.

Communication aids

Communication difficulties are common with people who have dementia. Losing the ability to speak or understand is frightening and can often lead to frustration and a feeling of isolation.

Some suggestions:

- Create special books with pictures as these can reduce misunderstandings by letting the pictures do the talking.



- 'Talking Mats', (right) can help people with dementia express their opinions. These use simple picture symbols that allow people to indicate their feelings and views. Talking Mats allow people to communicate both verbally and non-verbally (e.g. pointing, nodding etc).



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Useful contacts

We know that many local businesses share our commitment to supporting people with dementia.

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You have our permission to adapt, reproduce and use any part of this toolkit to train or provide information to staff and others who would find it useful.

Adults and Older People's Services:

Provides a single point of contact for all adult services including: information and advice, referral for adult and older people's social care services, adult safeguarding alerts, referral for community rehabilitation services and occupational therapy, and advice for carers.

Call during office hours
(9am – 5pm) 020 8921 2304.

Email:

aops.contact.officers@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

See back page for address

Social Care Emergencies:

For social care emergencies out of office hours (5pm-9am).
Telephone: 020 8854 8888

For information on the local and national organisations that support people with dementia go to:
www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/dementia



Adults and Older People's Services

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