

IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT

ENABLING INDEPENDENCE LIVING WELL WITH DEMENTIA



**The Sunderland Standard
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Introduction

This leaflet has been compiled for use by those providing accommodation for someone living with a dementia diagnosis. This may include:-

- Person living in their own home (family home)
- Extra care housing
- Sheltered housing
- Privately rented
- Residential Care
- Nursing Care
- Living in with family

Regardless of where the person is living – the environment in which they live should consider things like:-

- Natural lighting – how do you make places light and airy
- Access to outside – how to maximise the outside spaces and use as an extension to the home
- Accessibility – providing hand rails and grab rails to enable people to walk, or wide corridors and doorways to enable people with mobility aids / wheelchairs to move around easily
- Way- finding and interior design – how do you use colours, signage and materials to help people to recognise areas; identify spaces
- Reflection – how to reduce glare and glossy surfaces. They can look wet and slippery, or cause distress because of the reflection.

Small changes can make all the difference to the person with dementia. These changes should be considered by everyone providing accommodation; services; facilities where people with dementia live or visit. This can include the above list of housing provision – but should also be considered by:-

- Health centres – Doctors surgeries and clinics
- Day centres
- Re-ablement and rehabilitation centres
- Hospital Wards
- Public spaces including libraries; shops; supermarkets; reception areas.

Small changes can help a person with memory loss feel more able and independent by minimising confusing and potentially fearful environments.

This Sunderland Standard aims to demonstrate what practical changes could help our wider communities – those who have dementia now and those who may receive a diagnosis into the future.

General Building Design

Many people with dementia are less able to judge risk or foresee danger. This can be worsened due to sight loss and other sensory impairments.

It is common for people with dementia to get lost trying to find their way around a building, a street, or a neighbourhood. This reflects a person forgetting such basic information as the location of one room; one street; one house in relation to another. If numerous visual cues or reminders are incorporated into a design, these can help by acting as way finders and make the situation less stressful and confusing.

The ability for people to watch the world going by from their home, or from a seat in the park, or to visit the local shops help to keep them familiar with their neighbourhood eliminating any sense of isolation.



Open plan communal areas at Millhouse, Nantwich, Cheshire, helps residents to see different uses and spaces - very clear contrasting colours

Dementia and sight loss

A person's experience of dementia can be significantly worsened by sight loss, including cataracts, and potentially their ability to cope with stressful situations can be heightened.

It is understood that the more natural light we can access – increases wellbeing. As the eye 'ages' less natural light is absorbed. Less natural light can increase depression; affect sleep patterns; increased fatigue and irritability.

The combination of dementia and visual impairment is likely to be an overwhelming experience, profoundly affecting functional ability, activity, mood and sense of identity. Research suggests that individuals with dementia and sight loss may experience a profound sense of disorientation and may be highly vulnerable to isolation.

There may be a negative impact on an individual's ability to enjoy hobbies and interests. For example, the combination of poor sight, poor concentration and poor memory could restrict older adults' ability to read, and cognitive difficulties prevent them from learning how to use alternatives such as audio books. Simple tasks such as reaching for a drink or medication can prove impossible for someone with dementia and sight loss without assistance.

It is important to recognise that optimising lighting; contrasting colours of surfaces and furnishing; using colours which are easier to recognise; introducing assistive technology; providing clear signage; providing clear verbal instructions and one to one contact can significantly improve someone's quality of life by stimulating interaction and activity.



Design without barriers and requirements for signage, Belong, Macclesfield



Woodridge Gardens restaurant area, Housing 21, Sunderland

DEVELOPING DEMENTIA FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS

CHECKLIST

Communal Spaces - have you provided:-	
Level access flooring throughout removing tripping hazards	
A foyer at the main entrance for people to safely hang coats so they know they are home	
Easy to use doors onto safe garden areas to encourage people to easily move between indoors and outdoors	
Short corridors with visual cues; wall mounted activity boards and furnishing as stopping points	
A sensory room with relaxing music; coloured lights and different textures	
A multi-purpose room to encourage activities and participation	
Activity boards in communal areas to encourage stimulation and visual cues	
	
Signage placed at eye level and at waist height	
Minimised the use of patterns in fabrics; carpets; floor coverings and wall coverings – they can cause confusion.	
Incorporate acoustic provision within floor coverings and window covers	
A quiet room for someone to go to if they don't want to hear the TV or radio which is playing in the communal areas	
Keep furnishing tactile, with rounded edges. Ensure that furnishing complies with Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations	
Provide a focal point, such as a fire / fireplace or media unit	

Recreate an era, by providing familiar objects to help prompt memory recollection	
Place seating in small groups in various sizes but ensuring that wheelchairs can be accommodated and are not left sitting at the edge of the room	
Provide a carpet which does not prevent a wheelchair or walking aid from easily moving over it	
Avoid visual clutter and keep walkways clear	
Provide a specific area for sun downing / quiet lounge	
Provide a variety of lighting, or dimming light for mixed use areas	
Use materials (carpets and curtains) to absorb sounds, helping to reduce background noise	
Avoid the use of patterns and colours that could cause confusion	
Provide blinds and / or curtains at windows to help manage the lighting in the room.	
Colours/ Decoration	
Research suggests that strong colours such as reds, oranges and yellows are easiest to recognise, with blues, greens and violets the more difficult	
Strong colours should be contrasted with muted / pastel shades to help people identify doors; changes in direction; different areas e.g. floors and walls	
Make all toilet doors the same colour to help with identification (orange, yellow or red is easily identifiable), in both communal areas and private spaces	
Increase the contrast between objects and background, such as crockery and table/placements and marking steps with a contrasting colour.	
Avoid providing borders as part of floor design – this can look like a barrier and some people may stop at this point and not progress further.	
Very dark floors may look like a large hole, again preventing people from stepping onto it or walking across it	
Corridors should have progressive lighting. Dark corridors ahead can unsettle people and prevent them from moving forward.	
Flooring should be plain and non-reflective – flecks and speckles can cause confusion – could be seen as being dirty or covered in crumbs.	

Signage and Circulation spaces

People with dementia often look at the floor as they walk. Place clear signs nearer waist level or using the surfaces of the path to help with way finding.

Clear and uncomplicated circulation routes reduce the possibility of people getting lost and frustrated.

Avoid dead end corridors and stairs with blind turnings – provide a destination point or seated area with a visual cue.

Provide well lit, inviting entrances to day rooms, natural lighting, changes in floor and wall textures, colours, identifiable architectural features, recognisable and distinctive individual room designs to compensate for residents' sensory and memory losses

Use tactile furnishing and decoration to help stimulate the resident via touch, but also to help with recognition of space

Remove walls and doors (barriers) – keep communal spaces as open plan as practical

Use signing that both spells out the word of the location and shows a picture of the location – some people will recognise the word and others will recognise the picture

Provide a pain management illustrated chart in any treatment areas to help someone to tell you if they are in pain and where the pain is.

Provide reminiscence items in corridors and communal spaces alongside pictures of a particular era e.g. 1950's and local heritage pictures.

Bathroom – have you provided:-

Tick if achieved

Non slip flooring in shower room / bathroom – reduces the need for bath mat (can cause tripping hazard)

Level access flooring throughout bathroom including from adjoining rooms (falls prevention)

Flooring which clearly contrasts with the walls and sanitary ware

Matt wall tiling which clearly contrasts with grab-rails; flooring and sanitary ware

Walls painted in a colour which clearly contrasts with grabrails; flooring and sanitary ware

Doors into the shower room contrast with the walls on both sides

Level access shower to be provided where possible

Avoid providing glass shower screens / doors – reflection can be confusing. If they are provided, cover with towels when shower is in use to prevent glare and reflection

If shower curtains are provided then provide them in a

contrasting colour to the tiles / walls – keep plain - avoid patterns	
Toilet doors to be the same colour throughout the building i.e if communal toilets are provided then keep door colour consistent.	
Sensor lighting which automatically lights up as movement is detected and back down after person leaves the bathroom – can prevent falls and help people to find the toilet during the night	
Familiar toilet flush – handle is usually more familiar than push button. If push button is provided then just provide a sign telling people “ push to flush”	
Toilet roll in contrasting colour to wall or rail so it can be seen and be more easily accessible	
Shower fixtures which enable the shower head to be pulled down to a level that can be easily reached from a shower chair and easy to use control	
Taps and showers to be thermostatically regulated to avoid scalding	
Taps with cross head which are more familiar to older people	
	
Mirrors that can be easily removed or covered if required	
Toilet can be seen and easily accessed from the bedroom and bed can be seen from the toilet	
	

A toilet seat that contrasts to toilet bowl (in own living space and communal areas)	
Towels; flannels; soap in contrasting colours to walls; sink etc., to help people to easily see them and use them	
Multiple cues for doors could involve a toilet door being a single bright contrasting colour with a sign showing both the word 'toilet' and a picture of a toilet.	
Healthy and enjoyable eating – communal dining– have you provided:-	
Functional domestic kitchen next to dining space to encourage activity and participation	
Views of garden areas or other outside spaces from dining space	
Flexibility so families and friends can prepare meals and eat with others or in privacy	
Safeguards to allow people with dementia unsupervised access into domestic kitchen area	
Safe shelving heights to minimise reaching and bending in all areas to prevent falls and other safety hazards	
Glazed kitchen units or open units / shelving – people can easily find items they want	
Acoustic treatment in eating areas to minimise noise	
Pull down lighting over dining tables (if required) to help those with visual impairment to 'help themselves' where they can	
Non slip flooring in cooking areas which is in clearly contrasting colours to units; work surfaces and wall surfaces	
Easy clean, plain and matt floor covering in dining area	
Door handles on cupboards which are easy to hold (get hand into) and which do not protrude as this could cause a snagging hazard which could result in a fall or injury.	
Chairs with and without arms in colours which contrast with the surroundings	
Dining tables which can accommodate wheelchairs comfortably so the individual can move under the table easily to enable them to eat	
Red and orange crockery or red and orange interior decoration – research suggests it helps stimulate appetite	
Crockery which contrasts against the table covering to help people to see their plate, cup etc.,	

Design for Personal Space – have you provided:-

GENERAL LIVING AREAS

Wheelchair storage spaces / mobility scooter storage with charging points – can be provided in the main foyer area or space provided in each apartment

A good external view and sunlight to living areas and bedrooms

Low windows to improve natural lighting and ventilation – windows with easy to use casement stays / handles – views outside from seating or from bed

Patio doors? If so, have you provided windows which can open independently to the patio doors in that room for ventilation?

Thermostatically controlled heating in each room to let people modify the temperature room by room

A lockable cupboard in the kitchen area for medication

A notice board next to the front door to remind people of important visits; appointments they have that day and anything they should take with them.

Adequate storage with easy to reach shelving

A shelf next to each front door can provide a space for a photo, picture or item so people know they are home.

Paintable front doors – the door colour can be changed to help with recognition

An area to display the address which is most familiar to the resident – enabling them to see it at their doorway and know that this is their home

Memory boxes can be helpful for personalising a door area as well as providing a cue for a resident to identify their own space and telling others about the person whose apartment it is.

Contrasting light switch covers



BEDROOM	
A bedroom door which contrasts with surrounding walls – or has photos/ pictures / label on so people can identify it as their bedroom	
A visible bed – can it be easily seen from the hallway; can it be accessed from both sides; does the bed linen and sheets contrast so people know where to sleep; does the bed linen contrast with the carpet; can the toilet be seen from the bed and vice versa.	
Mirrors which can be removed or covered (roller blind can be useful to cover mirrors) – some people can be frightened by their reflection because they don't always recognise themselves	
An analogue clock in the person's view to help them to identify time of day – morning and night	
Areas for a room to be personalised with the person's own items, perfume, hair brush; photos; favourite teddy or blanket	
Lamps with light up when movement is detected can enable people to move around safely.	
Care staff who dress appropriate to the time of day – wearing dressing gown over their uniform during a night visit will help the person with dementia to realise it is night time	
Visually accessible wardrobes to assist with ongoing independence	
	
PERSONAL KITCHEN AREA	
A practical kitchen area with open shelving and glazed units so regularly used items can be easily found – are accessible and easy to reach	
	

Kitchen appliances that can be easily seen and are easy to use	
A dining area that can be seen from the kitchen area – or is in the kitchen	
Pictures or labels to prompt where necessary	
A glass fronted fridge? It will encourage people to eat what is in there	
Large ceramic mugs with large handles – they are easier to hold and drink from. Plates and bowls with a lip around the edge – easier to hold and eat from	
Screening in communal eating areas to allow dignity with discrete assisted eating	
Shelves; furnishing with rounded edges to help prevent injury through collision	
A lockable cupboard in the kitchen area for medication	
Eating and Nutrition – have you provided opportunities for:-	
A sense of occasion at meal times – enjoyable and fun – a time for reminiscence	
A domestic home style setting – encourage participation	
Encouraging people to set tables; clear their plates and wash and dry up – if they want to (reminiscence)	
Individual food and social preferences to be met	
Cultural differences in mealtimes to be met	
Meeting individual food and nutritional requirements	
Encouraging mealtime social interaction	
Involvement in growing and /or buying food	
Well lit dining areas	
Reducing noise and distraction	
Colour and colour contrasts in deco and in tableware to help people easily identify places and identify crockery and cutlery	
Dignity crockery and cutlery to be available to help people maintain their dignity and independence at mealtimes	

Design for Family and Community – have you provided opportunities to:-

Encourage families and community to be involved at the accommodation – multi use room; dementia café etc.	
Enable staff should find it easy to move around the building	
Adequately store equipment	
Enable staff to relax in their own area and safely store their possessions	
Interact via wi-fi access to enable case conferences; training and presentations to be carried out (encouraging visitors and family contact via Skype etc.,)	
Incorporate religious and cultural beliefs – recommend use of activity area for group sessions	
Carry out physical activity for residents, family, community and staff – in internal and /or external spaces	

Walking and Exercise

Design should provide natural and seamless access from inside to outside areas and vice versa, taking into account weather issues, and at the same time allow unobtrusive observation by staff and families.	
Provide plenty of seating with shade or cover in garden areas so people can sit outside comfortably	
Limit the numbers of doors in communal corridors and to communal rooms to encourage people to have 'free walking experience'. Where doors are required – replace with a glazed panel door to allow people to see the other side	
Integrating exercise equipment into internal and external spaces, can help to eradicate excessive energy, which suggests that the need to wander can be reduced and it can also help to increase appetite	
Encourage people to be active outside provides access to natural lighting which in itself increases wellness.	
Non accessible doors (service doors) can be hidden by painting them the same colour as the walls – or covering with a vinyl image (picture)	
Distractions at the end of a corridor, where there may be an	

exit door, like a table and chair or a hat stand, and things to look at along the way will also help with preventing people from leaving the premises as well as addressing impaired memory issues	
Open plan areas or clear glazed screens will permit residents to understand the use of a room without resorting to signage	
Use manifestations on large glass areas to stop people from walking into them or becoming confused by reflective surfaces	
Providing an open plan layout to communal areas helps people to easily find their way to different communal spaces	
Avoid visual clutter, it can distress and confuse residents, especially where glazed and open plan areas are provided within design	
Cupboards and cabinets will be required to safely store items away	
Aromatherapy and music therapy should be factored into the design of the building to enhance communal areas, assisted bathing suite; healthy living suite etc., this provision could help to relieve a person's anxiety and also to reminisce	
Television noise may upset and / or confuse people so this needs to be carefully managed.	

Garden Areas

Keep any circulation routes away from vehicular access / parking areas	
Enable the garden, as far as possible, to be accessible from apartments and main communal areas	
Use soft lighting to illuminate the garden areas at dusk so that people can continue to go outside	
Provide different areas of sensory stimulation e.g. water features; wind chimes; attract birds into the garden area; sensory planting	
Do not use any spiky or poisonous planting	
Provide a familiarity layout, what would people have had in their back gardens – shed, greenhouse, bench, bird tables, bird baths, vegetable patch	
Maintain concentration and interest within the perimeter using sculptures, and murals to support way finding	
Treat boundary areas with planting to prevent people attempting to climb / leave the accommodation	
Provide furniture which is bolted to the ground or is too heavy to move – this will prevent people from using it to help climb over the boundary	
Develop courtyard areas providing protection from weather	

<p>Provide seating with shade – skin can become more prone to sunburn with some medication so shaded areas are required</p>	
	
<p>Plant herbs and lavender next to paths to release fragrance when brushed</p>	
<p>Fill garden with colourful and scented flowers to encourage wildlife</p>	
<p>Different activity areas in gardens including outside eating area; shaded seating; planting areas; activity shed; greenhouse; wandering pathway circuit and games</p>	
<p>Washing line which people can use to peg out laundry (reminiscence)</p>	
<p>Digging areas – some people may just want to dig</p>	
<p>Mowing the lawn – have you enabled people to mow the lawn if they want to?</p>	
<p>Paths to lead back to where they started – avoid patterns and significant contrasts / drain / manhole covers on paths – people may see these as an obstacle and not walk further</p>	
<p>Provide a safe pathway i.e don't use gravel; pebbles or bark which could cause slipping or falling hazard</p>	
<p>Could pets be introduced into the garden – hens are an increasingly popular addition helping with activities such as providing food; water; cleaning and egg collection</p>	
<p>Outside reablement / fitness equipment – fun gaming area</p>	
	
<p>Provide arches over pathways to break up the path and give areas of interest / recognition</p>	
<p>Provide a memory garden and garden club to encourage participation</p>	
<p>Avoid dark shadowy areas as this can cause distress to</p>	

some	
A well designed garden should cater for people with wheelchair and mobility aids as well as able bodied people	
Provide a sheltered garden area for someone at end of life to pass peacefully outside if required	

Designing for Sensory Impairment

Prevent electric flexes from trailing the floor by providing ample electric sockets	
Provide contrast between ironmongery, doors, door frames and walls to distinguish these clearly	
Defining walls and floors can be resolved by providing different textures.	
Different floor coverings can be used to help 'way finding' by producing different sounds	
Avoid shiny surfaces, especially shiny floor surfaces. Non reflective materials, such as matt wall finish tiles and flooring, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, reduce glare.	
Highly patterned floor and worktop surfaces should be avoided as this makes objects set against them harder to distinguish	
Callers can be recognised – via clear glazing beside the door, a door view, audible caller recognition or door entry system.	
Letter boxes should be centred within the door with a 'letter cage' on the inside and door numbers centred at eye level.	
Where homes share a communal outdoor space, an enclosed and gated dog run, with water and drains, is available for guide dogs to be taken for toileting.	
If a building is to be provided for people with visual impairment and sight loss, then non slip flooring should be considered in all areas, to support guide dogs to carry out their working role.	
All edges to stairs and steps should be highlighted with illumination and texture and tactile cue provided at the top and bottom of each flight.	
Colour and tone contrast, especially when combined with good lighting, can also make an enormous difference to a visually impaired person's ability to understand and 'read' their surroundings.	

The checklist is provided as a guide only and is not exhaustive. It has been compiled using good practice information as outlined within the Enabling Independence Design Guide which can be found at www.sunderland.gov.uk/extracare.

All acknowledgements are held within the Design Guide document.