

- Keep things in familiar places to help the person find them easier
- Keep noise under control such as TV and radio
- Visual prompts – eg notice board.
- Orientation information – eg clocks (Day Clox), calendar, diary, mobile phone
- If a person is going to an unfamiliar environment such as day centre it is important they have some personal belongings with them to help provide reassurance e.g wallet, keys, handbag
- Ensure smoke alarms/carbon monoxide detectors are in working order
- There is technology available and can be considered to help manage risk



## Key message

Like any of us it would be a very frightening experience to feel lost and not be able to find our way. It is important to remember how a person with dementia may experience these feelings on a daily basis, how we interact with them and subtle changes to the environment can change how a person may be feeling.

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## The Importance of the Environment for someone with Dementia



*Memory Service*

## Why is the environment so important?

The environment is very important for someone with Dementia. It can either support someone or it can hinder them. As we get older a person's eyesight and hearing can be affected and this may affect their ability to interpret things they are seeing and hearing.

However, a person with Dementia may also present with visual perceptual difficulties which means they may experience difficulty interpreting what they are seeing/hearing.

This can be very distressing and upsetting for a person when they begin to have difficulty making sense of the world around them. It can also impact on a person's ability to complete everyday tasks that we all take for granted.



## Difficulties someone might experience?

- A person can have difficulty orientating themselves around an unfamiliar environment
- A person may want to go home even though they are already home – eg childhood home
- A person may have difficulty recognising objects or knowing how to use them correctly
- A person may have difficulty distinguishing between objects that look similar eg tooth-paste/ face creams
- A person may misinterpret what they see eg may think a piece of furniture is actually a person in the room
- A person may have difficulty judging height and depth of steps/stairs or knowing how far away an object is eg person may sit too soon before reaching a chair
- A person may have difficulty with patterned carpets/wallpapers and this can cause increase in confusion
- A person may have difficulty picking objects out of a similar coloured background eg seeing white toilet paper against white tiles
- A person may not recognise hazards/risks in the environment
- A person may have difficulty completing everyday tasks in a cluttered environment
- A person may have difficulty focusing or completing everyday tasks in a noisy environment
- A person may have difficulty locking up safely or using the correct keys

## Things to try

**It is important that we ensure a person has lots of visual prompts and cues within their environment to support them. We need to make sure any prompts or cues are in the person's line of vision. Other strategies to help support a person within their environment:**

- Get eye sight checked regularly
- Wear glasses and hearing aid
- Keeping the environment well-lit particularly during everyday tasks or if the person is very disorientated, to help them make sense of the world around them
- A person may become more disorientated later in the evening or at night time. Night lights and lights on timer switches can be beneficial
- Use colour to help make things of importance stand out eg use coloured toilet seat or put coloured labels on things
- De-clutter – ensure during everyday tasks there are not lots of items sitting out that are not needed for those tasks as the person may then use them inappropriately
- Use sign/labels to help a person find objects or even to find their way – eg put labels on cupboard doors or even signs on bathroom door
- Try to avoid carpet/bedding/tablecloths or curtains with lots of patterns as this can confuse the person more