

Heneiddio'n Dda  
yng Nghymru

Ageing Well  
in Wales



# A pocket guide to being dementia supportive

Ensuring Wales is a good place  
to grow older for everyone

# About Ageing Well in Wales

Ageing Well in Wales is a national Programme hosted by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales. It brings together individuals and communities with public, private and voluntary sectors to develop and promote innovative and practical ways to make Wales a good place to grow older for everyone.

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**JRF**  
JOSEPH  
ROWNTREE  
FOUNDATION

 **Dementia  
Friends**  
An Alzheimer's Society initiative

Leading the fight  
against dementia  
**Alzheimer's  
Society**

# A pocket guide to being dementia supportive

This pocket guide provides a few useful tips from Ageing Well in Wales partners about how you can be more supportive to people living with dementia. Even the smallest action can make a big difference.

For more information and resources, visit:

[www.ageingwellinwales.com/dementia](http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/dementia)

## Speak clearly

When speaking to a person with dementia, speak clearly, calmly and slowly to allow them time to understand.

Use simple short sentences. Avoid complicated questions.

Don't ask the person to make complicated decisions. Keep choices to a minimum as too many options can be confusing.

Don't raise your voice.

Where possible talk in a noise-free, non-distracting place, or find a quiet corner.

## Body language

People with dementia may find it difficult to understand what is being said but can be quick to interpret messages on people's faces and can be aware of body language.

Smile warmly, make eye contact, use a friendly tone, respect personal space, and don't stand over them.

Pay attention to their body language for signals as to how they are feeling.

# Listen

Listen carefully to what the person has to say, giving plenty of encouragement whilst looking out for other clues of what they might be trying to communicate.

If someone with dementia is having difficulty finding a word, then you can suggest one ... but be careful not to interrupt or finish the sentence for them!

## Show respect and patience

Adapt what you are saying if you are having difficulty being understood.

Try to get the message across in a different way, perhaps using objects or pictures. For example, show the person the meals they can choose from.

Allow people with dementia time to find the words to tell you what they want. Don't rush, try to go at their pace.

## Keep the noise down

People with dementia may have difficulty listening if there are a lot of different noises around them.

Where possible, reduce unnecessary noise or move to a quieter area.



# Environment and lighting

People with dementia may not recognise colours, faces or objects or have problems with spatial awareness.

What is obvious to you may not be obvious to them.

Be aware that features such as lighting, mirrors, shadows, steps, and patterned walls and floors can cause disorientation.

## Help with handling money

Counting money, calculating and handling change, recognising coins and banknotes and knowing the value of money can all be very difficult for people with dementia.

Offer to help by counting out money and giving a receipt.

## Finding the way

People with dementia may forget where things are or may not recognise everyday objects.

They may need you to help them to find their way around.

They may not be able to follow simple directions and need you to guide them to where they want to go.

## Feeling lost

Sometimes people with dementia may feel lost in familiar places or forget where they live.

If someone is lost and distressed offer to help by asking if their address is on something they might have in their pocket or bag.

If necessary, the police can help.

## Difficulty finding things

People with dementia may have forgotten what they came into the shop for, or they may have a list, but have problems finding the things they want.

Offer to help with finding things on the list if they have one.

Help them to choose the right amount of things, particularly if they seem to be buying an unusually large amount of something.

# Making choices

While choice is good, for someone with dementia too much choice can be confusing.

Ask what they would like e.g. a coffee and then suggest two or three likely options.

Offer one choice at a time, preferably with a visual prompt.

## Whose reality?

The person may be confused and say something that doesn't make sense.

Avoid making them feel embarrassed or foolish by contradicting them. Try to find a way around the situation.

## Being predictable

The person with dementia may be confused if things have been rearranged or by new people they meet.

Try to keep things the same or offer additional assistance if things have changed.

Try to arrange that the same person supports the person each time they visit but remember they might not remember you or what you talked about the last time you met.



# Every day can be different

For some people with dementia, what they can do changes from day to day, so how you help them may need to be different every visit.

Look out for signs and offer help when needed.

## Feelings matter most

People with dementia may not remember facts or people, but they will remember how a person or a situation made them feel.

Always try to make someone with dementia feel valued and respected.

# The essential ingredients of a Dementia Supportive Community

Understanding of dementia in the community and within businesses.

Helpful staff.

Accessible physical environment.

People with dementia and their carers are empowered, have practical support to participate, and in identifying needs and aspirations.

Appropriate entertainment activities and leisure services.

Reliable transport - respectful to needs.

People with dementia are supported wherever they live.

Access to early diagnosis, integrated care and person-centred support.

**For more information  
and resources on how to  
be dementia supportive,  
please visit:**

**[www.ageingwellinwales.com/dementia](http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/dementia)**