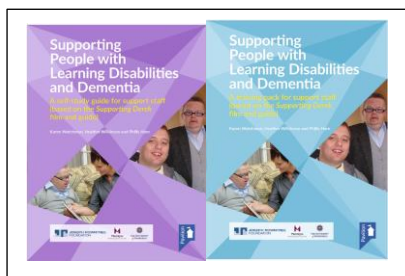


Care Planning and Dementia

This document contains the most common things that most people with dementia and a learning disability will need in their care plans. It is for guidance only, to support you to develop your own care plans for the person you support. **CLDT/Livewell Southwest do not take responsibility for any changes made to your care plans based on this document.**

It is important you check what works for the person you support, follow national guidance, and use these suggestions alongside any existing current care plans. The things in this plan won't be suitable for everyone.

The information in this document has been taken from the Supporting Derek Resource:



<https://pavpub.com/learning-disability/dementia/supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities-and-dementia-self-study-guide>

<https://pavpub.com/health-and-social-care/dementia/supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities-and-dementia-training-pack>

There are six main areas to consider:

- The environment
- Seating
- Communication
- Mealtimes
- Night-time care
- Activities

Environment

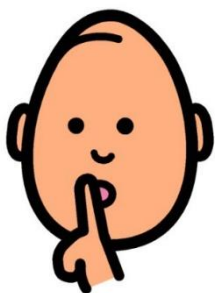
The environment often **negatively impacts the person with dementia**.

It is important to pay close attention to creating environments that **reduce confusion and distress**.

Surroundings should **be adapted** so the person does not have to “fit the home” but **the home fits them** – it is a space that **supports independence and comfort**

The environment needs to **be relaxing, familiar, and unsurprising**. This can help reduce distress and increase the wellbeing of the person with dementia.

A relaxing environment can be created by:

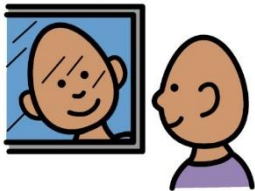


- Reducing noise levels and clutter
- **Reducing** the number of **things going on**.
For example, not having the TV and washing machine on at the same time.



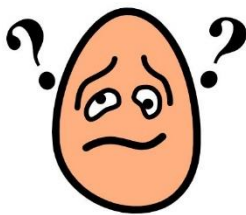
- Maintain consistency in the environment so that lighting, layout and daily rhythms help the person feel safe.

A familiar environment can be created by:



- **Remove or cover mirrors –**

The person may not recognise themselves, which can frighten them when they see an image in the mirror. Changes to perception and their general understanding can cause them to not understand that it is a reflection.



- **Making sure all floors are the same colour**

- Different colours may confuse the person. They might think they have reached a step or a large drop, which can cause them to freeze at the point that floors change, or where there is a rug or bathmat.



- **Avoid blue or shiny floors (especially in bathrooms) –**

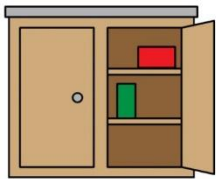
The person may present with distressing behaviour as **they think it is water**. They might not want to go in that room to avoid stepping in water.

- **The floor and door threshold bars may look like cliffs**, so can cause hesitancy in walking over them.

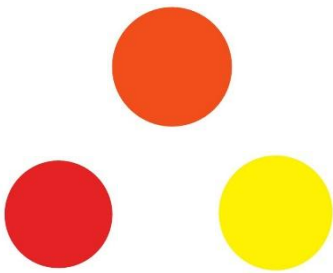
An unsurprising environment can be created by:



- Using **signs on doors** to indicate what room it is – make sure it is at eye level to the person!



- Using **pictures** to show what is inside cupboards.



- **Painting bathroom doors** a different colour **may help guide the person**. Red, orange, and yellow are ideal colours for a person with dementia!



- If possible, make sure **toilets** can be **viewed from their bedroom**.
- **Avoid changing the layout** of furniture and cupboards!

Seating

People with learning disabilities and dementia may have changes in how they move, sit, and understand things. This means **good seating is very important** for safety, comfort, and everyday activities.

Some changes that can be made are:

- **Full-body support seats –**

Dementia can lead to worsening posture over time so seating might need to be changed from simple support to fuller-body support as the person's mobility decreases.

- **Footrests, pelvic supports, side supports, or tilting chairs –**

These can help with tiredness, stiffness, or leaning.

- **Communication –**

Seating can also help with communication. For example, making sure the person can see the staff member's face.

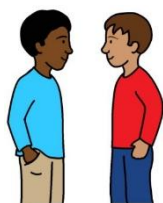
- **Regular checks –**

Seating should be checked regularly because needs change as dementia progresses.

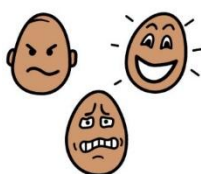
Communication

As dementia progresses, the person's ability to verbally communicate may decrease. It is important that you still **encourage communication** – even if it is non-verbal.

Here are some ways to encourage communication:



- Make **eye contact** to let them know you are talking to them, and not something else in the room



- Use **facial expressions** as they might be relying on non-verbal cues to understand what is being said



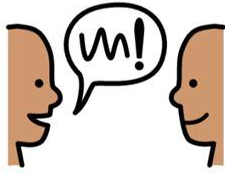
- Use **short sentences** and use simple language – avoid long or complicated sentences. Allow them time to process what you have said



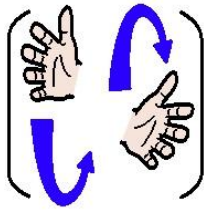
- Check **hearing aids** and try to limit as much noise in the room – this ensures they can hear you



- Keep an eye out for signs of **fatigue or misunderstanding**. If they don't understand rephrase rather than repeat.



- **Treat the person with respect** – ensure they remain included in conversations, avoid arguing, and try not to correct them unnecessarily



- Approach them slowly, at eye level, and say their name. **Use a warm, friendly, or kind tone of voice.** Speak clearly, and only talk about one idea at a time. You can **use visuals, prompts, gestures, or objects** to support meaning

Understanding the persons **non-verbal cues** – such as pointing to stomach when they are hungry – can help you with **creating conversation!**

Mealtimes

Always follow Speech and Language advice.

If mealtimes are difficult, it might be due to the persons sense of smell changing, communication decreasing, ability to understand hunger cues are changing, and ability to use cutlery is declining, changes in ability to see the food on the plate (e.g. if the plate food and tablecloth are too 'busy' visually)

Due to these factors, you should try to keep mealtimes slow, unhurried, and relaxing.

Here are some things that **might** help at mealtimes:



- **Reduce noise levels** and try to only have one person talking at a time.



- Understand **how** they want to eat meals (i.e., at the table, on the sofa, alone, with others, in silence etc.)
- Give a preferred drink



- Use contrasting, **solid colours** for plates/cups and try to **avoid patterned tablecloth** – it may confuse their ability to see the food, or utensils clearly.



- If food needs to be blended, try keeping it separate so they can enjoy each flavour. **Offer simple food choices**

Watch for signs of choking, inability to swallow, fatigue, or loss of interest in food.

Maintain independence wherever possible, adapting utensils or providing prompts when needed.

Nighttime care

Lack of sleep can cause a change in mood, short temper, or even poor co-ordination. Bedtimes and sleep can be supported by:

Consistent bedtime routines –

Use visual, auditory, or action prompts (i.e., ending music on a tv show, dimming the lights, brushing teeth, or put pyjamas on yourself) to show it is their bedtime. If they already have a bedtime routine, stick to it.

Reducing anxiety –

You may wish to talk to them quietly and try to reduce stimulation before they go to bed. Providing a hot drink a few hours before bedtime can help them. If they are to wake in the night, you should respond calmly, and offer reassurance over directing or correcting them.

Take notes of daytime naps, evaluate if they are affecting sleep, and **adjust if needed**

Activities

Finding activities that the person with dementia can participate in can help reduce **boredom**, **frustration**, and potentially **behaviour that challenges**.

Ensuring activities are **enjoyable and tailored** to the individual's skill set is key to this. Use signs of enjoyment to guide what activities you plan with the person!

For an activity to be meaningful, you should link it to **something they used to enjoy** or **still enjoy doing**. Offer them choices and adapt tasks so the person can succeed.

Consider whether **shorter or longer activities work best**, or a mix of both. Allow the person space and time to rest in-between activities and demands (including mealtimes)

You might also consider:



- **Arts and crafts** such as small woodwork tasks



- **Listening to music** and using that to think back to those time periods



- **Go for a walk**, especially on a sunny day!



- **Hand or foot massage**

Daily task activities –

Encouraging them to help with daily tasks in a way that they are able can help stimulate them and promote their independence (i.e., Folding, organising, putting away cutlery)

You can also find small tasks linked to what they were able to do previously. For example, if they enjoyed cooking, they could help put the vegetable cuttings in the bin or putting something in the saucepan.

You can get a tray of different items from around the house, and ask them to put them away or put in order (i.e., all the big items in one pile and small in another)

These can help support enjoyment, connection, and thinking.