

Dementia Friendly Physical Environments Checklist

Checklist

There are some quite small changes that can have a major impact on improving accessibility for people with dementia. Some such as clear signs and lighting can be done at minimal cost, others will involve some investment, and should be considered as budgets allow, and when replacing fittings.

Use this check list to have a good look round the public areas in your building. Remember to check corridors for example leading to the toilet – people can go in following the signs – but not remember which door they came in. A simple ‘way out’ sign on that internal door will help.

Quiet Space:

- Do you have a quiet space for someone who might be feeling anxious or confused? - A few minutes with a supportive person might be all that’s needed to continue the transaction.

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? – Reflections can cause confusion.
- Do you have bold patterned carpets? – Plain or mottled surfaces are easier. Patterns can cause problems to people with perceptual problems.
- Are changes in floor finish flush rather than stepped? – Changes in floor surfaces can cause some confusion due to perceptual problems. If there is a step at the same time you also 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 out if the person needs help with their clothes? – 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 the rest of the toilet are easier to see if someone has visual problems.

Seating:

- In larger premises - do you have seating areas? – Especially in areas where people are waiting.
- Does any seating look like seating? – People with dementia will find this easier. For example 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 (which could be a painting, or a plant) the easier it is to use it as a landmark. Have you had a good look around and thought about these landmarks?

Other issues:

- This list is not exhaustive – if possible speak to people living with dementia and ask them how they find your premises. Other unexpected things can cause problems. For example reflections can be confusing.