

Dementia Friendly Environments

Guidance for selecting and using
non-Society venues for Legacy events

Introduction:

Any new environment can be confusing or even frightening for a person living with dementia. There are however, a number of steps that we can take to make anyone living with dementia who attends one of our events feel safe, comfortable and secure.

If a person with dementia does not recognise what they are seeing, their brain may tell them they are somewhere they do recognise – e.g. they may think an event room is a school room, or a patterned rug is a pond with fish and plants in. These may cause reactions depending on their feelings about where they think they are, or as in the example of the patterned rug, thinking they cannot cross the floor.

The following points are worth bearing in mind when selecting a new venue, and laying it out on the day, although it's appreciated that not everything mentioned below will be practical or even possible to arrange for some venues.

Access:

- Is the venue accessible to people living with dementia (PLWD)?
- Is there adequate signposting on how to get to and into the venue?
- Are the venue owners happy for you to put up our temporary dementia friendly signs. (DFS) around the venue on the day of the event?

Interiors:

- Steps/stairs – can you minimise use to get to the event room? To PLWD these can look like a slope on the way down.
- Corridors – if these turn a corner it can look like a dead end. DFS ahead pointing the way to the event room/toilets/etc (and the way out coming back) will help.
- Lifts – if these have mirrors they will look like someone is already in there. If they are not well lit they can look like another corridor. Try to cover mirrors with posters or plain paper, ensure the lift is well lit, and put DFS on the outside and inside indicating that it is a lift.

- Vertical or horizontal blinds, striped wallpaper, etc can cause a strobing effect.
- Noise – can the event be held in a quiet space without background music, and with minimal or no background noise?
- Take consideration of lights, which may cause shadows, glare or reflections which could be visually misinterpreted and cause anxiety e.g. ripple effect on a floor mistaken for water.

Toilets:

- Cover mirrors where possible, as in other areas. PLWD may not recognise themselves and think someone else is there.
- Traditional “cross head” taps are best as it is easier to recognise them as taps and know how they work.
- Remember to signpost the inside of toilet doors with “way out” signs, and the route back to the event room is signposted.
- Have a towel next to the sink if possible – PLWD may not recognise an air hand dryer or what paper towels are for.



Lift, or corridor?



Is there someone already in the loo?



Is this a rug, or a fish pond with lillies?

On the day

- Put up dementia friendly signage in clearly lit, visible appropriate places around the venue.
- Put signs up in the event rooms saying day, date and where you are (supplied by the L&RG Marketing team), e.g:



- Cover mirrors wherever possible, including in toilets, using posters or plain paper
- Remove patterned rugs, and be aware of any shiny or chequered floors and patterned carpets around the venue that may cause confusion
- Keep doors to the event rooms open
- Raise or remove vertical or horizontal blinds in the event rooms if possible
- Do not have any background music playing, and try to keep background noise to a minimum
- Check there are no unnecessary or over bright lights in the event room.

If you have any questions or feedback about these guidelines or dementia friendly environments please contact Anthony on 01179 673006 or email anthony.townsend@alzheimers.org.uk