

Creating a dementia-friendly environment

Specification guidance and checklist





Myth Buster

Look out for this symbol throughout the document. It should break down some of the myths that surround what we can and can't offer as part of designing and installing what goes into our buildings and how some items assist customers with dementia.

Introduction

Creating a dementia friendly environment for our customers' homes is important. The impact for customers living in a safe, stimulating and comfortable environment should not be underestimated.

There are small changes we can make to existing buildings that will make a big positive difference for customers living with dementia.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance explaining what will make our buildings easier to use for customers with dementia.

The following elements of dementia friendly specification should be considered when developing new homes, maintaining existing homes or carrying out planned maintenance work.



1. General principles

- (a) Where possible use open plan layouts in communal areas to increase visibility e.g. visibility from reception area to entrance, waiting area, WCs and access points to other parts of the building.
- (b) Maximise views of nature by having low windows, natural materials and colours.
- (c) Provide as much good natural light indoors as possible taking care to ensure that glare or shadow contrasts are minimised.
- (d) Non-reflective glass should be used in public areas.
- (e) Reflections, shadows and very bright lights can cause disorientation.
- (f) Consider introducing landmarks to assist people with finding their way to areas e.g. their bedroom, such as furniture, plants, wall hangings, artwork and generally items that are attractive and interesting.



Adherence to fire safety regulations are vital. There are items that will be permitted in line with clear corridor guidance. To find out what can be included in your design please speak to a member of the health and safety and housing team.

2. Exterior and entrance

- (a) The approach to the building should be level or easily graded, relatively low and preferably free of kerbs.
- (b) The building entrance should be level and without steps or non negotiable thresholds. Where level access is not possible handrails should be provided.
- (c) Ensure that the main entrance is obvious and that guidance is clear on how you enter the building.



Main doors should preferably be automatically operated and should be wide enough for wheelchair users. In the event that they are manually operated, guidance should be clear on how to operate and warnings issued where necessary.

3. Signage

- (a) Use pictures and words for signs where possible and ensure that signage is at hung at a height which makes viewing easy (recommended 1.21m).
- (b) Ensure signs are not too small to be seen and a contrasting colour to the surface they are mounted on.
- (c) Use bold type face for the wording and a contrast between wording and background. Abstract fonts and highly stylized design should be avoided.
- (d) Signs should be fixed to the doors they refer to and not be adjacent or opposite.
- (e) Signs for toilets and exits should be particularly clear and glass doors should also be clearly marked with manifestations.
- (f) There should be signage at clear decision points around the building.

Laundry room



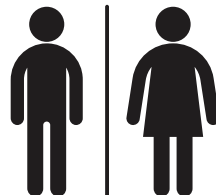
Bathroom



Bedroom



Toilet



4. Reception area

- (a) The reception area should be bright and well lit with maximum use of natural light.
- (b) Staff only spaces should be less obvious, this could be achieved by painting the doors and handles in the same colour.



Seating should be provided as a rest point. Ensure that the seating looks like seating and it is not abstract in design. Remember to check if you are unsure about what can be used and where it can be put.

5. Corridors

- (a) Corridors should be bright and evenly lit. The recommendation is that lighting should be double the normal brightness. Pools of bright light of shadows should be avoided.
- (b) Design corridors to lead to meaningful destinations. Avoid the use of dead ends where possible and unavoidable think of uses for the dead ends i.e. rest area, information/display point.
- (c) Opposing bedroom doors along corridors should be staggered.
- (d) Use handrails in corridors that are easy to grasp and a contrasting colour to the wall.
- (e) Ensure light switches stand out from the wall by using contrasting colour and that they are at a suitable height for customers to use.
- (f) Where possible paint the walls a different colour on different floors of the building to help customers familiarise themselves with what floor they are on or what area they in.

6. Flooring

- (a) Barrier matting placed in entrances should be similar colour to the flooring or avoided where possible.
- (b) Avoid changing the floor finish around stepped areas, this would increase the risk of falls. Ensure steps are obvious by using edging on the stair tread.
- (d) Consider using a theme or different colours to distinguish one floor area from another.
- (d) Flooring should be plain or very lightly mottled and should not be highly reflective.

information

People who have dementia can also have cognitive problems that affect their visual-spatial perceptions and tend to avoid, walk around, or be wary of darker-colored areas on floors because they perceive them to be deep pits or steep cliffs.



7. Outside space

- (a) Provide safe independent access to outside space – consider use of raised beds for planting, seating area, water features, bird feeders.
- (b) Ensure paths are well maintained, well defined and trip hazards minimised. Where possible free flowing looped designs work well for people with dementia.

8. Lifts

- (a) Lift areas should be clearly identified.
- (b) Controls on lifts should be highly visible and easy to operate.
- (c) Careful consideration should be given to what type of mirror should be fitted as they can cause distress to some people with dementia.



Equality Act guidance states that a mirror must be fitted in lifts for people in wheelchairs but they can be high up and positioned on an angle so that the wheelchair user can see what they are doing when they are going backwards.

Checklist

Entrance and Exterior

Is the main entrance clearly signposted?	Yes / No
Is the main entrance accessible for wheelchairs?	Yes / No
If no, is there a separate accessible entrance and is this clearly signposted?	Yes / No
Does the main entrance have level access?	Yes / No
Does the main entrance have a power assisted door opener?	Yes / No
Are handrails provided?	Yes / No
Is there a communal garden area?	Yes / No
If yes, is it secure and accessible independently?	Yes / No

Comments on above:

Checklist

Reception area

Is the reception area bright and well lit?	Yes / No
Are staff only areas marked as such or less obvious?	Yes / No
Is there a seating/rest area?	Yes / No
Are notice boards tidy and information presented in a clear format?	Yes / No
Do light switches stand out from the wall?	Yes / No
Are handrails provided?	Yes / No
Is non-reflective glass being used?	Yes / No

Comments on above:

Checklist

Layout & Lighting

Does the building have an open plan layout throughout the communal areas?	Yes / No
Are communal areas inc. corridors bright and evenly lit?	Yes / No
Are there pools of light or shadowed areas in common areas?	Yes / No
Are views of nature maximized i.e through use of low windows, natural materials or colours?	Yes / No
Are landmarks being used to aid way finding?	Yes / No
Are handrails provided along the corridors?	Yes / No
Do handrails stand out in colour from the wall?	Yes / No
Are there rest points along the corridor?	Yes / No
Do corridors lead to dead ends?	Yes / No

Comments on above:

Checklist

Signage

Is signage provided in all communal areas? Yes / No

Are exits and toilets clearly sign posted? Yes / No

Are signs at eye level and well lit? Yes / No

Are signs placed at key decision points? Yes / No

Do the signs provided use pictures and words? Yes / No

Are signs mounted on the surface that they refer to? Yes / No

Are signs in bold typeface and with a contrast from the text to the background? Yes / No

Comments on above:

Checklist

Flooring

Are mat wells a similar colour to the surrounding floor covering? Yes / No

Are floor coverings patterned, reflective or slippery? Yes / No

Does floor covering change around stepped areas? Yes / No

Is non-slip flooring provided in communal bathroom/toilet areas? Yes / No

Does the floor covering contrast with walls in that area? Yes / No

Comments on above:

Checklist

Other issues

If there is a lift on-site is the lift easy to use with instructions in clear words and pictures? Yes / No

Are mirrors in place in the lift? Yes / No

Are property doors clearly personalised either by number or colour? Yes / No

Do doors in communal areas have visibility panels? Yes / No

In communal toilet facilities are flushes, seats and handrails a contrasting colour? Yes / No

Comments on above:

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