

Hints and Tips on creating a Dementia Friendly Environment



Marple Dale Nursing Home

The aim of this booklet is to help staff working within Stockport care and nursing homes to understand some of the challenges that residents living with dementia, struggle with on a day to day basis.

Surroundings can make a big difference to people living with dementia. Quality of life can be improved considerably with some thought and good planning of the environment they live in.

Having a dementia friendly home is an important part of the support and the wellbeing of our residents, but it is also equally important that staff are able to learn and understand the fears some people with dementia can experience.

With the help of this booklet staff will have a better understanding and knowledge regarding what is important when it comes to the environment and surroundings for their residents.

Although this booklet has been put together to support care and nursing home staff there are some useful tips to share with carers who support people living with dementia to enable them to continue to live independently in their own home.

Booklet: written by Wendy Morrell: NHS Stockport CCG April 2016



***Stockport
Clinical Commissioning Group***

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- People with dementia should be treated with respect and dignity. It is important that people focus on the qualities a person has and not what they have lost or will possibly lose in the future.
- A diagnosis of dementia can stir up many emotions and even fear.
- It can be a very difficult and upsetting time for all concerned so it is important to make sure support is given to enable that person to feel as though they are still valued.
- This isn't just about people in care homes but also people who are still able to live independently.
- Early stages of dementia can be frustrating and embarrassing for people. Dementia patients are aware that they now forget how to perform simple daily tasks; they can struggle to find the right words during conversations and can even forget what they were talking about, mid-sentence.
- It is important to be patient and to listen to what that person is trying to tell you. Try not to interrupt or finish a conversation for them.
- Staff should have the skills and knowledge about dementia to help and understand some of the challenging times that might lie ahead but must still be mindful that every person with dementia is different and will each have their own special qualities.

Respect & Dignity

There are many ways that people with dementia can be supported while still keeping their dignity - remember it's the little things that can make the biggest difference.

- Make sure residents are kept clean and tidy and continue to look smart. Just because a person has dementia it doesn't mean to say they don't have to look nice – it is important to remember your resident was probably very proud of their appearance before their diagnosis.
- Make sure residents clothes are well kept and ironed. Ask what clothes your resident would like to wear.
- Please do not dress residents in other people's clothes – this isn't right and clothes will often be the wrong size. This can also be upsetting for relatives when they visit and see their loved ones in someone else's clothes. Most homes like residents names sewn into their garments.
- Make sure nails are kept clean and not too long.
- Hair should be kept neat and tidy -many homes have hairdressers/salons to help with this.



- Remember to clean glasses regularly. This will also help to reduce trips and falls
- Always check hearing aid batteries.
- Your male residents should also be kept looking clean and tidy, they might like to look clean shaven every day.
- Make sure residents are wearing suitable foot wear; it is not a good idea to let them walk round bare footed.
- Supporting a person when out shopping, i.e. if the person is unsure or confused knowing how much money to give at the till, this can be done discreetly by asking if you can help and sort the change for them.
- Care plans are important. Make sure you have as much information documented as possible. This will allow new staff to see at a glance what their residents likes and dislikes are.
- Life story work can also be a huge advantage. This can allow staff to have a better understanding of a person and can support their wellbeing. This can also have a positive outcome with helping staff to understand their resident's behaviour especially during "sun downing time".

Entrance Halls

- Entrance halls and corridors are very busy areas within a care home and a lot of thought must be put into making them a safe environment.
- Reception staff in the entrance hall provides security for people entering and leaving the home. Always ask visitors to sign in and out when entering and leaving the home.
- Lighting is important and corridors should always be kept as bright as possible.
- Corridors should be free from clutter to reduce the risks of trips and falls with floors at the same level; avoid step or slopes where possible
- Signs should be large and easy for residents to read with a good contrast between the text and the background and on a non-reflective surface. Signs should be at eye level, especially for toilets and exits.
- Glass doors should be clearly marked to reduce the risk of people walking into them.
- Avoid large mirrors as people with advanced dementia can often find these disturbing as they often don't recognise the person in the mirror.



Brinnington Hall

Hallways & Corridors



Avoid bold patterns on the carpet as this can confuse people.

Hand rails should be in a colour that contrasts with the walls. This makes the hand rail more visible and therefore more likely to be used to support residents while walking up and down.

Try not to have corridors that come to a sudden stop or dead end as residents could find these confusing and will disorientate them.

Short wide corridors are thought to be best.



People with dementia like to feel different textures. This could also be incorporated into wall art for residents to touch as they walk past.

Use appropriate pictures on the walls to generate interest for example the bus stop to the left and the fake window scene below.



Example of Wall Art



Personalising doors with pictures and memorabilia within memory boxes, is a great way for a person with dementia to recognise their own room.

Memory boxes are now used in most of our homes.

Family photographs are important to have around as they can be very comforting for residents and can create a topic of discussion with staff.

It can be helpful to have some seating within the entrance halls and corridors to allow residents to rest.



Lounge

Residents will spend a long time within a lounge. It is important to ensure it is comfortable and feels like home.

The lounge should look inviting and be a place where residents are happy to sit and interact with each other. Residents are less agitated when sat in a nice relaxing environment.

- Chairs and sofas should be comfortable and high enough for residents to get out of easily.
- Chairs should be placed in a way to encourage interaction and not made to look like a GP surgery.
- Recliner chairs may restrict residents from getting up easily and could result in a Deprivation of Liberty form (DOLS) having to be completed.
- Piped cushions can be uncomfortable for older residents.
- Side tables should be available and should be high enough for the residents to use safely when picking up and putting drinks down.
- Furniture, such as wall units, should look traditional and have handles that are easy for the residents to open.
- Try to use units with open shelves to enable easy access and for residents to see the items on the shelves. Keep items of interest in the lounge such as board games and magazines.



- Carpets and curtains should not have bold patterns, as residents with dementia can find these disturbing. Avoid contrast stripes on floors as these can be seen as steps.
- Keep the floor free from clutter to avoid trips and falls.

Lounge

- The T.V should be positioned for all residents to be able to see without obstruction.
- Music systems should not be placed directly behind residents.
- Music should be age appropriate – more suitable for residents not staff.
- Loud music may be more annoying than therapeutic!
- Draw the curtains at night to avoid reflections on the windows as this can confuse residents.
- Blinds are also useful to reduce glare on bright sunny days.
- Good lighting is essential to make sure rooms are bright enough in the evenings
- When displaying a clock this should be big enough for the residents to see, it is also a good idea to have the day and date displayed on the clock. Some clocks also have the month displayed and the weather for the day.
Non reflective glass on the clock makes it easier for the resident to see the time.
- It is not a good idea to display a mirror, as residents with dementia do not recognise the person they are looking at in the mirror, they quite often remember themselves as a much younger person and this can cause distress.
- Residents like a focal point in the room for example a fire that glows or a fish tank.
- Visiting time is an important part of the day for residents but some may see this as an inconvenience or intrusion. It is useful to have a quiet room or family room where friends and relatives can visit and spend time together without disturbing others.
Remember it is their home too
- Furniture, such as wall units, should look traditional and have handles that are easy for the residents to open.
- Try to use units with open shelves to enable easy access and for residents to see the items on the shelves. Keep items of interest in the lounge such as board games and magazines.



Residents like to rummage through drawers so place items within them that you are happy to be moved or 'borrowed'.

Dining Area

The social setting of a dining room can have a big impact on how much or little time a resident will stay and sit at the table, so it is important that residents feel comfortable within these surroundings. The aim is to encourage your residents to sit at the table longer to help to increase their food and fluid intake, interact with other residents and enjoy their meal.

- Dementia can lead to reduced food and fluid intake because of decreased recognition of hunger and thirst, weakening perception of smell and taste, problems swallowing, inability to make out dining utensils, loss of physical control and depression. Dementia can also lead to visual/space problems which means residents can struggle to know which their defined area of the table is.
- Always ask residents if they need the toilet before taking them to their table. This will encourage them to sit longer to enjoy their meals.
- Ensure that if the resident wears glasses that they have them and that they are clean. Denture wearers should have well-fitting dentures.
- Poorly fitting dentures can have an effect on what and how much a resident can eat.
- On-going observation of people at mealtimes is needed to pick up warning signs of eating and drinking problems.
- Residents should be allowed to eat their meals free from other distractions and keep meal times protected. Resident's families should be informed that visiting is not allowed during meal times; most families will understand and respect this request. However some family members are very keen to help and support at meal times by assisting their friend or relative with their meal. There is no right or wrong here so it is up to each home manager to decide what works best for their residents.



Dining Area

- Food should always look appetising. Not all residents with swallowing difficulties require their food to be pureed. Please consult with the SALT team and dieticians for guidance and advice.
- Make sure there are enough members of staff on duty at meal times to help support residents if required. Some residents might need to be prompted and encouraged more than others at meal times. Meal times should be an enjoyable part of the day.
- Does the resident know which room is the dining room? A clear picture sign on the door informing residents “this is where you eat” is easier for the residents to understand rather than a sign that says “dining room”. Use appropriate pictures on the walls to help define the room.
- Increase lighting and control glare to aid independence and improve people’s ability to see and eat.
- Use ambient lighting, for example cove lighting, combined with decorative lighting, to provide a warm and comfortable feel.
- Install adjustable lighting that can be turned up at breakfast and down at lunchtime, depending on the quantity of natural light.
- Set up family style dining with small tables to increase social interaction. Warm colours such as peach and yellows are thought to be preferred colours to encourage residents to sit longer at the table.
- Use round-edged tables as these are more comfortable to rest against. Square tables can also help residents define their own area better. Tables must be accessible for wheelchairs.
- Tables with four legs are sturdy, but tables with a centre pedestal can be adjusted to accommodate wheelchairs
- Chairs with arms provide support but must fit under tables so people are able to move in closer. Where possible use slider chairs.
- Make meal times more interesting or themed so residents know which meal time it is. Some homes do this by changing items on the table such as flowers at lunch or a battery operated candle for the evening meal
- Also you could place a large clock and large-print sign in the dining area to identify which meal time it is.
- Please be aware that people with dementia do not like a lot of noise and it can have a negative effect on them. Bare this in mind when clearing away pots and cutlery, scraping plates and loading plates onto a trolley. Try to do this at the far end of the room.
- If music is played at meal times, ensure that it is age appropriate. Easy listening is usually a good option and will suit most peoples taste in music. Make sure the volume is not too high as it can become distracting.

Dining Area

- Use strongly contrasting borders around edges of tables to improve visibility and distinguish one table from the next.
- Colour contrast table cloths or place mats with dishes so plates stand out against a background.



- Coloured place mats and contrasting plates are thought to be more helpful as residents can identify them easier. Plates with a lipped rim help to distinguish the edges of a plate and also help to reduce spillages.
- Cups and mugs should have a large handle or two handles to enable them to be picked up easily. Coloured cups and mugs are a preferred option.



- Try to use cutlery with large soft handles
- Use napkins instead of bibs; this is far more dignified for your resident

- When assisting with eating try not to scrape food from the residents mouth with a spoon. Remember to use the napkin. Residents need to be treated with respect.
- Don't automatically fill the fork/spoon with the next mouthful of food. Residents may see this as a sign to hurry up or that you are in a rush. Residents need time to eat and to be able to enjoy their meal.
- Some of your residents will need help at meal times. Please refrain from using expressions such as "I am just going to feed Ethel" It is far more dignified to say "I am assisting Ethel with her meal".
- Remember it is the small things that make a big difference

Bedrooms

Bedrooms are very much a part of our own personal space and this is no different for people living in care homes. Residents spend a lot of time in their bedrooms and because of this, their rooms must be a place of comfort.



- One of the most important factors to consider is to ensure the resident knows which their room is and how to get there. This can be achieved by having themed corridors or things strategically placed which a resident can use as a guide. Different coloured and numbered doors can help.
- It is important to respect your resident's privacy and dignity. You should always knock before entering a bedroom.
- Staff should always give residents time to respond before entering the room. Also ensure doors are closed while residents are getting dressed.
- Knocking on a door in the middle of the night to check on a person is not always appropriate; however it is important to work out if night checks are needed and if so, how best these should be carried out. This information will be best recorded in care plans and adhered to.
- Residents may want to spend some quiet time in their room so make sure there is a chair in there for them to sit and relax. They may also want their own television to watch their own choice of programmes.
- As in most other areas avoid big bold patterns on the carpets and curtains as this can be confusing.
- Always make sure curtains are drawn when it becomes dark, as often the reflection can be disturbing. Ensure the lighting is adequate and appropriate.

Bedrooms



- Use dementia friendly furniture where possible.
- These have open or see through sections within wardrobes and drawers which enable the resident to see their items of clothing.
- Drawer units with an open curved section give increased visibility of its contents.
- If other furniture is used, then make sure it has handles that are easy for the resident to open.
- If there is an en-suite within the resident's room then arrange the furniture to enable the resident to see it from their bed.

Important to remember at Bedtime

- Residents should be going to bed at a time that suits them and NOT at a time that suits staff due to low staffing levels.
- Staff should make time to understand their residents past as this can often provide clues to bedtime behaviours.

Medication at night time

- Residents should not be going without medication because they are asleep.
- If the night time medication regime needs to be altered then please consult with their GP but please remember to make sure any changes are clear and understood by all staff members that administer medication. This should also be documented in the residents care plan.



Bathrooms

- During bathing, people with dementia can feel exposed and frightened, especially if they are new to your home and are bathing in front of strangers.
- You may want to ask about a person's past habits, likes and cultural background.
- It is important to maintain dignity during bathing times. Always close doors to hallways and outer areas.
- Some people might need to be prompted to keep clean. This should always be done discreetly and in a way that does not cause embarrassment.
- Follow steps for good communication during personal care: explain what is about to happen, use the person's name and make encouraging non-verbal sounds and gestures. Do not hurry bathing.
- One of the most important factors when designing a dementia friendly bathroom or shower room is safety. People with dementia are less likely to consider the dangers within a bathroom such as slips and scalds from hot water. Always fill the bath first and test the water before your resident gets into the bath or enters the shower cubicle.
- Noise and acoustic conditions can cause great stress. Confusing, irritating or frightening sounds include rushing water and toilet flushing.
- Prepare needed items such as soap, towels and face cloths.
- Use nice smelling soap or scented bathwater to suit personal wishes.
- When washing residents' hair, make sure you explain to them what you are doing to relieve their anxiety. Don't just pour water over their head as this can be frightening and they probably can't see what you are doing.

Baths

- When using a traditional style bath is must be easy for residents to get in and out and also easy for staff to assist them. There are various types of baths on the market which are suitable for dementia residents. Some also have powered seats to enable a better bathing experience for both the resident and staff.
- Try to use traditional taps that are thermostatically controlled. This will allow the temperature to be set at a safe level.
- Taps with a central spout are thought to be better as residents are familiar with hot and cold taps. Red and blue colours should be clearly visible.

Bathrooms

Showers

- Bold colours are important in a bathroom/shower room as they stand out and are easier to recognise.
- Towel rails should not look like grab rails. Grab rails should be in bright colours.
- A seat within the shower is a good idea for residents who have difficulty standing for long periods.
- Floor space in showers should be big enough to accommodate wheelchairs.
- Avoid fixed “rainfall” shower heads as these are usually fixed quite high and can cause distress as the resident cannot see where the water is coming from.
- Shower screens should be used rather than curtains, as curtains can easily be pulled down causing more danger.
- Do not leave a resident in the shower facing the wall as this causes confusion as they will immediately feel disorientated.
- The shower floor should have a non-slip, non-shiny floor. People with dementia often think a shiny floor is wet. Consider installing a level access to the shower rather than a shower tray.
- Flooring with specks and patterns should also be avoided as these can be perceived as dirt and patients will try to pick them up.



Bathrooms

Basins

- Hand basins come in different sizes, shapes, materials and types. Very small basins with taps and a central spout close together do not suit people with dementia.
- Basins need an overflow mechanism to reduce flooding and floor damage. A floor waste outlet near the basin is cost-effective if an overflow feature is not within budget.
- Semi-recessed basins have better access and leg room for those who want to sit and for those in wheelchairs. A height-adjustable hand basin is best.



- Taps must be well spaced and easy to use with a comfortable grip and good leverage.
- Capstan head taps are preferable to taps with round or square handles.
- Hot and cold taps should have red and blue colour signs to help people tell them apart.
- Put in a tap aid for extra leverage for people with limited strength or manual agility.



Toilets

Ideally toilet seats and grab rails should be in bright bold colours that contrast with the wall behind.

Brighter colours stand out and make things easier for residents to use.

Ensure the toilet is a good height and has rails around to support.

Gardens & Outside Space

Gardens can be stimulating, provide a lot of pleasure and be very therapeutic to dementia patients. Gardening or just sitting in a garden may have been a very enjoyable and relaxing part of their life before they came into the home.

- When residents can make use of outdoor areas agitation and aggression can reduce and residents are likely to feel a little more independent.
- By careful planning and design, residents can still enjoy garden activities. Some residents may just want to sit in the garden while others might like to get involved in activities like planting.
- Gardens need to be accessible to everyone – including those in wheelchairs and those who may have difficulty walking. Keep paths on one level without steps.
- Garden paths should be in a loop. Residents are more likely to follow a path round and it will bring them back to the where they started, therefore reducing fears and anxiety.



- Some residents may feel uncomfortable walking too far away from their comfort zone. A table and chairs just outside the door will enable them to feel more confident about going outside.
- Furniture should look familiar, be sturdy and stable. Use different types of chairs to accommodate different sizes and mobility issues. Safety must be the main priority.
- Outdoor furniture should be non-splintering and have smooth surfaces and rounded edges. It should also be made from material that does not become too hot in the warmer weather.
- Place seats near garden paths to allow for rest stops.
- Some residents may want to spend time on their own so it is a good idea to have a couple of seats that do not form part of a group setting.

Gardens & Outside Space

- Time spent outside is vital for good physical and mental health. Limiting access to natural light can affect people's circadian rhythm, vitamin D synthesis, calcium absorption and general wellbeing.
- Outdoor areas can offer privacy, areas for sociability, activities for different skills and abilities, and a place to go to break up the day. For some people the outdoor world has spiritual or religious meaning.
- Walking has physical and psychological benefits and being outdoors lets people have safe sun exposure for vitamin D intake. Vitamin D is needed for musculoskeletal health and reducing the risk of bone fractures.
- For a home-like environment, arrange daily living around familiar tasks relating to people's life histories and cultural backgrounds.
- If mobility issues limit outdoor activity, people can still enjoy sunshine, fresh air, watching birds, sitting with others or eating meals outside.



People with dementia benefit from carefully planned outdoor settings and environments, for both quiet and noisier experiences; active experiences can meet the needs of people at different stages of impairment.

These activities are valuable as they support independence and mobility, maximising abilities and wellbeing.

- People may quietly connect with the natural environment sitting under a tree or pottering in a garden bed or they may want to meet friends and family in the garden.



Gardens & Outside Space

- It is important for the resident, families and staff to know that outdoor spaces are safe and secure.
- Views of and access to enclosed outdoor areas can give people options for privacy and sociability.
- Gardens and outdoor environments have ready-made activities for staff to tap into. They make it easy to say, 'Let's go and look at the flowers'.
- Porches, patios and pergolas give wayfinding cues for entering and leaving garden spaces and have clearly marked areas for socialising.
- Gardens give people options to control their personal space for privacy or social contact. For privacy, put seats singly beside paths and in special outside spots. For social contact, group chairs together and use other outdoor features.



- There should be dining style chairs and more comfortable chairs of different sizes and heights for different outside experiences.
- Other outdoor seating types that create a home-like environment include park benches.



People need places to sit:

- along walking paths
- near garden beds
- under trees for hot days
- close to pets, bird baths or bird feeders
- near water features
- where there is a view
- in private and quiet spots

Dementia Friendly Activities

- Keeping residents with dementia occupied is a vital part of their wellbeing. If residents are bored they are far more likely to be agitated and unsettled. Involving residents in daily activities can bring a structure to the day and give them a feeling of achievement and happiness.
- It's so easy to switch the TV on and presume people are happy with this daily routine. TV will only interest people with dementia for a short time, or might even contribute to confusion.
- Activities can be rewarding for both residents and staff. Life story work is always an interesting topic as this can often involve family members who usually have a lot of information and stories they like to share. Getting to know your resident and their interests before they moved into their new home will give you a better understanding of what they liked to do in their earlier years.
- Some homes are now seeing the advantages of “buddying up” a resident with a member of staff who are able to spend some quality 1-1 time together, this might only be for a short walk, trips to the shops or even an hour at the local pub, and why not, as long as risks assessments are in place, and there is enough staff to allow these activities, remember it has to be safe for all concerned.
- The time of year can make a big difference. Outdoor and garden activities such as planting can be very rewarding for some people, but of course there is only a short window for this with our summertime. To enable these activities to take place throughout the year, one of our homes has set up an allotment room.



Dementia Friendly Activities

- There are many activities that can be done without incurring too much cost.
- Sensory items bring a lot of enjoyment as people with dementia like to touch and feel things. Keeping hands active is important.



Twiddle muffs are cheaper to make than buying online and have been proven to be very therapeutic

[.http://www.ravelry.com/patterns/library/crotchetted-twiddle-muff](http://www.ravelry.com/patterns/library/crotchetted-twiddle-muff)

Here is a short list of activities that can be done either on a 1:1 basis or within a group:

- Card making, colouring books, painting, scrap and memory books, weaving cards, table crafts, making paper chains and paper butterflies.
- Chair based exercises, sensory games, making sensory gardens, sensory touch items.



Movie nights

short films

Bingo

Singing

Visits with pets

- Jigsaw puzzles with large pieces, snakes and ladders, board games
- Baking, flower arranging, nail painting, hand massages, folding laundry
- Life story work, games that include TV programmes and memorabilia from the past
- Some activities could be facilitated by volunteers for example ex carers and students. Older people love the company of younger people – consider contacting your local school to see if they have activities that could be shared with your residents. School choir visits are usually very well accepted.

Dementia Friendly Activities



Bar at Wellcroft

One of our Stockport homes has turned a spare room into a bar for both residents and their families to enjoy.

This allows family members quality time with their loved ones without the need to take their family member/friend away from their familiar surroundings yet still giving them the feel of enjoyment by “going out”.

Board games are available plus table football, velcro darts, bar skittles, dominoes and solitaire.



Dementia Friendly Activities

April

ACTIVITIES WEEK COMMENCING

	MORNING ACTIVITIES	AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES
M	 INDIVIDUAL MEANINGFUL OCCUPATION	 THEMED MUSIC SESSION ON ALL FLOORS
T	 LARGE ACTIVE EXERCISES 10PM ALL FLOORS	 THEMED EXERCISES ON ALL FLOORS
W	 INDIVIDUAL MEANINGFUL OCCUPATION 10AM	 THEMED CRAFTS 2PM ON ALL FLOORS
T	 HAIRDRESSER MIKE ALLDAY	 CIRCUS WORKSHOP 2PM BRAMHALL SUITE
F	 SELECTION OF BOARD GAMES	 CHOICE OF READING MATERIAL....
S	TELEVISION CHOICE	TELEVISION CHOICE
S	Sunday Cinema	Sunday Cinema

Please note: Some activities may be subject to change.

A written and visual programme of activities helps residents to see what is happening every week. The use of bright colours and pictures can help residents understand the activities.

Resources available:

- Stockport library has a supply of reminiscence boxes containing materials related to themes like childhood, holidays and the seaside, transport and World War II. For more information please contact Stockport Central Library 0161 217 6009, Email: libraries@stockport.gov.uk or order the memory box online through the library's website.
- The Local Heritage library image archive is a great resource for local images to include in life story books for residents. For more information please visit <http://www.stockport.gov.uk/services/leisureculture/libraries/morelibraryservices/localheritagelibrary/>.

Useful Contacts

Wendy Morrell Care Home Officer

NHS Stockport CCG Phone: 0161 426 5037 Mobile: 0755775863

Care Institute for Excellence: www.scie.org.uk/publications/dementia/dementia-friendly-environments/environment/index.asp

Virtual environments online resource: <http://dementia.stir.ac.uk/design/virtual-environments>

Dementia Action Alliance: <http://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/environments>

My Life Software: www.mylifesoftware.com

Alzheimer's Society: www.alzheimers.org.uk

Age UK: www.ageuk.org.uk



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