

Dementia Friendly Information and Awareness Session

How to interact with people diagnosed with dementia:

When you are assisting a person with dementia, remember the following points.

- Firstly, allow the person to take their time.
- Put the person at ease – be friendly and smile.
- Try to understand how they might be feeling.
- Consider their feelings and respond to the emotions they are expressing.
- If they are experiencing difficulty or appear distressed, ask direct questions such as whether there is someone they would like you to call, rather than 'What would you like me to do?'

Body language and physical contact

- Make eye contact
- Make sure that your body language and facial expressions match what you are saying.
- Never stand too close or stand over someone to communicate.
- Do not cover your mouth. The person should be able to see your face clearly.

Talking

- Speak clearly and calmly.
- Use short, simple sentences.
- Speak at a slightly slower pace.
- Avoid speaking sharply or raising your voice.
- Avoid criticising, correcting or arguing
- Don't talk about people with dementia as if they are not there or talk to them as you would to a young child.

Listening

- Listen carefully to what the person is saying and give them plenty of encouragement.
- If you haven't understood fully, tell the person what you have understood and check with them to see if you are right.
- If possible, use visual clues – write your message down if the person is able to read and use objects or pictures to help the person understand.

Offer practical support

In some situations, there are specific ways you can provide help to people with dementia. You may find the following suggestions useful:

- If someone can't remember how to do something, offer to show them how to do it. As much as possible, do the task with them not for them.
- Somebody with dementia may feel anxious about their ability to carry out tasks or activities. Try not to put them under pressure: break down tasks into smaller tasks, supporting them along the way.
- If someone appears to be looking for something they can't find, ask if you can help.
- If someone forgets what you have just said, repeat your sentence patiently as if you had not said it before.

Be aware of environments that are noisy or dark, and if you can, provide a quiet place where it is easier to offer one-to-one assistance.

Dealing with a difficult situation

Practise your techniques for coping when your role is challenging and you are helping someone with dementia who is experiencing difficulties. Remember the following tips:

- Stay calm.
- Keep your breathing even.
- Reassure the person with dementia or anyone with them that they are not under any pressure.
- Explain to anyone else concerned that the situation is under control and that it will be resolved as soon as possible.
- If the situation remains difficult, ask a colleague or supervisor for assistance.