

Information for Local Businesses, Services, Employees and Customers

People with dementia lead active lives including going to the shops and using local services. However, they may display signs of confusion and forgetfulness. They may find it hard to recall words and may repeat themselves and/or forget why they have come to a shop or service. This can be stressful and upsetting for them. Though dementia affects people in different ways; by giving each individual extra time, assistance and support you can make a big difference to their lives.

This leaflet contains information on how you can support your customers with dementia.

This leaflet was created by The Crystal Project. The Crystal Project is a community dementia project involving collaboration between the HSE, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Ballyhoura Rural Services, families affected by dementia, UCC and local community groups.

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Information for Businesses and Customers



Verbal Communication

- Speak clearly and calmly - so that the person has enough time to understand information. Use simple and short sentences. Avoid jargon. Try not to interrupt and let the person finish their sentences. Use an even, friendly tone when speaking. If necessary, speak with the person with dementia in a quiet part of the shop or business.
- Change your words not your sentiment. If a person does not understand the words you are using, simplify them. It is important to adapt your approach in order to be understood.

Body Language

Body language and facial expressions are a large part of how we communicate. Remember to smile, make eye contact, and be mindful of personal space. It is important to remember that people with dementia may not always understand what has been said, but may understand the message on your face.

Noise

People with dementia may find it hard to hear what you are saying. If possible find a quiet part of the building or reduce background noise.



Listening

Listen carefully to what the person has to say, giving plenty of time and encouragement. Actively listen to what they are trying to communicate. If the person finds it difficult to find a word, suggest one.

Lighting

People with dementia may have problems with vision and depth perception and require extra lighting. Make sure your building has as much light as possible.

Paying for Goods

People with dementia may have difficulty managing their money. Coins and notes may be confusing, and they may forget their debit or credit card pin. Offer assistance with counting money, and if possible offer a signature option rather than a pin.

Choices

Offer choices but don't overwhelm the person with too many choices. If a person has a list, offer to assist them in finding items. Don't take over. Bring a person to where the products are and show them a few options. If a person is buying large quantities of the same item, help them choose the right amount.

Show Don't Tell - Using Visual Aids

If your business has visual clues, e.g. pictures of different hair styles, offer pictures, so the person can choose for themselves. Leave enough time between options to allow the person make a decision.

Getting Around

People living with dementia may be disorientated in familiar surroundings and may find it hard to read signs. Offer to walk with them to where they want to go.

Different Realities

People with dementia may be confused and say something that doesn't make sense to you. Avoid making the person feel embarrassed or foolish by contradicting them. Try to find a way around the situation as this will help reduce stress.

Every Day Can Be Different

A person's ability may change over time, so how you helped last time may not be effective this time. You may need to change your approach.

