

Dementia

Personalised care in a positive environment



Balhousie Care Group
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Dementia affects a growing proportion of the UK population. In Scotland alone the number of people with dementia in 2016 is 90,000: by 2025 that number is expected to increase to 220,000.

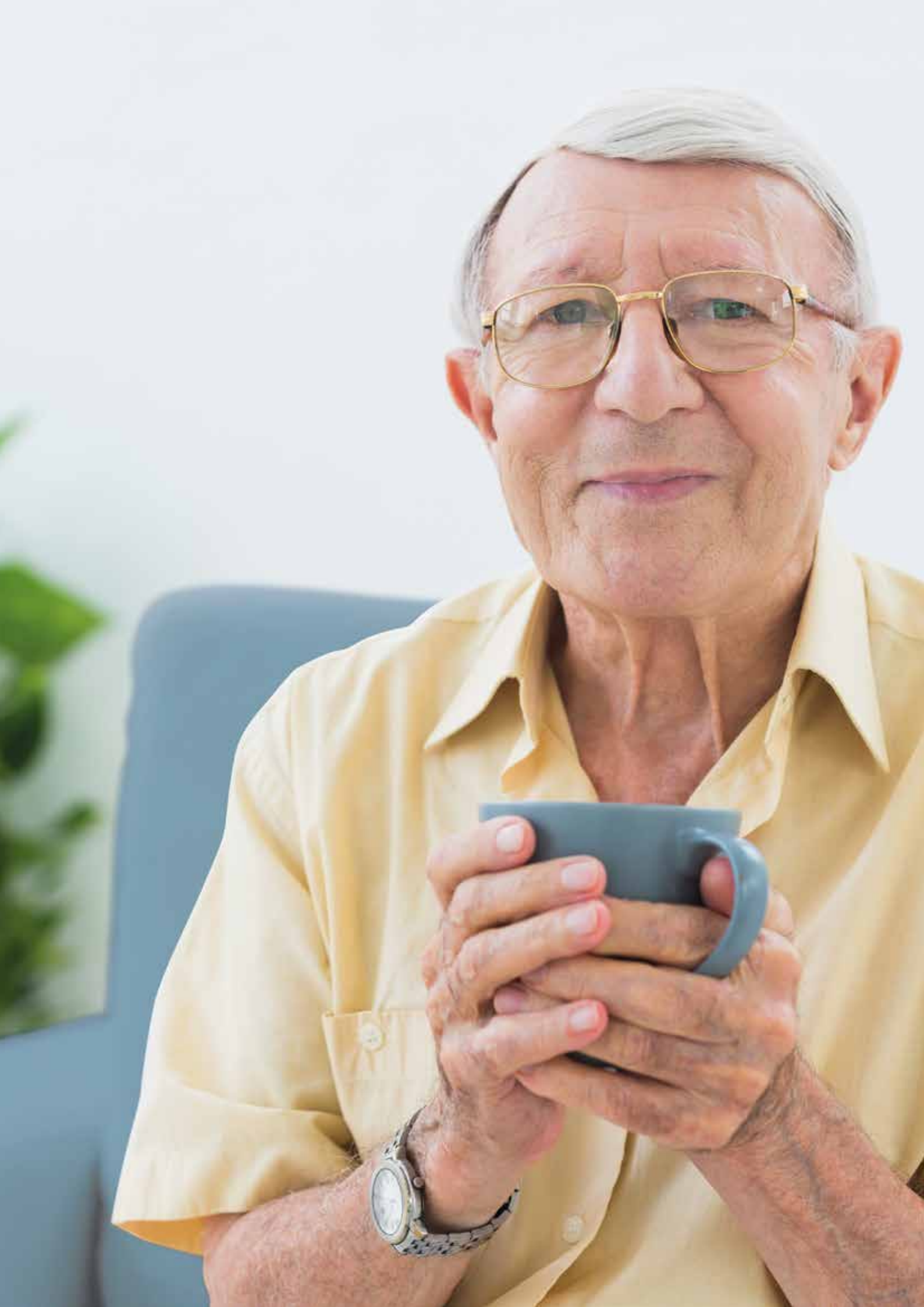
Every person living with Dementia is affected differently, which requires an in-depth understanding of each individual in order to provide the right level of support. This brief guide highlights some of the measures that can be taken to support people with Dementia in everyday activities, helping them to maintain a degree of independence.

A growing number of our residents are affected by this condition and our staff members are trained to support people with various types of Dementia. We encourage our residents to be actively involved in planning their care, with the support of family, home staff and other healthcare professionals. Our approach is always to support the individual to maintain the highest level of independence and to enhance their quality of life.

If you would like to discuss any of your Dementia care needs, please contact Yvonne Manson, Dementia Lead:
yvonne.manson@balhousiecare.co.uk

Find out more about the condition at
www.balhousiecare.co.uk/types-care/alzheimers-and-dementia-care





Colour

As eyes age many conditions can affect the clarity and definition of the images seen by individuals. Because of this, the need for visual contrast within the environment increases, especially for those aged 90 and above who experience a decline in colour perception.

Damage to visual processing centres in the brain, as a result of Dementia, can also cause people to struggle to make sense of their environment and, as a result, those environments with too many different colours, or with complex patterns, can both confuse or disorientate.

Colour can highlight or camouflage parts of the environment and create spaces that are easier to navigate, helping to promote independence.

Creating contrast

- To keep an environment from becoming over stimulating, care should be taken not to introduce too many different colours, particularly into a lounge or corridor.
- Whites and pale colours often become washed out and indistinguishable from each other, so appropriate levels of contrast require deeper hues of colour.
- As eyes age, colours like red, orange and yellow are often easier to see, while distinguishing between deeper tones of blues, greens and purples will become more difficult. Darker tones of blues and greens can provide effective contrast with lighter tones and colours, but they should not be used with each other; for example a dark blue chair cannot be highlighted with a dark purple throw, as the colour and tonal contrast will not be great enough.
- To avoid disorientation, patterns such as stripes, bold checks or tartans should be avoided on large surfaces such as walls and floors.
- Patterned flooring materials or contrasting stripes or lines can be mistaken for level changes, and people with Dementia may try to step over them, increasing the risk of trips and falls. For this reason patterned surfaces on stairs should be avoided – but edging strips in a contrasting colour will clearly identify the end of the tread of each step.
- Make sure that lighting levels are even across the living space, with lighting sources that can be adjusted as needed.
- To minimise the focus on restricted areas, such as storage cupboards or staff-only areas, their doors should be painted the same colour as the corridor and any signage should be unobtrusive.

Colour should also be used to highlight:

- Toilet seats
- Handrails
- Grab bars
- Crockery
- Communal toilets (for example the toilet/bathrooms containing toilets could all be painted blue, while the surrounding corridor is magnolia)
- Furniture.

Choice of colours

- Primary colours are easier to differentiate.
- The blue-green spectrum is more difficult to discriminate.
- Reds and greens can appear similar.
- Tonal contrast is more important than colour contrast.

Other considerations

Bright or vivid colours can cause agitation in those patients with behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (anxiety, disorientation, aggression). More subdued colours will have a calming influence.

Glare

Bright white, shiny or reflective surfaces can cause glare and make surfaces difficult to distinguish.



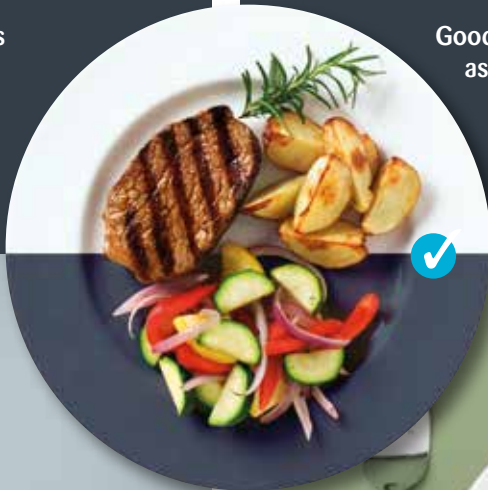


▲ This setting shows the importance of the principle of contrast to walls and lounge furniture. A general interior design tendency in care home communal areas is to create colour pallets that blend together, but for someone with visual impairment or visual perception issues this can be challenging.

▼ The black toilet seat creates excellent contrast between the toilet and the wall. It also helps to create a “target” effect.



◀▶ Good contrast between the plate and the food on the plate, as well as contrast between the plate and the table’s top are both very beneficial, helping people see all of the food on their plate. Having napkins and cutlery that contrast to the table’s top is also helpful.



Lighting

As eyes age they require more light to see things well. Natural lighting is best, as it is usually brighter and more diffused than artificial light. However, even with good levels of natural light, you should consider the flow of light throughout the living area.

Older eyes also become more susceptible to glare from light reflected from shiny surfaces, and require additional time to adjust to new lighting levels.

When evaluating your lighting consider:

- Is the lighting in internal areas of the home (corridors, toilets, etc.) bright and even?
- In winter or during hours of darkness are areas that are partially lit by natural light bright enough?
- Are lighting levels adjustable to accommodate the activities that are happening? (i.e. can reading areas or activity work surfaces have adjustable lighting?)
- Are there pools of light or dark pockets within rooms and corridors? These can lead to misperception of the environment.
- Do any surfaces reflect lighting glare?
- Do confusing shadows arise when sunlight is not restricted? This too can lead to misperception of the environment.

Due to the glare from its shiny surface this floor may appear wet. Where possible, reduce potential for glare from floor surfaces by ensuring that hard flooring has a matte finish. Because of changes in perceptual ability, patterns on the floor – like the one below – can cause confusion. For someone with visual perception issues the darker tiles may look like holes or appear “deeper” than the white tiles.



Furniture

Furniture should:

- 1 Clearly contrast with flooring and wall colours.
- 2 Be of a familiar design and style.
- 3 Chairs should have arms to provide leverage and stability and improve independence in mobility.
- 4 Choose textured textiles whenever possible, to enhance sensory opportunities.

When arranging your furniture consider:

- 5 Is lighting adequate for the activities you expect to take place in the setting?
- 6 Is there adequate space for a Zimmer frame or wheelchair to navigate?
- 7 What visual stimulation can you see from the sight lines in your seating arrangement?
- 8 Can cushions or throws be used to improve visual contrast or sensory stimulation?
- 9 In communal areas, have opportunities for engagement been increased by grouping chairs in small seating arrangements?



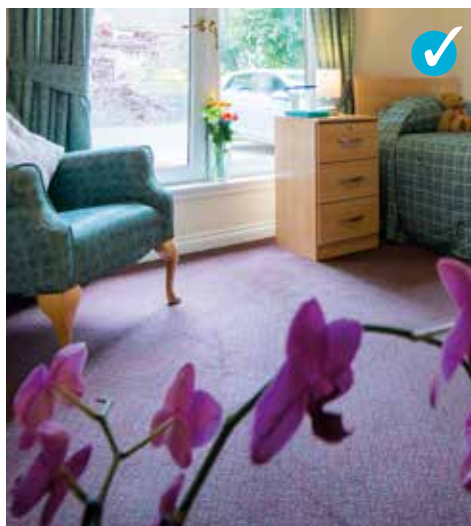


Noise

Older people, and those who have auditory impairment, find it harder to distinguish sounds – and particularly speech. Consider this when positioning seats.

High noise levels can be distressing for residents with anxiety, disorientation or a psychiatric disorder. To help absorb unwanted noise consider:

- soft furnishings
- curtains
- carpeting
- room dividers, to create 'quiet zones' within public areas
- sound absorbent acoustic boarding.



Accessories

Art and ornaments should be relevant to the individual.

Try to include images:

- 1 of local landmarks and scenery.
- 2 relevant to the individual's life and events (reminiscence therapy).
- 3 that represent projects undertaken by the individual (art therapy).
- 4 that reflect seasons or the passage of time.
- 5 that reflect the individual's local area.

Texture of material coverings on furniture is also important, to provide tactile stimulation, comfort and security.

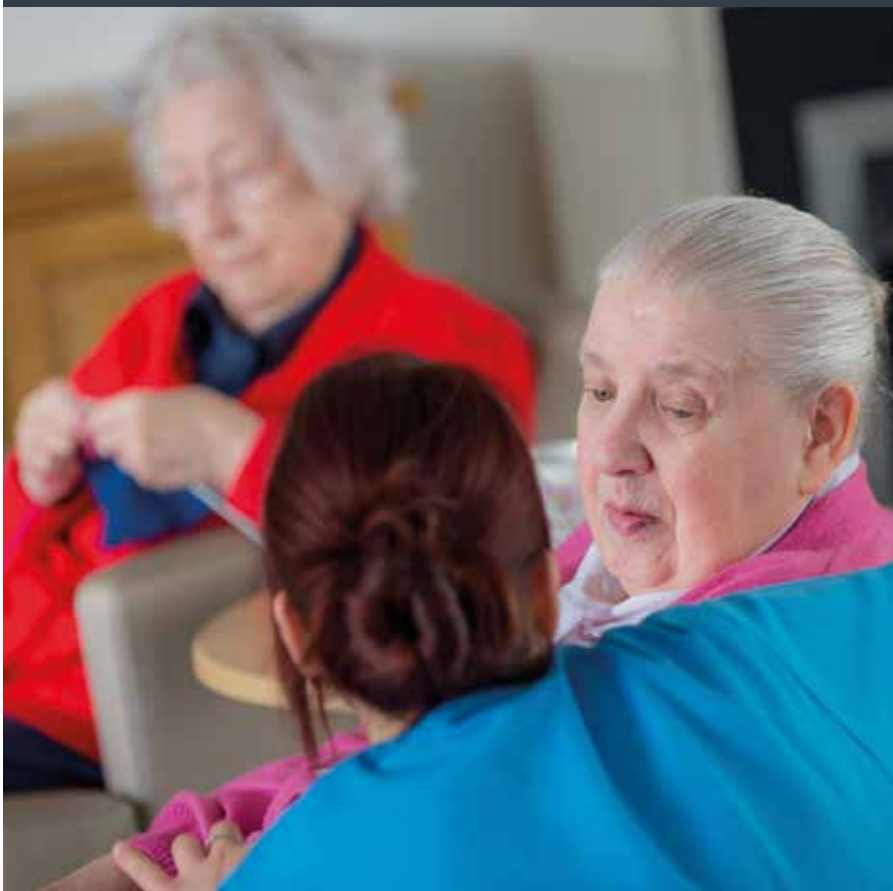




▼ Memory boxes or rummage boxes can be important for stimulation.



▼ Set out furniture to promote small interactive groupings.





▲ Use personalised touches to help the individual identify a room as their own. The navigational aid may be a picture of the individual, from any point in their life, or it may depict something that is very appealing or interesting to them.



Navigational aids and signage

Navigational aids allow people with dementia to identify the purpose of a particular space and navigate successfully in their environment. They might include:

- Clear signage, which uses both words and pictures (preferably realistic pictures with large contrasting symbols and lettering).
- Artwork that depicts the use of the room.

Colour can also be used to help people orientate themselves:

- Colour code private space v public space.
- Identify toilets or individual bedrooms.
- Mark out routes.

Signage

Signs should:

- Be consistent in style throughout the home environment.
- Clearly contrast with the colour of doors or walls.
- Use a capital letter, followed by lower case letters and include a graphic or photograph.
- Feature good contrast between the words, graphic and background. Generally, light lettering on a dark background is easier for people with sight impairment to read.
- Directional signage may be required if a location is not obvious. It should be in the same style as other signs and have a clear arrow to show where to go.

When mounting dementia-friendly signage:

- Mount them with their lower edge no higher than 1.2 metres from the floor
- Fix them to the door of the space being labelled rather than the wall alongside. (Unless the door is always left open, or unless the integrity of a fire door will be damaged if the sign is mounted on the door itself.)



These signs have a number of adaptive elements. Firstly, the background is yellow and the text is in bold black, which makes it easier to see and read. They also have directional signals (arrows) and the images are actual pictures, rather than drawings.

Visual cues

Art can be used to provide visual cues about the purpose of a particular room. There may be occasions when it is appropriate to include other sensory cues as well, such as sounds or smells.

▼ Dining room



Pictures of food may help to stimulate the appetite

▼ Coffee/tea lounge



▼ Library



▼ Bathroom



Further information

A useful website for general design for the elderly can be found at <http://dementia.stir.ac.uk/design/virtual-environments/virtual-care-home>



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