



Why do you need to be dementia-friendly?

Making Walsall a dementia-friendly borough



Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group



Walsall Council

Briefing note

Why does your organisation need to be dementia-friendly?

Dementia currently affects some 800,000 people in the UK.

There are many forms of dementia, but they are all diseases of the brain which can cause:

- Problems with memory
- Problems with everyday tasks, like handling money.
- Problems with communication
- Problems with perception.

It is progressive, in that it starts off with very mild symptoms and gets worse over time.

It affects everyone differently. No two people with dementia are the same.

Why do we need to know about dementia?

There are estimated to be nearly 3,000 people with dementia living in Walsall and that figure is set to steadily rise over the next five years.

Increasingly, people with dementia are living for much longer in the community and that will mean that increasingly, more and more of your customers and potential customers will have dementia.

You probably already have some customers who have dementia.

You certainly have many potential customers who have dementia.

Making it easier for people with dementia to use your service and supporting your staff to serve them more effectively has a number of very clear benefits:

- ✓ It will enable you to maintain your existing customers who might have or be developing dementia. If they do not find it easy to use your organisation, they are likely to seek out another.
- ✓ It will enable you to attract new customers. There will be an increase in the numbers of people with dementia living independently. They will use the organisations which are easiest to use.

- ✓ People with dementia and their carers will be more inclined to use your services and spread the word amongst peers
- ✓ Your organisation may have a community charter, or a community benefit component, to your quality assurance programme. Making it easier for people with dementia to use your business will be a very big 'plus'.
- ✓ It will help with compliance to the Equality Act 2010
- ✓ Staff who are unsure how to best serve customers with dementia may be hesitant in helping, causing delays to themselves, the customer with dementia and other customers.

How can I make things easier for people with dementia to use my organisation?

There are a number of things you can do, fairly easily and cheaply, in order to help people with dementia:

1. Ask people with dementia what it is like to use your organisation.

You may already know people with dementia – if so, that is a great place to start.

People with dementia will often be able to tell you very directly which aspects of your organisation they find easy to use and which present barriers to them.

For more information. If you don't know any people with dementia, then contact Pathways 4 Life on 01922 707 898 or the Alzheimer's Society on 0121 521 3020, who might be in position to arrange for people with dementia to visit and then let you know what they think.

2. Have a look around your buildings and facilities, are they dementia-friendly?

There are often some very simple changes we can make which make the environment much easier for people with dementia.

For more information. See the environmental checklists. This is not a prescriptive list, nor is it exhaustive, but it may give you a few ideas and some food for thought.

3. Check whether the information you provide about your organisation is dementia-friendly.

At the very least you should make sure that you use plain language.

4. Raise awareness of dementia

People with dementia tell us repeatedly that it is the attitude of those they encounter which has the biggest impact on their lives in their community.

Our work in Walsall has shown that those with good 'people skills', or within organisations with a strong focus on customer care, may already have many of the attributes or skills they need to be able to support people with dementia.

However, a basic understanding of the impact of dementia and how to support people can make a huge difference, both to the experience of the customer and to that of the staff involved.

People living with dementia will encounter a range of people on a day-to-day basis as they go about their business.

They may experience a range of problems associated with dementia that have the potential to impact on their ability to interact with those they encounter. Similarly those they encounter may be unsure how and whether to help people who appear to be experiencing difficulties.



People with dementia all differ in the way they experience their dementia, but generally speaking, in public situations, people with dementia may have a range of difficulties, including:

- Have problems remembering what they are doing
- Have difficulties in communicating clearly
- Have problems handling money
- Have problems navigating in complex or confusing environments.

How staff respond to people who may be experiencing these kinds of problems makes the biggest difference.

For more information. See the other documents in the toolkit

- Checklist for dementia-friendly communities
- Hints and tips for customer facing staff.

or visit:

accordgroup.org.uk
ageuk.org.uk
alzheimers.org.uk





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