



# Dementia-friendly housing guide

Guidance on delivering a dementia-friendly approach to housing: from planning and design, to management and adapting



## Document purpose

To inform housing organisations, corporate bodies and sector professionals on how housing, its design and supporting services can help improve and maintain the wellbeing of people affected by dementia.

## Title

Dementia-friendly housing guide

Guidance on delivering a dementia-friendly approach to housing: from planning and design to management and adapting

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## Target audience

Housing providers, planners, architects, builders, surveyors, landlords, occupational therapists, home improvement agencies, property maintenance companies, building control, telecare providers, property developers.

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## Publisher

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This report uses the term 'people affected by dementia' to include people with dementia and those important to them, which may include friends or family members (including family carers).



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# Forewords

Dementia is the UK's biggest killer and is a challenge that all areas of the housing sector can contribute to fighting. From planners to builders and homecare providers to housing with care, everyone has a part to play.

We want to see an increased number of people with dementia being able to live longer in their own homes when it is in their interests to do so, with a greater focus on independent living. This will only be achieved with greater support in people's own homes from trained professionals and by improving the homes that people live in to ensure they are adaptable as circumstances and needs change.

At Alzheimer's Society, we believe that life doesn't end when dementia begins. Designing more dementia-friendly housing or becoming a more dementia-friendly housing provider means being able to help people stay in the setting of their choice for as long as possible.

By developing an understanding of the condition, organisations in the housing sector can make a huge difference to people living with dementia and their quality of life.

Dementia and other conditions pose challenges for the housing sector. This includes housing associations, owner occupiers and the private rented sector, as well as organisations responsible for the design and construction of new housing and for making adaptations to existing housing.

Awareness and understanding of dementia is increasing, which is leading to a wealth of information, knowledge and resources on how to improve the wellbeing of people affected by dementia. This presents an ideal opportunity for everyone in housing to play their part and plan, develop and manage housing which helps maintain the wellbeing and independence of people living with dementia and their carers.

We hope that your organisations will commit to making a positive difference to enable people living with dementia to live in housing that is appropriate to their needs.



*Kate Lee*

**Kate Lee**  
Chief Executive  
Alzheimer's Society



*Bruce Moore*

**Bruce Moore**  
Chief Executive  
Housing 21

# Introduction

People with dementia face a range of challenges. These may include memory loss or difficulty communicating, mobility and navigation issues and other associated problems. Across every part of the housing and built environment sector, organisations can make a valuable contribution to supporting people with dementia facing these challenges to continue to live well in their own homes and community.

There is an increased need and demand for suitable housing for older people, including those living with dementia. This dementia-friendly housing guide seeks to make the housing sector aware of the challenges of living with dementia so that all projects consider ways of minimising risks and enhancing wellbeing for people living with dementia.

The guide is aimed at the full range of professionals working in the housing sector, from planners and architects to landlords and developers, housing managers and handypersons. It is designed to encourage the creation of dementia-friendly environments, help all professionals support people living with dementia in their homes and facilitate consistency and good practice. Organisations are urged to improve existing action plans or develop new ones in order to future-proof their organisations and services.

This dementia-friendly housing guide contains dementia-friendly actions that we encourage organisations to commit to. These actions can have a huge impact on the lives of people affected by dementia.

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‘We want to see an increased number of people with dementia being able to live longer in their own homes when it is in their interests to do so, with a greater focus on independent living.’

## Dementia-friendly actions

The guide outlines a number of dementia-friendly actions to inform your work in becoming more dementia friendly. Every individual and organisation working in the housing sector can make a difference to the lives of people living with dementia by committing to become more dementia friendly in three key areas:

### People



**Supporting staff, residents and customers affected by dementia**  
See page 12

### Processes




**Communication, signposting and the local community**  
See page 20

### Places



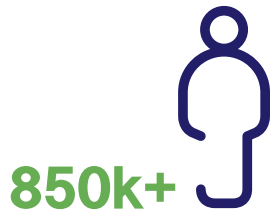
**The physical environment**  
See page 34



## The scale of the challenge

Dementia affects large numbers of people, so it's likely you'll regularly come into contact with people living with or caring for someone with the condition.

The following numbers show how many people are affected.



Over 850,000 people are living with dementia in the UK. There will be 1 million in 2025 (CPEC, 2019)



Dementia is one of the leading causes of death in England and Wales – the only one we cannot cure, prevent or slow down (ONS, 2018)



Over 42,000 people under the age of 65 are living with dementia



There are 1.8 million carers of people with dementia (CEBR, 2019)



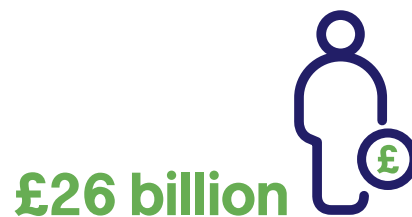
1 in 6 people over the age of 80 have dementia



225,000 people will develop dementia this year (that's one person every three minutes)



Alzheimer's disease is the biggest concern among people aged over 60 (Alzheimer's Society, 2015)



The cost of dementia is £26 billion per year (based on 2013 cost data)

The statistics above are from Alzheimer's Society, 2014, unless specified otherwise.



## What is dementia?

The word ‘dementia’ describes a group of symptoms that may include memory loss, difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language, and often changes in mood, perception or behaviour.

These changes are usually small to begin with, but for someone with dementia they can quickly begin to have an effect on daily life.

Dementia occurs when the brain is damaged by diseases, such as Alzheimer’s disease or a series of strokes. It is not a natural part of the ageing process.

Dementia is not just about memory loss – it is a very multi-faceted condition. Some of the symptoms of dementia are also symptoms of other conditions, disabilities and impairments. Supporting people with dementia can therefore also help you to support people with a range of conditions.



“

‘When you’ve met one person with dementia, you’ve met one person with dementia’

Professor Tom Kitwood



**Everyone experiences dementia differently. Some symptoms a person with dementia might experience include:**

- **Memory loss** – this will include problems recalling things that happened recently (such as what they had for breakfast) and may lead to asking the same question over and over. Longer term memories will also be affected as dementia progresses.
- **Difficulty thinking things through and planning** – for instance, struggling with problem solving, grasping new ideas or following a series of steps. A person might also have problems with familiar everyday tasks such as managing bank accounts or paying bills.
- **Problems with language** – difficulty finding the right word or struggling to follow a conversation.
- **Being confused about time or place** – losing track of the time or date or getting lost even in familiar places, such as their own home or community.
- **Difficulties with sight and perception** – problems judging distances (for example, on stairs), seeing objects in 3D or misinterpreting things in the environment (such as patterns and reflections).
- **Changes in mood or difficulties controlling emotions** – becoming unusually anxious, sad, frightened, more easily annoyed, or losing interest in things and becoming withdrawn.





## Living well with dementia

It is possible to live well with dementia. A person who has dementia can often continue to enjoy their hobbies, daily activities, friendships and relationships. As their condition progresses, they may need adjustments or extra support with these things. Everyone can play a part in supporting a person with dementia to live well and remain independent for as long as possible.

# Why do we need the housing sector to be more dementia friendly?

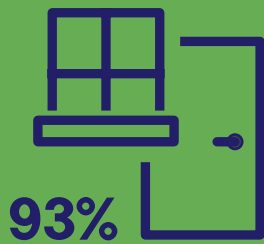
We want people with dementia to continue living in their own homes for as long as possible. The housing sector needs to step up to the challenge to help support people with dementia.



Two-thirds of people with dementia live in the community, mostly in mainstream housing. A third live on their own, predominantly in the owner-occupied sector. (Alzheimer's Society, 2012)



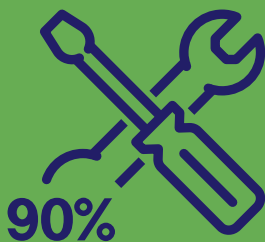
There is only enough specialist housing to accommodate 5% of the over 65 population. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2012)



93% of homes lack even basic accessibility features. (APPG on Dementia, 2019)



By 2040, a third of people aged 60+ could be living in private rented accommodation. (Centre for Ageing Better, 2017)



Home adaptations improved the quality of life for 90% of recipients and can reduce falls by 26%. (Heywood, F. and T. Lynn, 2007)



People with dementia occupy 25% of general hospital beds. Housing organisations play a role in supporting people with dementia to live well in their own homes. (Alzheimer's Society, 2016)



## What have people with dementia told us?

We asked people with dementia what difficulties they have in relation to housing and what actions they would like the housing sector to take. We'll explore these ideas throughout the guide. People affected by dementia told us that the issues they most wanted the housing sector to focus on are:

- **Support with difficulties recognising familiar places, objects or people** which can mean they struggle to identify their house. They need to be able to distinguish it from others with an item, familiar symbol or colour.
- **Dementia awareness training for housing staff and planners**, to enable them to support people with dementia who may become distressed, be unable to retain information about services, or have challenges with communication.
- **People with dementia may leave the house and walk for a long period of time and become disorientated.** They may become lost or are unable to find their way which can lead to other issues, such as dehydration and exhaustion. Having dementia-friendly staff and a wider community who understand can help.
- **Clear and appropriate signage** – such as doors labelled with pictures of the room's use, signs on cupboard doors of what items are inside and 'hot' and 'cold' written on taps.
- **Considering dementia-friendly design features can help people to continue living in their own homes.** For example, the importance of wet rooms, step-free access, open plan layouts, dementia-friendly signage and considering the possible need for another room for a carer or another member of the family.
- **Accessibility to the local community and amenities is key**, to alleviate the risk of social isolation, loneliness and boredom. Within housing complexes, wellbeing areas and meeting rooms can facilitate social connections.
- **Technology can support independence**, from reminder alarms when cooking or to take medication, to movement sensors and automatic lights.

**Importantly, housing should meet people's needs and be adaptable as their dementia progresses and these needs change.**

The range of issues identified above shows the necessity for all housing professionals to influence and create a better living environment for people with dementia, at all stages and aspects of housing. Hearing directly from people with dementia highlights the scale of this issue. However, their insight also shows how sometimes small changes can make a significant difference.



# Key issues for the housing sector

## People



There is a lack of understanding by staff of the different needs of people with dementia and associated stigma.

Those working in the design and construction of new housing lack awareness of how to create more dementia-friendly housing.

Staff members may develop dementia or need to care for a loved one with dementia and there may not be appropriate processes and policies available to support them.

## Process



Processes and systems are not appropriately designed and are not dementia friendly.

Staff do not understand where to access specialist advice and information or there is incomplete and unclear information available.

People with dementia may lack capacity to maintain a tenancy.

## Place



The built environment raises a number of challenges for people affected by dementia and housing is not being designed or built to address these challenges.

There is a lack of appropriate adaptations in properties to provide a more dementia-friendly environment.

People living in their own homes may need support to ensure that their home is safe and suitable and is adapted to meet their needs.

## Who is the guide for?

All areas of the housing sector have a responsibility to support people affected by dementia to live happier, healthier and more independent lives, regardless of how much direct contact they have with people affected by dementia. It is not only the responsibility of specialist supported housing providers but organisations and individuals throughout the whole lifecycle of housing: designing, building, managing and adapting. This includes:

- **Support workers, scheme managers and occupational therapists** who directly support people affected by dementia
- **Estate agents, landlords, housing associations and housing managers** whose residents or customers may be living with dementia and may require additional support
- **Home improvement agencies and handypersons** who will have access to and carry out maintenance and improvements in properties where people affected by dementia live

- **Architects, planners, builders, developers and surveyors** who are responsible for implementing dementia-friendly design into their work

The guide can also be used to influence policy and decision-making by the following bodies in regards to their work within the housing sector:

- Local authorities and commissioning bodies
- Adult social care services
- Clinical commissioning groups (primary care services)
- NHS hospital trusts (acute health services)
- Other local networks, organisations and partners
- Regulators and funders

The following services are not considered within the scope of this guide: care homes, hospices, independent homecare organisations (other than those delivering care in specialist housing).



## Importance of designing dementia-friendly mainstream housing

Only 7% of older people live in specialist housing (Government Office for Science, 2016). Therefore, while making specialist housing more dementia friendly is important, this is only a small part of the problem. Two-thirds of people with dementia live in mainstream housing so ensuring mainstream housing is dementia friendly will have a larger and longer-lasting impact.



## Importance of dementia-friendly landlords and estate agents

Older households make up 13% of the private rented sector, which has almost doubled from 2007 (Government Office for Science, 2016). It is estimated that by 2040, a third of people aged over 65 could be living in private rented accommodation (University of York, 2015).

This is a huge potential customer base whose independent living landlords and estate agents can help to support by being more dementia friendly. As well as this, the older people that are currently renting are likely to have lived at their current private rented accommodation for an average of 17 years, meaning they are a reliable customer base that needs supporting (ONS 2018).



**People:**  
Supporting staff,  
residents and  
customers affected  
by dementia



# People

Raising awareness of dementia, including how it might affect people and how employees can support staff, residents and customers who are affected, will create a more person-focused environment. Staff in all areas of housing should have a good understanding of dementia. Considerations include how to interact with, communicate with and support people.

The breadth and depth of knowledge and skills needed by the workforce depends on how closely they work with people who may have dementia, the nature of the organisation they work for, their particular role in it and the customer base.

Your colleagues should improve their awareness about dementia regardless of whether they have regular direct contact with people affected

by dementia. For example, if more architects understood more about dementia, we would see an improved understanding about the importance of engaging in dementia-friendly design.

Staff should also be attentive to the needs of family carers and others who support people with dementia on an unpaid basis.



## Key actions

- All staff to become Dementia Friends: [www.dementiafriends.org.uk](http://www.dementiafriends.org.uk)
- Appoint a senior-level Dementia Friends Champion
- Additional training for staff who regularly interact with people affected by dementia or need additional knowledge about accessible design
- Ensure staff are aware of advice and advocacy services
- Ensure HR policies are supportive of staff living with or caring for someone with dementia



## Dementia Friends

Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Friends programme is the biggest ever initiative to change people's perceptions of dementia. It aims to transform the way people think, act and talk about the condition.

Anyone, at any level of an organisation, can become a Dementia Friend. As more people become Dementia Friends, more people with dementia will feel understood and supported in their communities.

Dementia Friends is incredibly easy to embed into an organisation and is completely free – you can become a Dementia Friend in just ten minutes by watching our Dementia Friends online videos.

To ensure Dementia Friends is sustainable, it needs to be embedded within organisational procedures, such as employee inductions and refresher training.



To find out more information about Dementia Friends or register your organisation go to [dementiafriends.org.uk/orginfo](https://dementiafriends.org.uk/orginfo).

This gives you access to a dashboard to access resources such as videos and to view how many of your employees have become Dementia Friends.



For larger Dementia Friends rollouts, organisations can also use face-to-face presentations and e-learning modules.



If you are interested in rolling out Dementia Friends for your staff and members please contact:

[ProgrammePartnerships@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:ProgrammePartnerships@alzheimers.org.uk)



### Think about

- Aim for 60% or more of all staff to become Dementia Friends.
- Ensure that all resident- and customer-facing staff become Dementia Friends by embedding it in inductions and refresher training or elearning.
- Don't just stop with your staff! Include external contractors, volunteers and board members.
- Sometimes there can be negative reactions from residents and/or communities towards people living with dementia. Increase awareness and reduce this stigma by rolling out Dementia Friends to residents and the wider community.



## Dementia Friends case studies

### Housing 21

Housing 21, a not-for-profit provider of Retirement Housing and Extra Care for older people, has rolled out Dementia Friends for their staff, residents and contractors.

All staff receive a Dementia Friends session as part of their induction and can then access further training. To ensure that all staff work in a way to support people living with dementia, all contractors are required to become a Dementia Friend prior to working at any of their housing schemes. The requirement to commit to the Dementia Friends initiative is also written into the procurement process.

Housing 21 have a target for 50% of their residents – that's 10,000 people – to become Dementia Friends by 2022. Colleagues are also encouraged to create Dementia Friends in their local community within their normal working hours.

### Pentan Architects

Pentan Architects, an architecture firm based in Cardiff, goes beyond their direct workforce and educates their contractors about dementia.

Contractors need their work to be cost effective but Pentan believes that it is important for contractors to understand more about dementia to help them understand why certain decisions are taken. For example, matte tiles are sometimes deliberately chosen over glossy tiles because glossy tiles can cause confusion and look wet to a person with dementia who has perception difficulties. If contractors understand this, it is easier to have them on board with the architects' decisions.

### Notting Hill Genesis

Notting Hill Genesis (NHG), one of the largest housing associations in London and the South-East, has found how running Dementia Friend sessions has improved their relationship with their residents. One resident involvement officer noted how few residents would attend their resident meetings, so she decided to arrange some Dementia Friends sessions during Dementia Action Week. She created invitations to the local residents and they found they had four times as many people attend the sessions as usual.

'When it was over the residents stayed talking to one another,' she reported, 'sharing stories of caring for family members living with dementia. People who had lived near one another, but had never talked, had something in common and became friends.'

NHG have found that this has helped them to build a community: 'Since then we have residents engaging with us more, they say they can relate to us more. We are no longer a faceless organisation. They say they see us as people too and they are more open to report housing issues.'



'Since the Dementia Friends session we have residents engaging with us more, they say they can relate to us more. We are no longer a faceless organisation.'

**Notting Hill Genesis**



## Additional training

Further dementia awareness training is available through Alzheimer's Society and other organisations, for Continued Professional Development (CPD) accredited courses and qualifications. These can be tailored to your industry or employee groups. We recommend that any community-facing employees take part in the Dementia Friends programme as well as further training appropriate to their specific role. These courses can be a great tool for increasing staff understanding of dementia.

Training is important to ensure that staff are equipped to support residents and customers who are affected by dementia and for design and architecture firms to improve their understanding about dementia-friendly and accessible design. Organisations could consider how to embed dementia awareness within existing staff training and e-learning packages.



To find out more contact  
[DementiaTraining@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:DementiaTraining@alzheimers.org.uk)



## Additional training case studies

### McCarthy and Stone

McCarthy and Stone, a developer and manager of retirement communities, have recently improved their dementia training for their workforce across the business. Their Virtual Dementia Tour was licensed for McCarthy and Stone and has been adopted to the program to ensure everyone has access to the training, including care staff, customer services, sales teams and directors across the regions. The training allows colleagues to open up and discuss how they can improve practice in their job roles.

They have also ensured the training is relevant to each person's job role: with their care teams they make sure the conversation is around improving a person's quality of life through their everyday engagements, whereas with customer services and executive boards they shape the conversation around what initiatives can be put into place to ensure they are improving the persons quality of life, whether they are living with or affected by dementia.

### Housing 21

Everyone can access Dementia Awareness Training in Housing 21 and for the majority of roles a dementia session (from Awareness to Intermediate) forms part of their expected learning pathways. Their internally designed sessions have been informed by Skills for Care Standards and the Dementia Core Skills Training Framework and their Housing Products have been recognised by the Chartered Institute for Housing. Across all roles, dementia training plays an important role in enabling all of their people to connect with the unique and diverse people they provide housing and care to.



'Dementia training plays an important role in enabling all of their people to connect with the unique and diverse people they provide housing and care to.'

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Housing 21



## Think about

- Dementia training plays an important role in enabling all of your people to connect with the unique and diverse people they provide housing and care to. This will develop staff's ability to communicate more effectively and operate within a legal framework.
- Additional training is especially important for front line staff who need to be able to identify the signs of dementia and know how to seek support for early diagnosis as appropriate.
- Increase staff awareness to identify the signs of social isolation or loneliness and take action.
- Key staff groups should have awareness about Mental Capacity and Deprivation of Liberty Legislation including Lasting Powers of Attorney. People with dementia may lack capacity to maintain a tenancy and staff may be able to identify a decreasing lack of capacity in existing residents and customers. Organisations should be aware that Deprivation of Liberty Legislation is due to change as of October 2020 to apply to all settings, rather than just hospitals and care homes.

## Supporting everyone affected by dementia

### LGBT+ communities

For people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) community, living with dementia can be additionally stressful. LGBT+ people may be less likely to have family members and children who can support them as they deal with dementia and might also be more likely to live on their own and be single than heterosexual people. Even with a 'family of choice', LGBT+ people often have an increased need to use social care services for support and help as their disease progresses. Many fear that mainstream care services will not be willing or are not able to understand how to meet their needs.



### Think about

- Organisations should take a person-centred approach to their residents, customers and end users and be sensitive to needs.
- Provide additional training for staff to understand the nuanced issues.
- Ensure your organisation has a zero tolerance policy to discrimination of any kind, including in your other residents.
- Environments should be as inclusive as possible – consider including multifaith rooms pointed to mecca and inviting local faith services in to accommodate for different religions and cultures.

### BAME communities

People affected by dementia who are part of **Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities** may also face additional challenges. There are nearly 25,000 people with dementia from BAME communities in England and Wales (APPG on Dementia, 2013). Some people with dementia from BAME groups will be overseas-born. As people with dementia begin to rely more on their longer-term memories, distress can be caused by remembering experiences of hostility and racism from earlier in their lives. Some people may also revert back to their native language, so where possible information should be made available in a variety of languages or translators made available. It's important to note that everyone's experiences are different and to bear this in mind during reminiscence work.



### Supporting everyone affected by dementia case study

#### The Guinness Partnership

The Guinness Partnership, one of the largest providers of affordable housing and care in England, have partnered with LGBT Foundation to ensure the continuation and roll out of their innovative Bring Dementia Out programme. This programme was designed and developed by the LGBT Foundation together with partners including Alzheimer's Society, National Dementia Action Alliance, the National LGB&T Partnership and Switchboard. Guinness want to build stronger relationships with LGBT+ customers and ensure their needs are met and so are delighted to be lead funder for the roll out of the Bring Dementia Out programme around England.



Find out more at  
[lgbt.foundation/bringdementiaout](https://lgbt.foundation/bringdementiaout)



## Supporting staff affected by dementia

It is important for housing organisations to be equipped to support any employees who are affected by dementia. Reasonable adjustments should be made to enable them to continue to work for as long as they can:

- Discuss the variety of options to support the person to stay in work
- Adjustments could be made, such as switching roles or changing working hours
- Encourage and champion flexible working
- Make use of memory aids, clear signage and quiet areas (see the physical environment check list on page 38 for more details on making the workplace more dementia friendly)
- Ensure that staff know who to contact in their organisation for greater support

Review your staff policies:

- **Review HR policies and procedures** to ensure they are supportive of people who develop dementia or have caring responsibilities, tailoring the support to the individual.
- **Create a Carers' Policy or a paid carers' leave scheme, as well as advertising existing policies**, for example flexible or special leave arrangements.
- **Provide support for carers to manage their own health.** This could include online tools and training and the use of occupational health assessments, as well as access to counselling or employee assistance programmes.
- **Training for managers** to support them to understand some of the difficulties that caring may involve and help them overcome their own concerns about managing employees with caring responsibilities.
- **Develop an internal support network, a workplace network** or support group offering the opportunity to link with other employees in a similar situation to exchange experiences.
- **Signpost to external information, relevant sources of information** and support on dementia available internally or externally.

 For more information and guidance on supporting your employees affected by dementia please see our **Dementia Friendly Business Guide** at [alzheimers.org.uk/business](http://alzheimers.org.uk/business)



**18% of people** diagnosed with dementia under the age of 65 continue to work



**Nearly 1 in 9 employees** in the UK have a caring responsibility



**1 in 5 people** with dementia are unable to find or stay in work



**Nearly 1 in 10 of people** with dementia report discrimination at work



Rolling out Dementia Friends across your organisation will help to create an environment where your staff feel supported and understood.



**Process:**  
Communication,  
signposting and the  
local community



# Process

Processes should be designed to reduce barriers, all policies should be dementia friendly and your organisation should signpost clearly to support for people affected by dementia.

This includes housing systems and infrastructure used in all housing settings, planning, design and development, and housing-related services such as repairs, maintenance, adaptations and management.

Dementia-friendly processes should support residents, customers and employees affected by dementia.



## Key actions

- **Audit your existing processes, procedures and support mechanisms** to ensure all your products can meet the needs of people affected by dementia using the auditing tool on the next page.
- **Improve your communication with people affected by dementia** to increase your staff's understanding of how best to communicate with people with dementia and develop policies that helps individuals communicate freely and openly.
- **Signpost to key local services** for residents, customers and staff.
- **Support your local community.** Work with local organisations and become part of your local Dementia Friendly Community: [alzheimers.org.uk/dementiafriendlycommunities](http://alzheimers.org.uk/dementiafriendlycommunities)





## Audit of processes, procedures and support mechanisms

Organisations should review current processes and systems and identify and make possible changes. The list below provides a guide to the areas of an organisation which should be audited, and the considerations to keep in mind.

### Strategy

- ✓ Is supporting residents, customers or employees affected by dementia included within your organisation's aims, ethos or objectives?
- ✓ Do you have a vulnerable customers' strategy or team?
- ✓ How does dementia fit in to your vulnerable customers' strategy or policy?
- ✓ How are the needs of people with dementia considered when making business change decisions, such as renovations or altering services?

### Support mechanisms

- ✓ Do residents, customers or end users have an opportunity to inform staff about their dementia and do they know that they can do this?
- ✓ Are employees aware of, and do they understand, flags and markers that somebody may have dementia or be vulnerable?
- ✓ Are residents or customers asked if they require support?

### Services

- ✓ Are services suitable for people living with dementia?
- ✓ How could adaptations be made to support people with dementia?
- ✓ Is written information clear and in an easy-to-read font on products or instructions?

- ✓ Are assistance aids available (for example, magnifying glasses and screen readers)?
- ✓ Are the needs of people affected by dementia considered in the development of services?

### Processes and procedures

- ✓ Do you have a well advertised feedback mechanism that people with dementia, their family, friends and carers can use?
- ✓ How are complaints that are made by people affected by dementia recorded or logged to understand their issues or concerns?
- ✓ Do you have an efficient method of recording the preferences of people with dementia, such as how they prefer to be contacted?



## Support mechanisms case study

### Together Housing

Together Housing are a housing association managing over 36,000 homes across Yorkshire and Lancashire. They have developed a dementia pathway which assists individuals wanting to move into their accommodation or those already living there to ensure that support is provided to access any help that they may need. They also encourage the use of all aspects of telecare/telehealth to assist and support.

## Communicating with people with dementia

Communication can be challenging for people with dementia. For example, they might find it difficult to find the words they want to use, have difficulty reading information or may need more time to process what someone is saying to them.

- Try to make sure the environment is as quiet as possible, reduce distractions or take the person somewhere quiet to talk.
- Speak clearly and calmly.
- Speak at a slightly slower pace and allow time between sentences for the person to process information and respond.
- Stand or sit where the person can see and hear you as clearly as possible. Try to be at eye-level with them, rather than standing over them.
- Use short, simple sentences with clear instructions.
- Don't talk about the person as if they are not there or talk to them as you would to a young child. Be patient and have respect for them.
- Try to avoid asking too many or complicated questions.
- Take time to explain what support you can provide and what you would like the person to do to reassure and support the resident or customer.
- Break down actions into small segments, offering encouragement.
- If the person doesn't understand what you are saying, rephrase it rather than just repeating it.
- Check if the person has any other conditions that may impact how they communicate. For example, if they have hearing loss and use a hearing aid, check that it is on and working.
- Try to find a common ground – this could be mentioning a family member or friend (if appropriate) or finding out a bit about the person to initiate conversation.

## Talking about people with dementia

People with dementia are individuals first and their diagnosis should not be treated as the defining aspect of their life. The following terms and phrases are preferred when talking about a person with dementia:

- A person/people with dementia
- A person/people living with dementia
- A person/people with a diagnosis of dementia
- A person/people affected by dementia

Terms such as 'sufferer', 'victim' and 'patient' should not be used to describe people with dementia. They are disempowering as they make people with dementia seem passive, childlike or worthy of pity.



## Written information for people with dementia

Written information can be helpful for people with dementia as a permanent record of an event or conversation which can be re-read as many times as needed and shared with relevant people. This can help reduce anxiety and be a memory prompt. Flag this information on their account so that all colleagues know how best to contact them.

## Signposting to information

The support that is available for residents, customers and staff should be well-communicated across all levels of the business. Ensure staff are aware of services locally that they can signpost residents and customers affected by dementia to, including:

- Advice and advocacy services, for example Citizens Advice
- Support services for help and advice for unpaid carers through the local authority or specialist local carers organisations
- Relevant organisations, groups and activities in the local area, such as for care and support at home
- Guidance concerned with physical and sensory impairments (See RNIB, 2016)

- Local specialists for local advice and support, such as Occupational Therapists to support wellbeing in the home



Use **Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Directory** to find local support services for people with dementia and their carers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland [alzheimers.org.uk/find-support-near-you](https://alzheimers.org.uk/find-support-near-you)

Organisations should also work with other agencies who come into contact with people with dementia to share learning and improve responses, such as Alzheimer's Society, Age UK, Dementia UK and AT Dementia. Make links with other local services to ensure people with long term health conditions are able to access the correct support.



## Dementia Connect

Dementia Connect, from Alzheimer's Society, is a new personalised dementia support service. It provides people affected by dementia with the support they need, when they need it, by phone, online and face to face.

The service operates at a local and national level, connecting people with support in their community, while offering phone and online help seven days a week.

Anyone can refer someone into Dementia Connect (with their permission), including all organisations in the housing sector. By doing so, you will be helping us to reach people affected by dementia who may not currently be using our services.

See [alzheimers.org.uk/refer](https://alzheimers.org.uk/refer) to become a referrer.







## Signposting to information case studies

### McCarthy and Stone

McCarthy and Stone recognised that people were not aware of the resources available to support their loved ones. They have introduced a dementia support pack and website so that people can access the important things they need to ensure a loved one can remain living an improved quality of life. Resources include local services around them, support with using technology, entitlements advice and much more. This pack should ensure that people have the right information while McCarthy and Stone can deliver the right support.

### The ExtraCare Charitable Trust

Working in collaboration with Cruse Bereavement Care, the ExtraCare Charitable Trust has developed resources for residents and staff in their housing communities around supporting bereaved people living with dementia and informal carers.

They have developed two guides:

**Responding to distress and behaviours that challenge** – this guide advises on how to respond in an empathetic and supportive way to people living with dementia whose understanding of loss and bereavement may fluctuate, causing confusion or distressed behaviour.

**Carers Stories: Loss along the journey** – this was developed by carers for carers, who very honestly discussed their experience of a changing relationship with someone they care about. Some residents still lived with their partner, others had seen their partner relocated to another care setting, and others had been bereaved.

The value of this work for ExtraCare as housing professionals has improved when and how they offer bereavement support in the context of dementia.

### Thorngate Living

Thorngate Living are a provider of independent assisted living and residential care in Hampshire. They have created a resource file located in each scheme which contains information on dementia for residents. This provides information on dementia, helps tackle stigma around dementia, and signposts people to appropriate services. They hope that having this information available will help to encourage early diagnosis.

### The Guinness Partnership

Guinness has been taking great strides to become a more dementia-friendly organisation. They identified that colleagues did not know where to access specialist advice or information to support customers living with dementia. In response, they now:

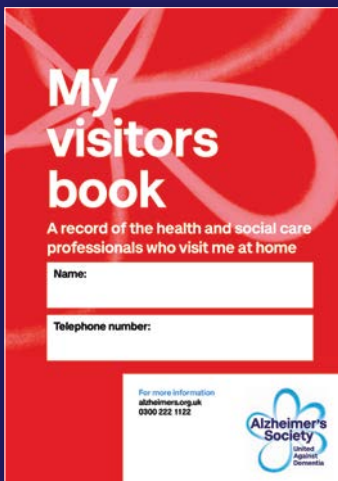
- Signpost to the Dementia Directory to help find local services.
- Update web pages with reports, resources and guidance on dementia. By moving these online they have improved the accessibility of their information.
- Have a dedicated contact to lead on their dementia programme, to develop services and update staff on changes and innovations.
- Review their housing policies to take into account the needs of their customers with dementia.

Following their successful two year Housing and Dementia project, providing a dementia-friendly service to their customers is now business as usual. The work they have done led to them becoming finalists in the Large Organisation of the Year category at the national Alzheimer's Society Dementia Friendly Awards 2019.



## Documents to support communication and understanding

Communication is important to ensure a person with dementia gets the right care and support, whether at home, in hospital or any other care setting. Encourage any visitors to leave a short note for any carers, friends or family members, as well as having a written record of your visit.



### My visitors book (code 923)

This is a resource for people with dementia to use so they can keep track of the professionals who visit them in their home. **My visitors book** is available online at [alheimers.org.uk/publications](http://alheimers.org.uk/publications) or call **0300 593 3333**.



### This is me (code 1553)

Alzheimer's Society produces a document called 'This is me' to support people with communication difficulties. It can give health and social care staff information about a person, including their preferences, likes and dislikes. It is available to download at [alheimers.org.uk/thisisme](http://alheimers.org.uk/thisisme) or you can order packs of 25 via Alzheimer's Society's online shop at [alheimers.org.uk/shop](http://alheimers.org.uk/shop)

## Websites

Organisations must ensure that their website has consistent and up-to-date information, with written copies available. People affected by dementia complain that most information they look at online is incorrect and does not match the processes and procedures that companies follow. Websites should also:

- Only hold key information
- Be well-designed and concise, with as few 'click-throughs' as possible to get to the information people need
- Have typeface that is large and clear
- Only use images if they are relevant and enhance the message

Not everyone has access to or the ability to use the internet. Information should therefore be available in other formats, including large print or 'easy-read' formats.



For more information about designing accessible websites, go to [dementiavoices.org.uk/deep-guides](https://dementiavoices.org.uk/deep-guides) and [alzheimers.org.uk/blog/how-design-website-someone-affected-dementia](https://alzheimers.org.uk/blog/how-design-website-someone-affected-dementia)



## 'Tell me once' policies

Disclosing a diagnosis of dementia can be daunting. It can become frustrating or distressing for someone to have to disclose a diagnosis on multiple occasions with the same organisation. Organisations should therefore review the information they are able to hold on their residents and customers, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), to help individuals communicate freely and openly, and only have to disclose a dementia diagnosis once. It should also be possible for organisations to record how people prefer to communicate, or any other preferences they might have (for example, following up calls in writing or being given a certain amount of time to process conversations).



## 'Tell me once' policies case study

### The Guinness Partnership

Guinness has devised a system to make notes of the individual requirements of their customers. This flagging system ensures they can adequately capture their residents' needs and understand what support they require and how residents want their services delivered. This avoids residents being contacted in ways that don't suit them or having to remind staff of their challenges every time.



'Flagging system ensures they can adequately capture their residents' needs and understand what support they require.'

The Guinness Partnership





## Dementia Friendly Communities

Dementia Friendly Communities are geographical communities that are committed to making their local area accessible, inclusive and supportive for people affected by dementia. Everyone shares the responsibility for ensuring that people with dementia feel understood, valued and able to contribute to their community.

Whether a housing association, an estate agent or an architecture firm, housing organisations should be an active part of their local community by supporting and engaging with the issues that matter to local people. To enable this, Dementia Friendly Communities provide a support mechanism, a network of local businesses and a platform to engage the local community and people affected by dementia.

Housing organisations can:

- Develop community-based activities where appropriate
- Provide or support people to access meaningful activities, points of interest or stimulation
- Work with local areas/authorities to aid wayfinding and orientation in local areas



To find your local Dementia Friendly Community go to [alzheimers.org.uk/dementia-friendly-communities](https://alzheimers.org.uk/dementia-friendly-communities) or email [dementiafriendlycomm@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:dementiafriendlycomm@alzheimers.org.uk)

## Working with local partners

To help people with dementia to stay safe, you can work with different organisations and people in your local area on various different initiatives. Working with local specialist organisations including Alzheimer's Society, Age UK and care providers will ensure people living with or affected by dementia are aware of the support you offer. Organisations should also work in partnership with key aspects of the community, for example transport hubs, emergency services and retailers.

Reach out to other local partners to provide support for residents and customers to access their wider community and the things that matter to them. From supermarkets, pharmacists, opticians, dentists, hair salons, banks and local heritage sites, you can support your residents and customers affected by dementia to continue to live well.

## Remember...



'If you've met one person with dementia ... You've met one person with dementia.'

Everyone affected by dementia is unique and will have unique challenges and these challenges will change over time. Ensure you are developing individual strategies to support each person that can be adapted as needs change.



## Working with local partners case study

### The Dementia Friendly London Group

The Dementia Friendly London Group is an example of how lots of organisations can work together to be more dementia friendly.

The group comprises of members from across London's sizeable housing sector, from housing associations and socially minded, innovative housing providers through to private landlords, architects and designers. All are welcome to join at quarterly meetings, where the group shares best practice and challenges each other to be better in how they deliver dementia-friendly housing in the capital. Together and in support of each other, the group are confident of achieving their key objectives, including:

- 1 Members to have made 20,000 Dementia Friends between 2019 and 2022, to promote the Dementia Friends programme to any procurement partners and to ensure Dementia Friends sessions are part of organisational inductions
- 2 Members to champion, and where possible implement, adaptations for future ageing and dementia to properties
- 3 Members to use dementia-friendly principles for void works and cyclical improvements by 2022



For more information about the group, or for dates of future meetings please contact [ProgrammePartnerships@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:ProgrammePartnerships@alzheimers.org.uk)

## Safeguarding and managing risk

It can be hard to know what to do if you're concerned about someone's wellbeing. This could be the case whether or not they have dementia, though you might have particular worries if they do. There are a number of other signs of possible abuse or neglect that could be reasons to raise a safeguarding concern with social services, including:



### Think about

- Through training, ensure staff understand, respond sensitively and keep a record so that an emerging pattern can trigger appropriate action, for example speaking to family.
- Develop a referral pathway to manage risks where additional support is needed. If you believe that someone is in any immediate danger, you should of course call 999. In other cases, a call to social services to raise a safeguarding concern could lead to them finding out what can be done to help.
- Work with local emergency services to embed procedures such as the Herbert Protocol or home fire safety visits. The Herbert Protocol is a risk reduction tool for people and their families living with dementia. In some areas this is called an 'At risk of going missing' form. It's a simple form designed to make sure that, in the event of someone going missing, the police can get access to important information about that person as quickly as possible. It can also help relieve the pressure on a person's friends or family as they don't have to try remembering lots of information at an already distressing time.



Download the dementia-friendly emergency services guide for more information:  
[alzheimers.org.uk/emergencyservices](http://alzheimers.org.uk/emergencyservices)

- **Self-neglect** – where a person isn't looking after themselves as well as they should be. This can get worse and lead to many problems.
- **Noticing signs of financial abuse** – for example, the person lacks money for basics like heating or for other things they'd usually spend it on, they're befriended by someone new who may be taking advantage of them, or they're repeatedly buying items from sales callers.
- **Physical wellbeing** – be aware of any bruising, cuts, burns or other marks on the person.
- **Witnessing or hearing arguments** that appear more severe than you'd expect, including verbal or physical abuse.
- **Not seeing someone for a long time** – especially if you'd usually expect to see them, or if they miss something they regularly go to. For example, you might notice their bins not being put out or post not being picked up.



## The Herbert protocol case study

### Housing 21

A Housing 21 scheme has used the Herbert Protocol since 2017 to help protect their residents.

The staff involve residents' families as they know them better than anyone. On the Herbert Protocol form, they provide the addresses where the resident who leaves the scheme is likely to go, along with photographs of the resident. This information is handed to the police when a resident leaves the scheme. The photographs help the police with identification.

On one occasion, a gentleman who had left the scheme was found exactly where his family said he would be at the local cricket club.



## Walking around

When people with dementia walk around, this is often labelled as ‘wandering’ and ‘problematic behaviour’. However, walking around offers an activity that can provide pleasure and exercise and shouldn’t necessarily be viewed negatively. ‘Wandering’ also suggests aimlessness, when in fact there is often a purpose behind this activity. There are of course a number of challenges with people walking around, such as ensuring the resident’s safety, but there are a number of actions we can take to support them:

- Get to know the resident to understand their life story and reasons for walking around.
- Accompany the resident on a walk outside if they are happy for you to do this.
- Staff training in understanding how to safely support people living with dementia to continue walking around.

- Design of the physical environment – design safe indoor and outdoor walking routes, with places to rest and interesting things to see and do along the way.
- Assistive technology can alert carers when a person leaves their room, bed or chair, and track their location, to help find the person if they become lost.
- Foster good relationships with the local community and organisations who can help people who want to walk find their way back.



To find out more about supporting a person with dementia who walks about see Alzheimer’s Society factsheet 501, **Walking about** at [alzheimers.org.uk/publications](https://alzheimers.org.uk/publications)









## Walking around case studies

### The University of Worcester and Housing 21 – ‘All those who wander are not lost’

The University of Worcester and Housing 21 undertook research to better understand and to develop good practice guidelines around residents who walk around, something they have termed ‘walking with purpose’.

They found that each person’s ‘walking with purpose’ story was unique. They also faced different risks depending on their personality, mobility, where and for how long they walked and their ability to get back.

Successes experienced in relation to ‘walking with purpose’ were connected with:

- improving staff understanding so that they can better support residents;
- raising awareness of dementia amongst other residents; use of technology;
- improving activities provided;
- working with families to improve their awareness and find solutions;
- greater understanding in wider community, such as local shopkeepers, and providing a secure environment.

In schemes with good dementia awareness among residents, other residents play a part in ensuring people living with dementia can walk around safely by keeping an eye on them, alerting staff, redirecting the person and even returning them to their apartment.

### Walker Simpson Architects

Designers and architects also have a role to play in supporting people to continue to walk around.

Walker Simpson Architects are a Manchester-based practice with experience designing dementia-friendly public buildings. One of their buildings, the Great Sankey Neighbourhood Hub, has been awarded the world’s first Dementia Friendly Gold Accreditation for a public building by the Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC).

Walker Simpson Architects are strong advocates of allowing people to walk around freely, what is sometimes termed ‘wandering’. They consider this in their design of buildings, such as in the layout of corridors and making use of internal courtyards. They also use design to help people find their way and retain independence, such as doors painted all different colours and personalised areas outside of bedrooms.



‘It is worth the risk to let a person live as they want to... Encourage positive risk taking approaches.’

University of Worcester, 2019





**Place:**  
**The physical  
environment**

# Place

Physical spaces should be easy to navigate and be accessible for people with dementia, as well as other conditions, to enjoy a more meaningful and inclusive life.

This includes the creation and maintenance of suitable housing which incorporates space and design that can support people with dementia. Making your spaces dementia friendly includes both the interior and exterior of buildings, areas around buildings and the location in which they are built.

When planning new housing or other properties, dementia-friendly design features should be considered. However, existing places can also be retrofitted to support people with dementia. Recognition should be given to the fact that people living with dementia will react differently to their surroundings and their needs will change.



## Key actions

- Complete an audit to understand what small changes can make your environment accessible to people affected by dementia. Where possible, this should be done with input from people affected by dementia.
- Future proof your environments by considering dementia-friendly design features when designing and planning new buildings.
- Be aware of potential barriers and challenges that people affected by dementia might face. Put proactive support measurements in place to overcome these barriers.
- Ensure your new buildings are going above and beyond relevant accessibility building regulations and standards to make your environments as inclusive as possible.
- Review the signage throughout your premises to make sure all signs are clear and prominent.
- Review the lighting to ensure it is consistent and natural, and reduce shadows, glares and pools of light.



## The King's Fund (2013) found that for people with dementia, improving an environment can:

- Reduce the incidence of agitation and behaviours that challenge
- Reduce the need for antipsychotic medication
- Reduce falls
- Promote independence
- Increase engagement in meaningful activities
- Encourage greater carer involvement
- Improve employee morale, recruitment and retention

90%



Home adaptations improved the quality of life for 90% of recipients.

“

‘Designing accessible buildings looked quite demanding at the outset, such as installing wider corridors, but once we were implementing it we found that it was benefiting everyone, including young families and people with autism.’

Walker Simpson Architects

## Building regulations and best practice for accessible design

There are two key documents to consider when ensuring the design of new buildings is accessible and inclusive. These are **Building Regulations Approved Document Part M** and the **British Standard 8300 (BS 8300)**.

### Building Regulations Approved Document Part M

Approved Document Part M provides information about the accessibility of buildings for visitors or occupants with disabilities. It covers guidance on the use of:

- Ramps and steps to ensure accessible and safe approach
- Accessible widths of doorways and corridors
- Easy access to toilet facilities
- Wall-mounted switches, socket outlets and other controls are reasonably accessible to people who have reduced reach.

Part M is in three categories:

- 1 Category 1 – Visitable dwellings:** This category states that reasonable provision should be made for people to gain access to and use the dwelling and facilities;
- 2 Category 2 – Accessible and adaptable dwellings:** This category goes further to ensure that the provision made must be sufficient to meet the needs of occupants with differing needs, including some older or disabled people, and ensure the dwelling can be adapted to meet the changing needs of occupants;
- 3 Category 3 – Wheelchair user dwellings:** This category goes further still to ensure reasonable provision is made for a wheelchair user to live in the dwelling and use any associated private outdoor space, parking and communal facilities.





Currently only Category 1 (Visitable Dwellings) is a mandatory design regulation. Alzheimer's Society strongly recommends taking this further to ensure both Category 2 and 3 are considered in the design of all your built environments.

### BS 8300

BS 8300 offers best practice guidance on making buildings accessible and welcoming to people with disabilities. It offers design solutions that go beyond Building Regulations' requirements for a whole range of disabled access scenarios.

The guidelines cover aspects such as:

- Entrances
- Door fittings
- Steps, stairs and ramps
- Corridors and passageways
- Surface finishes
- Visual signs
- Lighting
- Storage facilities
- Provision of seating



## Think about

- Inclusive design should not mean just meeting the minimum legal requirement. Go above the legal requirements and ensure your built environments are also BS 8300 compliant.
- Local authorities and large bodies in the housing sector should consider how they can lobby for building regulations to be made more inclusive and dementia friendly.

## Physical environment checklist

Use this physical environment checklist to audit your places and make them more dementia friendly. If possible, speak to people living with dementia and ask them how they find the area.

Remember: some of these changes don't require much time, effort or money! Small changes can have a huge impact for people living with

dementia. Temporary and low-cost changes are also a good starting point – for example putting up temporary signs could be a useful way to encourage people to start thinking about becoming more dementia friendly.

See examples of dementia-friendly signage in the Alzheimer's Society shop: [alzheimers.org.uk/shop](https://alzheimers.org.uk/shop)



## Physical environment checklist case studies

### Pentan Architects

'We make use of dementia-friendly principals throughout the process, from start to finish, such as planning, designing and choosing internal fittings. When we design care homes, we try and strip back the institutional feel and make it feel more like a home. For example, avoiding very large kitchens, having living rooms directly outside of bedrooms, and encouraging people to get involved with making the meals.

Even very small changes help massively.'

### Walker Simpson Architects

Walker Simpson Architects demonstrate that thinking about dementia-friendly design principles in even very small ways can have a huge impact.

When choosing paint samples, they say it is important to not just look at the colour but also the Light Reflectance Value (LRV) of the paint, which measures the amount of light that reflects from a painted surface. They make sure that the paint has a high contrast value between the door and the floor. People with dementia perceive colours and tones slightly differently and high LRVs can help to reinforce the contrast between the walls and floor.

This makes the whole space clearer for everyone, with or without dementia.

### Guinness Partnership

Guinness are carrying out a programme of refurbishment around the country in all their housing for older people to ensure that it follows their dementia-friendly design principles.

At an extra-care housing scheme near Plymouth, they adapted the environment to support people with dementia. Each of the residential areas now have carpets and walls that are colour coded to create distinct zones. Each area has a theme, such as flowers, trees, waterscapes or landscapes. Visual prompts make it easier for residents to navigate the building and orientate themselves.



### Think about

Future-proof all housing by building dementia-friendly design into all housing briefs from the very outset. Dementia-friendly design doesn't have to be costly if it is engaged with at an early enough stage.



## Physical environment checklist case studies

### RDT Architects

The design approach of RDT Architects, a RIBA Chartered Architectural Practice, focuses on developing a homely feel to assist people living with dementia to navigate around their home with wayfinding markers and identification points.

The interior design scheme adopts strong colour themes, memory aids and signage together with shorter corridor lengths and open plan areas. To help reduce confusion or disorientation, signs are clear and correctly oriented and residents' rooms are clearly marked. A number of points of interest and areas that provide interactive stimulation are introduced both inside and in the garden areas with appropriate colours and lighting.

The core design features considered of paramount importance are:

- Personalisation
- Flexible use of internal spaces
- Variety in environment, and
- Use of natural light

### BRE, A dementia-friendly home

BRE is an innovative group of researchers, scientists, engineers and technicians who want to make the built environment better for all. In 2018 they and Loughborough University created a dementia-friendly demonstration home on the BRE Innovation Park in Watford. The home presents evidence-based design, adaptations and support solutions which allow people to age well at home. It is aimed at people living with dementia to live independently by addressing their day-to-day needs. The home considers accessibility, lighting, layout, comfort, colours, safety and security.

'While there is a British Standard (BS 8300) which works for buildings, there should also be consideration of "suitability" for the occupant and an assessment of whether a building meets their needs. For example, is the oven too low as the occupant is tall and has trouble bending down? Is there a clear line of sight into adjacent rooms so that occupants can see carers?'



Go to [www.bregroup.com/ipark/parks/england/buildings/dementia-friendly-home/](http://www.bregroup.com/ipark/parks/england/buildings/dementia-friendly-home/) for more information or to organise a visit.



### Think about

As a landlord, sometimes all you need to do is provide your consent to allow residents to make changes to their property, such as painting their front door a different colour or painting around a light switch so it easier to see.



## Checklist



### Layout

- ✓ Install wider corridors which are more accessible for everyone, including people in wheelchairs and parents with pushchairs.
- ✓ In housing schemes, create opportunities for 'accidental' contact between people, such as incidental seating areas. Ensure the chairs in communal areas are arranged in small clusters to encourage conversation.
- ✓ When designing new builds, ensure there is enough space to walk around independently.



### Décor

- ✓ Architects and designers should consider the Light Reflectance Value of paint. People with dementia perceive colours and tones differently – making sure paint has a high contrast between door and floor can help with perception.
- ✓ Choose fabrics that are durable, attractive and easily cleanable.
- ✓ Handrails along walls can help with mobility and should have at least a 20% colour contrast between the rails and the walls.
- ✓ Maximise views of nature with low windows.



### Lighting

- ✓ Entrances should be well lit and make as much use of natural light as possible.
- ✓ Areas with bright lights or deep shadows should be avoided, such as pools of light or strips of shadows.
- ✓ High windows allow deep natural light.
- ✓ Ensure bedrooms can be made dark, through blinds or curtains, to support normal sleep and wake patterns.



## Flooring

- ✓ Reflective flooring can cause confusion and look like water. Highly reflective or slippery floor surfaces should be avoided where possible.
- ✓ Flooring with bold patterns can cause problems to people with perceptual problems – plain or mottled surfaces are easier.
- ✓ Flooring near steps and other possible trip hazards should be clear and defined, such as with brightly coloured tape or paint.
- ✓ Avoid areas of contrast such as rugs or mats – to a person with dementia these can look like holes in the floor.
- ✓ Check that cables for lights and other appliances are not a trip hazard.



## Furnishings

- ✓ Check pictures and mirrors and cover or remove them if they are likely to cause confusion.
- ✓ Make sure the colour of the switches for lights and appliances contrasts with the walls so that they are easier to see.
- ✓ Fit cupboards with non-reflective, transparent and shatterproof fronts so you can see inside.
- ✓ If you need to replace equipment or appliances, like a kettle, try and make sure they're the same design or model as the old one, so it is easier to remember how to use them.
- ✓ Ensure the fixtures and fittings, such as kettles and ovens, are of traditional design so that they are easy to use.



## Seating

- ✓ Having a seating area where people may be waiting can be a big help.
- ✓ Seating should look like seating – traditional seating rather than abstract, modern seating is much more helpful.
- ✓ Seating is useful for people who want to walk around and may become tired.



## Signage

- ✓ Signs can be used to for a variety of reasons, such as labelling doors of the room's use, on cupboard doors of what items are inside, and 'hot' and 'cold' written on taps.
- ✓ 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 it is mounted on. This will allow the person to recognise it as a sign.
- ✓ Signs should be fixed to the doors they refer to. They should not be on adjacent surfaces if at all possible.
- ✓ Consider using pictorial signs as well as written signs, such as a picture of a toilet.
- ✓ Avoid using block capitals.
- ✓ Signs should be eye level and well lit.
- ✓ Signs should not be abstract images or icons.
- ✓ Signs should be placed at key decision points for someone who is at the building/area for the first time.
- ✓ It is particularly important that signs for toilets and exits are clear.



## Toilets

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Put colour contrasted grab rails in showers, changing rooms and toilets.
- ✓ Make sure there is clear signage inside and outside the toilet.
- ✓ Ensure that door locks and taps are easy to use for a person with limited dexterity.
- ✓ Taps and plugs should be of traditional design so that they are easy to use.





## Navigation

- ✓ Check that the entrance is obvious and the doorbell/entry phone is easy to use.
- ✓ Check that the front door is easy to tell apart from the others in the road or block, such as by painting it a different colour or having a recognisable tile or door number.
- ✓ 'Landmarks', such as a painting or a plant, can be used to help people navigate their way around, both inside or outside the building. The more attractive and interesting the landmark is the more effective it is in aiding navigation. These can be used to differentiate between floors or different areas.
- ✓ Having minimal or no contrast is a useful way to de-emphasise features that are not for public access. For example, make sure there is no contrast for doors to store rooms so they blend in.
- ✓ Lifts should be easy to find and have large control buttons.



## Parking

- ✓ Review the areas immediately outside the facility or home for safety, particularly if there is an area for cars to park or drop/collect people.
- ✓ Create larger parking spaces or offer 'family spaces' rather than 'mother and baby' spaces. This can make a real difference if someone is not yet eligible for a blue badge but is experiencing cognitive difficulties.
- ✓ Check the route from the car park to the building, to ensure there are safe walkways and designated crossing points.



## Noise

- ✓ For people with dementia, background noise can be distracting and disorientating. For example, excessive background noise can affect their ability to concentrate or interfere with hearing aids. This problem is often exacerbated by music or radio. Consider switching off music and televisions or providing a quiet area when communicating with someone with dementia.



## Quiet space

- ✓ At your workplace, there should be 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.

## Funding the cost of adaptations

### What are adaptations?

Minor adaptations can have a huge impact for people affected by dementia to continue to live independently in their own homes. These include installing:

- Hand and grab rails
- Lever taps
- Improved lighting
- Opening and closing aides for doors and windows.

Minor adaptations are quite common and can be funded up to the value of £1,000. These can be funded for your tenants through the social care budget. If you are a landlord, you will be contacted to ask for your consent to the work taking place, usually by an occupational therapist or a trusted assessor. **The installation of this won't cost you anything personally.** (Be aware that it is possible that the removal of the installation at the end of the tenancy could incur a cost.)

More major adaptations, which tend to range between £1,000-£10,000 but can be covered up to £30,000, include:

- Installing ramps and stairlifts
- Providing level access showers and wet rooms
- Through-floor lift
- Providing easy access to the garden

As with minor adaptations, these adaptations can make a huge difference for people affected by dementia but still **do not cost you anything personally** because these adaptations are funded by **Disabled Facilities Grants**.

### What is a Disabled Facilities Grant?

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is available from local authorities to pay for housing adaptations to help people with a disability stay in their own homes. Because the Equality Act 2010 classes dementia as a disability, this means people with dementia can qualify for a DFG (unless the means-test concludes that the tenant can pay for themselves).

### Applying for a DFG

Depending on how the grant is applied for affects whether or not it is means-tested:

- A DFG is means-tested if the tenant applies for the DFG themselves. This concludes whether they qualify for the funding or if they can pay for the adaptation themselves.
- A DFG is **not** means-tested if the landlord applies for the DFG on their behalf. But bear in mind that it is possible for a land charge to be placed on the property by the council for adaptations of more than £5000. See an example of how a local authority applies this here: [www.surreyheath.gov.uk/residents/communities-wellbeing/grants-funding/disabled-facilities-grant/disabled-facilities-grant](http://www.surreyheath.gov.uk/residents/communities-wellbeing/grants-funding/disabled-facilities-grant/disabled-facilities-grant)

Your tenant can apply for a DFG themselves but they will require your consent to carry out the work. This normally requires a tenant and owner certificate in which the tenant states their intention to remain living in the property for five years. This is about **intention** only and **does not** require a formal commitment to live there for five years so should not be a barrier to a successful DFG application.

To apply for the DFG on behalf of your tenant, you should go through your local council.



Find out more about the process and how to apply at [www.foundations.uk.com/dfg-adaptations/dfg-regulations/disabled-facilities-grant-dfg/](http://www.foundations.uk.com/dfg-adaptations/dfg-regulations/disabled-facilities-grant-dfg/)



**You can usually find funding for adaptations. They don't need to be costly for you or your organisation.**



## Think about

- Tenants qualify for funding whether they are private, council or housing association tenants. (The funding process is slightly different for tenants in council housing but guidance consistently says that this should not result in a worse service than for those in other housing.)
- As a landlord, you can apply for a DFG on behalf of your tenant. This can help your tenant if they find it difficult or confusing filling out forms. This also means the request will not be means tested, making the process easier for your tenant.
- Build a relationship and atmosphere where your tenants feel comfortable disclosing their dementia or speaking to you about their need for adaptations. The process of applying can be stressful so support them where you can.
- Adaptations generally only cause minor disruption. This means that most work takes place with the tenant in situ and doesn't require void periods.
- Adaptations don't have to be institutional-looking. Consider adaptations that are inconspicuous and multi-functional, such as plain carpets to help people with dementia with perception issues, as these won't need to be removed for your next tenants.
- Local authorities should look into how they can implement something similar to the Dementia Dwelling Grant and influential bodies and associations should lobby for the same.



## Funding the cost of adaptations case studies

### Motionspot

Motionspot is an award-winning design company recognised by RIBA who create environments that are both accessible but also designed to be visually attractive.

Motionspot has been working with Housing 21 to design bathrooms across their estate that are both accessible and also intended to be attractive. The design and product selection is both suitable and future-proofed for dementia. Particular time is spent ensuring style is not compromised in these spaces as Motionspot believe that too often bathrooms adjusted for the needs of people with dementia can look institutional in appearance. Motionspot are proud to have helped create homes that are both accessible and aspirational and seek to inspire other providers to review how the design of their homes can be improved to help empower people to live well with dementia.

### Dementia Dwelling Grants in Worcestershire District Councils

District Councils in Worcestershire, in partnership with the NHS and Worcestershire County, provide non-means-tested Dementia Dwelling Grants to people living with dementia. A £750 grant is made available to agree some adaptations and changes designed to reinforce cognitive resilience. The project is delivered through the local networks of Dementia Advisers run by Age UK Hereford and Worcestershire and has assessed over 500 people in the year between April 2017-18, over 380 of which were accepted.

People choose their own preferred solution based on the difficulties they are experiencing. This also allows them to feedback what works and what does not. It is therefore capable of informing the future design of equipment and adaptations.

The average cost of Dementia Dwelling Grants is only £132 for beneficiaries not living alone and £150 for those living alone. Timely preventative responses to a diagnosis of dementia do not need to be expensive to the public purse.



## Adaptations and assistive technology

Technology can be used to support a person to continue to live in their own homes by allowing an individual to perform a task that they would otherwise be unable to do or increasing the ease and safety with which a task can be performed. This ranges from simple tools to high-tech devices and can promote independence and reduce early entry into care homes and hospitals. When choosing a device, it is important to consider how the person will react – they may find it helpful or it may be confusing. Below are a few examples you could consider making available or designing into your properties.



- **Walking around (see page 31)** – Some people choose to use GPS devices to support people who might go missing if they walk about. Most GPS devices are worn either on the wrist, like a watch, or around the neck on a lanyard, and they send various kinds of alerts notifying someone has gone outside of a certain boundary. People with dementia and those supporting them must think carefully about whether they want to use GPS devices, as there are lots of questions to consider. It's important that they have these conversations early on to ensure consent.

- **Reminder messages** – when a person enters or leaves their home, a personal voice prompt recording can remind them to pick up their keys or lock the front door, for example. Door reminders can remind people not to trust bogus callers. This can be useful as people with dementia can be vulnerable to doorstep scams.

- **Telecare** – devices that monitor real-time emergencies to manage the risks associated with living alone by triggering an alarm to a relative, key holder or call centre. Sensors can be used to detect a range of situations, including: floods, extreme temperatures, gas and leaving the home. (See AT Dementia for more information.)

- **Devices that detect motion** – these use a sensor or pressure mat and play a pre-recorded voice when there is movement. For example, you could set one of these to play a message when you walk out of the kitchen to remind you to turn off the gas.

- **Cooker locking valves** – a simple safety feature that prevents an oven door from opening.

**Remember:** assistive technology is not always the best solution. Simple ideas such as a noticeboard or labelling cupboards or rooms can be very helpful.



For more information see Alzheimer's Society factsheet 439, **Using technology to help**



## Adaptations and assistive technology case study

### Hyndburn Homewise

A home improvement agency in Accrington, Lancashire, Hyndburn Homewise runs Memory Matters, supporting people living with memory issues to stay at home, continuing to live independently, and keeps them safe and out of hospital and residential care.

Simple innovations in the home can make all the difference to people with dementia with visual and orientation problems. Examples include changing white grab rails in the bathroom to blue or light switches to red to improve visibility, the use of memory aids to remind people to lock doors or close the fridge and the use of signage and pictures to aid orientation.

If the home is a safe environment, people can remain there for longer, holding onto their memories at home, which can improve their quality of life. Memory Matters has helped over 414 families with focused work to meet a variety of needs about the home – from £50 for improved lighting to £4000 for a level access shower.

## Further steps to creating dementia-friendly environments

Further adaptations might involve some investment. However, devoting additional resources can help to future-proof the business by making your buildings more accessible for people affected by dementia. If you are designing new properties or your office is being refurbished, consider the layout – as budgets allow. Improving accessibility in this way could benefit a large number of people living with other long-term health conditions, not only people affected by dementia.



# The benefits of becoming more dementia friendly

## Social benefits

There are numerous social benefits in making your organisation more dementia friendly. These include:

- Ensuring that the needs of residents, customers and end users are met in a consistent and appropriate manner
- Creating an organisation in which residents, customers and end users feel comfortable discussing their needs
- Making changes now means housing organisations can future-proof by anticipating a growing need from residents, customers, end users and staff.

## Business benefits

Becoming a dementia-friendly organisation is not just a socially responsible step – it can also benefit your business. There are clear economic benefits in supporting people with dementia to use your services. This does not mean prioritising dementia over other conditions or disabilities. But when a business responds to the challenges faced by people with dementia and takes positive action, it can:

- Demonstrate leadership within the sector by proactively addressing the societal challenges posed by an increasing incidence of dementia
- Understand the cause of an issue early and tackle it appropriately
- Deal more appropriately with risks to health and safety
- Reduce the risk and cost of litigation
- Reduce the rate of property turnover and the cost of voids
- Avoid or reduce decorating and repairs to properties damaged by incidents that could have been prevented
- Be alert to simple adaptations that can be installed early as preventative measures

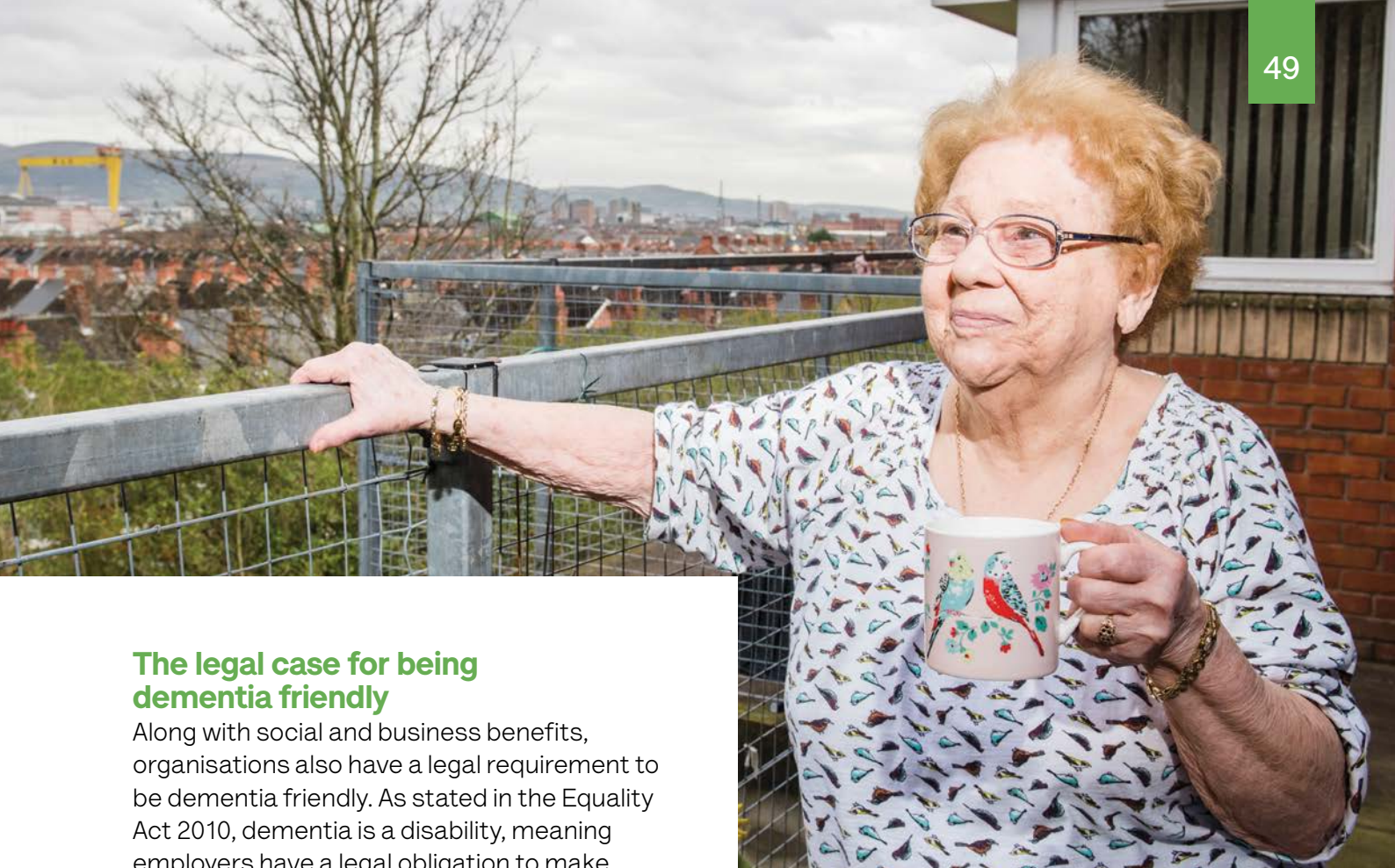


“

‘85% of people say if they developed dementia they would want to stay at home for as long as they want to or feel able to.’

(Alzheimer’s Society 2016)





### The legal case for being dementia friendly

Along with social and business benefits, organisations also have a legal requirement to be dementia friendly. As stated in the Equality Act 2010, dementia is a disability, meaning employers have a legal obligation to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to ensure someone is not disadvantaged because of their disability. Reasonable adjustments include adapting employees’ working hours, responsibilities and management support. **However, 98% of people said that society still treats people with dementia differently to people with other health conditions or disabilities (APPG on Dementia, 2019).**

Organisations need to ensure they are meeting these legal challenges.

#### The BSI Code of Practice identifies the key provisions required in the housing sector for people living with dementia as:

- Adaptations, built environment and design
- Assistive technologies, including telecare
- Access to outdoor spaces
- Support of family and paid carers in private homes
- Training of all staff in the housing sector – appropriate to the settings in which they work and their roles
- Maintenance of tenancy if a person with dementia is temporarily admitted to care.

“

‘People with dementia are being denied their right to live independently in their own homes where they are able to make their own choices.’... ‘Part 4 of the Equality Act covers discrimination in housing, meaning that people with dementia should not experience any form of discrimination and that there are requirements for landlords to make “reasonable adjustments”. For example, a person with dementia might benefit from replacing signs or notices, changing taps or door handles, replacing bells or entry systems and changing colours of walls or other surfaces.’

APPG on Dementia, 2019

# Useful resources

## **Alzheimer's Society**

We produce a wide range of information for people with dementia and their carers, family and friends. You can read and order this information at [alzheimers.org.uk/publications](https://alzheimers.org.uk/publications) or call 0300 303 5933.

## **Alzheimer's Society Dementia Directory**

Find local support services for people with dementia and their carers in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, using a simple postcode search. Go to [alzheimers.org.uk/dementiadirectory](https://alzheimers.org.uk/dementiadirectory)

## **Alzheimer's Society Dementia Connect helpline**

For information, support or advice about dementia call our Dementia Connect support line on **0333 150 3456** (open every day). For welsh speakers please call us on **03300 947 400**. For up to date opening hours go to [alzheimers.org.uk/helpline](https://alzheimers.org.uk/helpline)

# Useful organisations

## **Dementia Friends**

[www.dementiafriends.org.uk](http://www.dementiafriends.org.uk)

Learn more about what it is like to live with dementia and turn that understanding into action.

## **Dementia and Housing Working Group**

[www.housinglin.org.uk/housing-networks/dementia-and-housing-working-group/members/](http://www.housinglin.org.uk/housing-networks/dementia-and-housing-working-group/members/)

The Dementia and Housing Working Group (D&HWG), aims to promote the contribution of the housing sector to improving the health and wellbeing and quality of life for people living with dementia.

## **Elderly Accommodation Counsel**

[www.eac.org.uk](http://www.eac.org.uk)

EAC holds the most comprehensive database of accommodation available in the country. It also runs the First Stop information and advice telephone line.

## **First Stop Advice**

[www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk](http://www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk)

This website offers a range of leaflets including one on housing options for older people.

## **Foundations**

[www.foundations.uk.com](http://www.foundations.uk.com)

Foundations is appointed by the Department of Communities and Local Government to oversee a national network of nearly 200 Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) and handyperson providers across England.

## **Housing and Dementia Research Consortium**

[housingdementiaresearch.wordpress.com](http://housingdementiaresearch.wordpress.com)

This is the only group that brings together housing providers, commissioners and others specifically with the aim of achieving robust research into accommodation and care for people with dementia.

## **Housing and Safeguarding Adults Alliance**

[www.housinglin.org.uk/AboutHousingLIN/HASAA](http://www.housinglin.org.uk/AboutHousingLIN/HASAA)

The Alliance focuses specifically on improving practice and co-operation between the housing sector and adult social care and other organisations. It has a website hosted by the Housing LIN with some excellent resources focusing on housing and safeguarding.

## **Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN)**

[www.housinglin.org.uk](http://www.housinglin.org.uk)

Leading 'knowledge hub' for a growing network of housing, health and social care professionals in England involved in planning, commissioning, designing, funding, building and managing housing with care for older people.

## **National Housing Federation**

[www.housing.org.uk](http://www.housing.org.uk)

National trade body for housing associations. The NHF has regional representatives keen to work in collaboration with health and social care commissioners and providers.

## **Stirling University Dementia Services Development Centre**

[dementia.stir.ac.uk/housing-dsdc](http://dementia.stir.ac.uk/housing-dsdc)

Stirling University, Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) has gathered together a specialist team dedicated to helping commissioners and providers tackle the complex and practical issues which they are wrestling with now.



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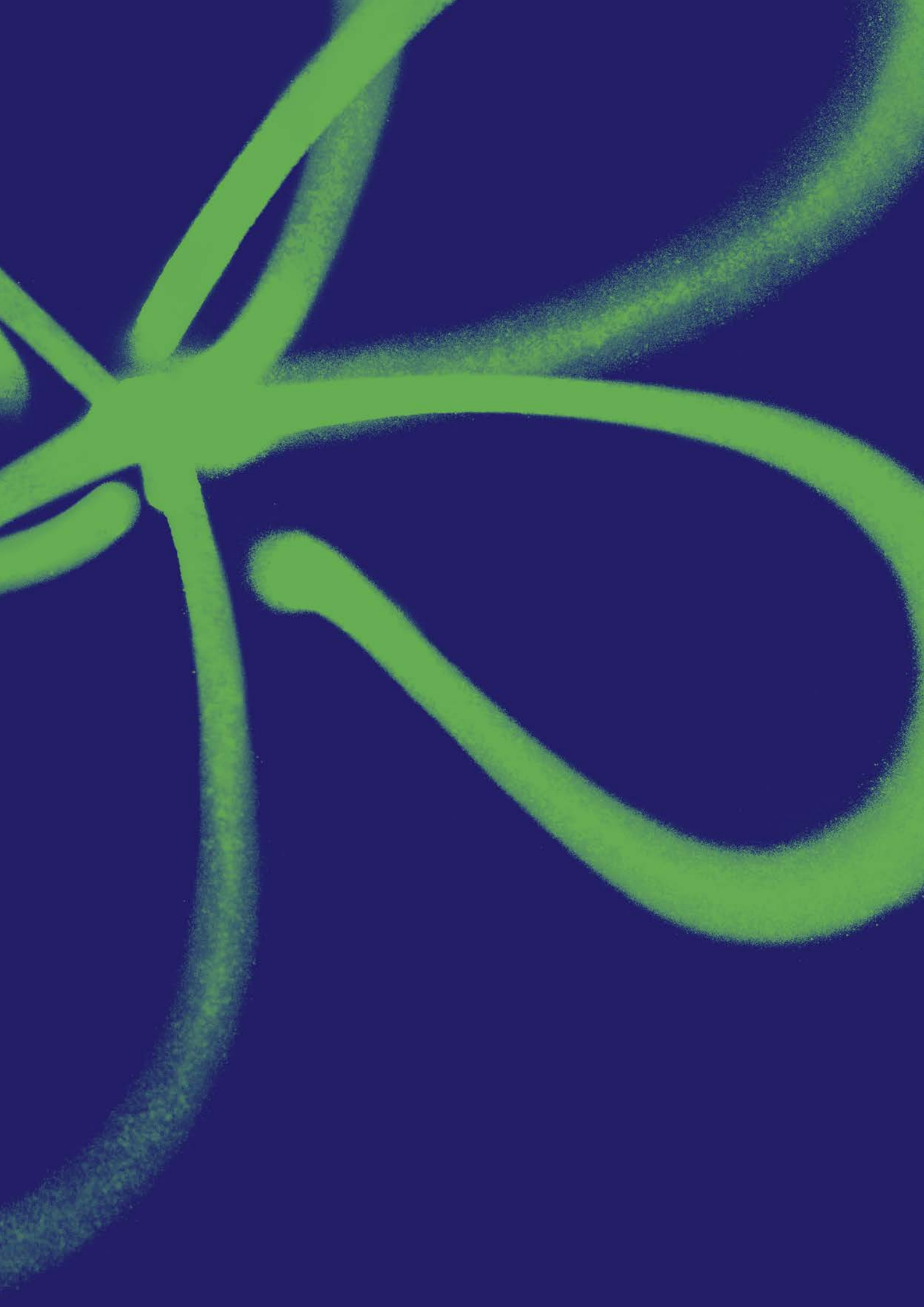
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**Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity.  
We provide information and support, improve care, fund research,  
and create lasting change for people affected by dementia.**

If you have any concerns about Alzheimer's disease or any other form of dementia, visit **alzheimers.org.uk** or call **Alzheimer's Society** on **0333 150 3456**. (Interpreters are available in any language. Calls may be recorded or monitored for training and evaluation purposes.)

**Alzheimer's Society**

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