




National
Intellectual Disability
Memory Service



**Supporting safe care
for the person with intellectual
disability and dementia in
their home**

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Guidance for Person-Centred Dementia Care in the Home

The person with intellectual disability living with dementia needs a safe supportive home environment to maintain their daily living skills. A supportive home environment helps the person living with dementia to make sense of their surroundings and to minimise distress and anxiety. It provides the person living with dementia with a sense of agency in being able to negotiate and understand their living environment.

People living with dementia require more mental and physical energy to undertake the tasks of daily living. Planning for and providing a safe environment suited to the person's needs is one of the most important supports you can provide to optimise their quality of life. The person's environmental support needs in their home may continue to change as their disease progresses. With the correct supports, a person may be able to live to the end of their life in their own home.

In this booklet we give suggestions for you the carer on how to create a supportive environment in the person's home, based on five main principles of person-centred care:

1. Support engagement in valued life activities
2. Optimise comfort
3. Promote privacy, control and self-esteem
4. Support dignity and comfort at end of life
5. Demonstrate care for all living in the home



Support Needs in the Home

A person living with intellectual disability and dementia may have these support needs in their home:

Loss of Orientation Skills

1. Confusion about time of day or what day of the week it is
2. Difficulty in finding their way around their home

Reduced Daily Living Skills

1. Help with Dressing, Showering etc
2. Help with normal household jobs/chores

Changes in Mood and Behaviour

1. Person may feel agitated, irritated or depressed with their loss of skills

Loss of Physical Ability

1. Loss of Balance
2. Loss of Mobility
3. Loss of Continence

Loss of Depth Perception

1. Finding it hard to see steps properly
2. Finding it hard to walk across differing floor surfaces

(Adapted from National Down Syndrome Society, 2019)

This booklet aims to give you suggestions in each room of your home to help you with all of the issues that a person living with intellectual disability and dementia may experience. The tips in this booklet will help to make the home environment easier for the person with dementia to understand and continue to enjoy.

Principles of Quality Home-Based Care

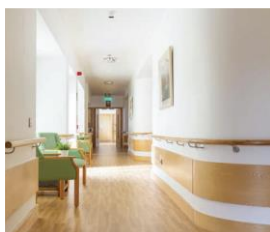
A philosophy of person-centred care includes design principles that help the person with ID and dementia to continue to live well in their own home.

These home design principles include:



Familiar items and a 'homely' warm environment

Opportunity and space to take part in ordinary household activities in all areas of the home



Cues and support for orientation for the person to each room in their home

Uncluttered spacious living areas with opportunities to take part in meaningful daily leisure activities



Access available to enjoy being outside in nature on a daily basis

We recommend the use of a strengths based approach to supporting the person in their own home. This means that you identify the strengths and skills the person still has and use these to continue to create a meaningful, safe and supportive home environment for the person





Living Room

The living room is often a shared room that is used for many purposes. Many enjoyable leisure and social activities can take place here every day.

Designate one area of the room as an activity area for the person living with dementia. Have their favourite activities available nearby, e.g. arts/crafts, life story work, photos, adult jigsaws and colouring books

Designate an area of the room as a relaxation area with a comfortable chair and supports such as music, low lighting, hand and foot massage equipment. Ideally, this relaxation area can be positioned next to a window enabling the person to look outside while relaxing

Ensure the main lighting is bright enough for the person and ensure there are no shadows being cast by lighting in the room

The person living with dementia may enjoy displaying some of their art/craft activities at their eye level on the wall near their activity area. This helps to designate this area as their spot in the room

Remove hazards from the floor and remove clutter. Ensure the person has a clear space to walk around the living room

Designate a bowl or small box for the person to put personal items such as their phone or keys for easy location of them when needed

Comfortable solid chairs with padding and arms help a person to sit down and stand back up more easily

Kitchen

The kitchen is often the heart of a home and one where a lot of useful and interesting activities can take place. Keeping someone included in these activities keeps them included in the life of the house.

The kitchen is a place where you can ensure that people are involved in the rhythm of the home

Encourage the person to continue to stay involved in basic food preparation and dining activities, with your support

If a person is struggling to communicate, the use of other cues can really help them to become engaged in activities

This can include using their sense of smell and taste in cooking and baking activities to build meaningful engagement and communication

Involving the person in mealtime preparation may help to stimulate their appetite

Place photos at eye level on presses and drawers that show what is inside the presses or drawers. This helps the person living with dementia to be more independent in accessing kitchen items

Ensure knives and other potentially hazardous kitchen equipment are put away in a press

Ensure all hazardous kitchen chemicals are securely stored away, preferably locked



Dining Room

The dining room is a social hub. It's where everyone can meet to have a meal and to spend time together celebrating special occasions.

The smell of baking or the smell of dinner being made can help the person to know that it is time for their meal. These multisensory cues are really important for a person living with dementia to continue to take part in their normal day

Placemats help define table space. Crockery chosen in a clearly contrasting colour helps to give people a sense of control and support and continued independence with eating and drinking

The person can be encouraged to help with setting the table and getting ready for mealtimes

Some people prefer a quiet space for their meals with little distractions. Others may prefer to spend more time with others whilst they eat

Dining room chairs with arms and seat padding can help to support the person comfortably whilst they are eating

Involve the person in planning meals and setting the dining table for special occasions e.g. birthdays, anniversaries and seasonal events e.g. Christmas. This helps to keep the person engaged in the life of the home and to mark the passing of time





Bedroom

People's bedrooms are often a private space where they can relax away from others and enjoy reminiscing with personal objects.

Place a photo of the person and a photo of their bedroom on the outside of their bedroom door to help them know where their bedroom is. Ensure the photos are at the person's eye level height

Have plain bedclothes with contrasting pillows on the bed to support the person living with dementia to see where they can get into bed

Have a low level light on at night (e.g. table lamp) to help the person to orient themselves if they wake in the dark

Place photos on the person's wardrobe and drawers to help them to know where various personal items are in the room

Support the person to 'declutter' personal items if needed to ensure they can easily access their items

Close curtains/blinds at night to reduce window glare/reflection which the person might interpret as another person in their bedroom

Similarly, place a light covering (e.g. voile) over mirrors and picture frames at night if required to reduce potentially distressing reflective surfaces at night

Leave the bedroom doors slightly open and the hall light on at night in case the person wishes to get up to use the bathroom

A windchime can be placed on the person's door to alert you if they are awake at night and leave their room. A pressure mat is an assistive technology aid that can sound a discreet alarm if a person steps out of bed. *[See the later section on assistive technology for more information]*



Bathroom

People can be supported to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible with bathroom activities.

Ensure there is a photo of the bathroom at the person's eye level on the outside of the bathroom door so they can identify the bathroom quickly when needed

Prominently display the person's personal toiletries such as toothbrush and toothpaste to help them to find them easily when needed

Keep the bathroom homely and welcoming and warm for the person to use

Review the use of safety measures such as installing a thermostat temperature control on taps, the use of grab rails at the toilet and in the shower etc. A shower chair may be helpful for a person to use

Use deep coloured facecloths and towels to help the person to see where they are

The use of colour can help the person to orient themselves in the bathroom and support independence e.g. using a coloured toilet seat for contrast, placing a coloured strip at the edge of the sink

Regularly prompt the person to use the bathroom in order to try to support the person to retain bathroom skills for as long as is possible

Regularly evaluate the person's safety and support needs in the bathroom as falls and slips can occur in the bathroom as a person's dementia progresses

Gardens and Therapeutic Outdoor Spaces

Many people enjoy spending time in the garden, and it gives an opportunity for exercise and walking in nature in a safe environment.

Circular paths, seating and outdoor relaxation areas encourage the person to be outside in nature

Water features can be a lovely sensory addition for the person to watch the water flowing and enjoy the sounds

Encourage the person to help out in the garden through sowing seeds, planting flowers, watering plants, maintaining window-boxes, feeding the birds, basic safe DIY etc

A variety of plants can be sited throughout the garden to encourage the senses of smell, sight and touch

Support the person to get gentle exercise and stimulation through being outside in nature daily

Lighting can be placed to highlight certain plants and garden areas

Seasonal activities can be planned so that the person gets an opportunity to be out in nature in all seasons. Even in bad weather, a person can sit inside and look out at the garden

Ensure there are no slip/trip hazards and uneven surfaces and that the garden is securely fenced in so that people can be safe in the garden



Assistive Technology Supports

There are a number of simple assistive technology aids that can support the person to be happier and safer in their home. They can be a huge help to carers also in providing support in a person's home.

The HSE provide a number of Memory Technology Resource Rooms which give the person living with dementia and their carer(s) the opportunity to visit and assess what technology might assist the person in remaining in their own home. Most of these Technology Resource Rooms are run by an Occupational Therapist and you can make an appointment to visit them.

There is a Memory Technology Resource Room in most counties in Ireland. The link attached will give you a list of all of the contact details around the country.

<https://www.understandtogether.ie/Training-resources/Helpful-Resources/Memory-Assistive-Technologies/MTRR-May-updates.pdf>

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland has a booklet on Assistive Technology. This booklet will give practical information on different types of assistive technologies that are available. You can order a free copy of this booklet by ringing 1800 341 341.

The Living Well with Dementia project also has a section on their website with information on assistive technologies and suggestions for further resources. <http://livingwellwithdementia.ie/assistive-technology/>

Finally, you might like to look at the AT Dementia Website, which is a UK based website that gives detailed information on different assistive technologies that are available.

<https://asksara.livingmadeeasy.org.uk>



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