



HINTS AND TIPS LIVING WELL WITH DEMENTIA

- **Ideas for creating Dementia Friendly living in your own home**
- **A practical guide of low level home adaptations.**

This guide is informed by people with dementia, carers, professionals and research.



This booklet is the second in a series of practical information and guidance booklets informed by people living in Midlothian who care for a relative, partner or friend with dementia.

The first booklet *"Hints and Tips – When caring for people with dementia"* provides tips from carers based on what worked for them and acknowledges that everyone's dementia journey is different.

This booklet shows straight-forward, low-cost, practical ways a home can be designed and laid out to enable someone with dementia to live in their own home independently and safely.

Supporting someone with dementia can be a difficult journey. Both carers and professionals have shared some of their experience and expertise in the hope that it might make your journey a little bit easier.

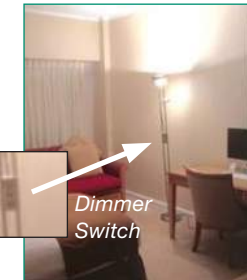
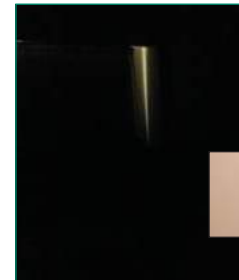
Lighting



1. Natural daylight is good for us. Manage daylight and sunlight by installing or adjusting blinds/net curtains.
2. Move objects away that block natural light.
3. Use bright, evenly distributed lighting in the evening.
4. Adjustable lighting and additional light sources are preferable to fewer, brighter lights.

Before (light off)

After (light on)



5. Avoid sudden changes in light or heavy shadow.

“Effective lighting involves a combination of increased light levels, good contrast, minimising glare, avoiding of sudden changes in light levels and good colour definition. Quality lighting is a vital component of good dementia-friendly design.”

Noise

People with dementia can rely more on their senses to understand and engage with what is happening around them.

Homes can be busy places. Being aware of how specific noise and noise levels impacts the person you care for is important.

Multiple noise sources, persistent or loud noises can overload the senses and be quite disturbing for a person with dementia.

Tuning into the positive sounds that promotes a person's wellbeing is very important.

For example, opening a window to listen to birds sing or the wind through trees can engage multiple sensory experiences without overload.

A person's response to sound is individual. Lifestyle and where a person has lived may increase tolerance and response to certain noises.

Paying close attention to behavioural and vocal responses to different types of noise stimulation is necessary as responses are likely to change in different context and times.

1. Televisions:

Turn TVs and radios off when not being watched.



2. Covering Televisions when they are not being watched will avoid reflection/ mirroring on a black screen.



3. Too many conversations going on at once can be overwhelming.



4. Create a playlist of music that has had meaning throughout the life of the person with dementia.



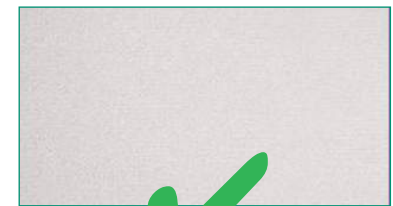
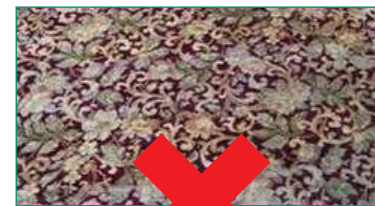
Flooring

Visual perception is the ability to see and give meaning to the visual space around us. As people with dementia may be experiencing changes to their sense of sight and to how they perceive colours, dementia friendly flooring can help reduce environmental anxieties a person may experience.

Using colours and colour tones well can make spaces and rooms more accessible. For example, avoid having contrasting colour on the floor threshold between the hall and bathroom.

This can have significant impact on someone with dementia's ability to feel safe, make sense of and move around their home. For example, sometimes people with dementia can think of gloss finishes as being wet areas or dark areas, or patterns in flooring can be perceived as being a hole in the floor.

- Ensure furniture is contrasting colour to flooring
- Remove rugs and clutter to minimise fall risk
- Use of colours at warm end of colour spectrum
- Use materials having a matt finish



- Avoid large, patterned designs in flooring and wallpapers.
- Avoid high gloss, reflective floor surfaces
- Ensure floor surfaces are non-slip
- Colour of floor is best contrasted with walls skirting



Reflections

There are many different stages involved in the seeing process, various types and combinations of mistakes can occur. Common mistakes include:

Illusions: What the person sees is a “distortion of reality”. This may result from a particular characteristic of the object, such as its surface being shiny or it being the same colour as the wall behind. An example might be seeing a face in a patterned curtain.

Misperceptions: What the person sees is a “best guess” at the inaccurate or distorted information the brain has received from the eyes. This is usually the result of damage to the visual system due to diseases such as glaucoma. For example, a shadow on the carpet could be mistaken for a hole in the floor.

Mis-identifications: Damage to specific parts of the brain can lead to problems identifying objects and people. For example, distinguishing between a son, husband or brother may become difficult.

Source: Alzheimer's Society



- Reflections may be perceived as being someone else watching.
- Remove/replace mirrors or highly reflective surfaces if causing problems for the person with dementia.
- Use non-reflective, anti-glare glazing on paintings/pictures.
- Replace mirrored doors on cabinets and wardrobes with non-reflective glass, or simply remove the doors all together.
- If removing doors from a medicine cabinet, ensure that medicine is kept safely elsewhere.



Labels and Signage

Dementia can impair recent memory, and this can be both disorientating and distressing for a person with dementia. For example, in our homes it is typical that doors to rooms are all the same design and colour with no indication of what lies beyond the door.

Labels and signage can greatly improve how people understand and move around their home.

- Early usage of labels and signage to build familiarity with them is helpful.
- Label drawers and cupboards with what is in them if transparent doors are not possible or suitable.
- Place wayfinding signs at slightly below eye level that is visible to the person.



Contrasting colours

Colours and/or tones that are contrasting can help where vision and perception of objects is difficult to make sense of and can lead to misinterpretation of their environment.

Making doorways, door surrounds and skirting different tones or colours can make it easier for someone to plot a route – or a ‘wayfind’ – through their home. By having different coloured food plates and cups, foods and liquids become clearer and stand out against different background colours.

Just as some colours help objects stand out, you may also consider using colours to camouflage doors, cupboards or areas that you may not want to emphasise.



- Contrasting colour of toilet seat with base system.



- Colours such as reds and yellows can make doorways more visible.



- Strong patterns, such as chequers, can cause some confusion and may lead to a person trying to pick up the pattern. Therefore, plates are best in a colour tone that is different to the food to be eaten and the table or tablecloth beneath the plate.



Household items

There are a growing range of household items that make day-to-day tasks safer for people with dementia. Visual prompts and buttons that are a manageable size can reduce the day to day-to-day difficulties that can occur as a result from symptoms of dementia.



Useful resources



The Dementia Centre is based at Stirling University and has a wide range of online resources, books and information about environment and dementia friendly design. For more information: <http://dementia.stir.ac.uk/>



NHS Choices is the UK's biggest Health Website and has dedicated information on the home environment and dementia. For more information: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/dementia-guide/Pages/dementia-home-environment.aspx>



The Alzheimer's Society has produced a booklet called "Making your home dementia friendly". For more information: https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=3113



Alzheimer Scotland is a leading dementia organisation in Scotland and has comprehensive information and resources about dementia. For more information: <http://www.alzscot.org/>



NHS Inform is a national information service providing a co-ordinated approach and a single source of quality assured health information for the public in Scotland. For more information: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/brain-nerves-and-spinal-cord/dementia/about-dementia>

This guide has been created in partnership with people living with dementia, carers of people living with dementia, professionals from across third and public sectors and up-to-date research.

In the year ahead, workshops will be delivered within the community to both inform and learn from people with dementia and their carers. The learning from these workshops will update this guide on an continuing basis.

This guide sits within a series of living well with dementia booklets covering:

- Hints & Tips for Dementia Carers
- Hints & Tips: Ideas for creating Dementia Friendly living in your own home
- Hints & Tips: Home Adaptions, Equipment and Assistive Technology *
- Hints & Tips: Dementia Friendly Design for New Build Homely Environments*

*Available by end of 2016.

This guide has been produced in partnership with:

People living with dementia, their families and carers living in Midlothian,

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