

Dementia Friendly Home Environment Checklist

This has been designed as a tool to assist a visiting professional to discuss simple but carefully considered changes to the environment which can reduce the barriers for people living with dementia. It is important to remember that everyone experiences dementia in a different way. The changes should be discussed with an individual and their spouse/family in a sensitive and timely manner before being implemented. Only those which are most suitable for a person should be considered.

Promoting Mobility - Home

- Suggest removing rugs
- Check that flexes are not a trip hazard
- Outline edges of steps, stairs and slopes with brightly coloured tape, paint or trims
- Contrasting colour stair handrail
- Consider minimising patterns by installing plain matt flooring which colour contrasts with walls
- Avoid floor colours that can be mistaken for real things (e.g. green = grass, blue = water, black mat = hole in floor)
- Chairs with arms and seat at knee height are easier to get out of
- Encourage the use of walking aid if required
- Consider if orientation is helped by having room doors open or closed
- Consider way finding signs to aid direction
- Light switches should contrast to wall colour this can be done by making a border with bright tape
- Touch lamps on bedside table
- Automatic light sensors should allow sufficient time before they switch off if they are suitable

Promoting Mobility – Personal

- Get up slowly after sitting/lying
- Ensure footwear fits correctly (avoid slip on/loose fitting)
- Consider regular podiatry for foot care and nail cutting
- Have regular eye tests
- Have regular hearing tests

Lighting

- Check that nothing is blocking the light through the windows indoors and outside
- Suggest having windows regularly cleaned inside and out
- Increase natural light by opening curtains in daytime and avoid unnecessary nets/blinds
- Try to reduce glare, shadows and reflections
- Close curtains at night to reduce reflections and promote sleep
- Use brighter bulbs or extra lights especially on stairs and in the toilet

Kitchen - Eating & Drinking

- Make frequently used items and appliances easy to use and place within sight
- Use bright coloured cloths and towels
- Install safety timers, sensors and shut off valves for appliances.
- Use crockery that is a solid colour which contrasts (e.g. blue) with the food and table or use plain contrasting tablecloth/placemats
- Water in a glass can be easier to see if coloured with cordial
- Have regular timing of meals
- If possible, use mealtimes as a social experience
- Limit distractions (e.g. music, TV)
- Encourage food/drink intake little and often
- Senses can change. Consider the smell and texture of food
- Use clear plastic containers for storage

Knowing where things are

- Traditional fixtures, fittings and appliances are easier for people to recognise and use
- Reduce clutter unless a person uses this for orientation or gains comfort from having items nearby then consider appropriate placing to reduce hazards.
- Keep frequently used items accessible
- Always keep important items (e.g. keys, glasses, medication) in the same place
- Consider wearing keys on a lanyard
- Photograph contents of cupboards and wardrobes to display on the outside of the unit
- Or label the outside of cupboards/drawers using words and simple images
- Remove existing cupboard doors or use transparent fronts
- Consider a basket or tray for paperwork
- Keep shelves and cupboards tidy
- Lock away hazardous items
- Consider using a medication dispenser
- Place good sized, contrasting colour signs/labels with a simple image and lower-case text at eye level (1.2m) on the front of room doors

Furniture & Furnishings

- Check that furniture and furnishings contrast with the walls and floors
- Avoid stripes or strong patterns
- Use plain bright contrasting linen (in bedroom and bathroom)
- Mirror can be a distraction and cause disorientation, cover if needed
- Consider making 'feature' items which will help to orientate a person e.g. a favourite chair, an ornament of meaning or photographs

Minimise Distractions

- Reduce background noise from TV, radio, open windows
- Carpets, curtains and cushions help to absorb background noise
- Recognise the need for and calming benefit of quiet space
- Avoid use of heavily scented air fresheners and cleaning products
- Try and keep the room temperature even and comfortable for an individual as senses can change and extremes can be a distraction

Bathroom – Personal Hygiene

- Put a sign on the door as a reminder about where the toilet is
- Leave the bathroom door open so the toilet is visible, consider leaving toilet light on at night
- Make sure the door lock is familiar and easy to use. Do not use if unnecessary
- Have open shelves or glass door cabinets so self-care items can easily be found
- Clearly label toiletries (a bar of soap may be more familiar than a dispenser)
- Clearly label hot and cold controls
- Use a flood safe plug
- Consider installing (coloured) grab rails
- Use a contrasting colour shower curtain and slip resistant- mat
- Leave the toilet seat lid in the upright position or consider removing it
- Use a colour contrasting toilet seat
- Highly visible toilet target aids inside the bowl can assist gentlemen
- Ensure toilet roll is visible and easy to reach from the toilet
- A handle flush is more recognisable than button flush

Garden/Outdoor Space

- Ensure flagstones are even, in good condition and are secure
- Ensure paths are clear of overhanging plants
- Use a colour contrasting railing on slopes or steps
- Consider raised planters and easily accessible/visible watering cans
- Ensure areas in the shade are available with appropriately coloured, comfortable, accessible seating
- Consider sensory elements such as wind chimes, water features and bird tables

Technology Enabled Care

- An around the clock, emergency care alarm service is provided by City Wide Care Alarms who have a range of devices
- Personal alarms can be used to call for help in the event of an emergency
- Voice-based artificial intelligence powered digital assistant (e.g. Alexa) can make a phone call in the event of an emergency plus provide aid by setting reminder alarms, making lists, playing music/audiobooks, provide real time information and can control several smart devices.
- A tracking device can enable a person to remain independent while providing peace of mind for everyone

Keeping Active & Engaged

- Keep doing what is enjoyable
- Make sure there is an easy-to-understand clock and calendar
- Clocks can have large analogue or LED display showing day/night and date
- Check the telephone is easy to use (big buttons) and in easy reach
- Put a photo of the person next to their name and telephone number
- Keep emergency contact numbers listed in one place
- Place memorable photos and keepsakes around the home to evoke positive memories.

Important Additional Information

- Ensure that carers/supporters needs are recognised and offer referral to appropriate services such as the Dementia Advice Service (0114 2502875) and Sheffield Carer's Centre (0114 2728362)
- If further assessment is required (e.g. for specialist equipment or a Disabled Facilities Grant) telephone 0114 2734709 or email CommunitiesEquip&Adaptations@sheffield.gov.uk
- People can also request an assessment for mobility equipment and adaptations to the home by following the link below <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/housing/adapting-your-home>
- The Alzheimer's Society have many useful factsheets and publications. Advise that for further information a person can access the booklet "Making your home dementia friendly". https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/migrate/downloads/making_your_home_dementia_friendly.pdf