

Working to Build a Dementia Friendly Hartlepool



Thinking about a “memory aware” high street scheme

Briefing note for organisations in Hartlepool

Based on material created by Hampshire County Council, Local Government Association and “Innovations in Dementia” CIC which has been recognised nationally as “best practice”

[Update due Spring 2015]

Memory Aware High Street

Thinking about a Memory Aware High Street Campaign

The idea of a “kite mark” for shops and facilities that want to encourage customers with particular needs is not new. Schemes for people with learning disabilities have already been developed in a number of locations, including Milton Keynes, and Sheffield.

Developing such a scheme for people with dementia is a relatively new initiative, Plymouth being the first city to introduce the notion of shops and other businesses with dementia friendly “zones”.

This has been developed under the auspices of the local Dementia Action Alliance and has already achieved considerable levels of buy-in from local businesses, with 400 local businesses signing up.

It is important to establish a shared meaning about what this might mean, both for businesses signing up, and for people with dementia who might want to use it.

Developing a scheme without a mutual understanding of the implications of signing up risks both the participation and goodwill of businesses, and the trust of people with dementia for whom one poor experience might come to represent a loss of faith in the whole venture.

Essential characteristics of a dementia-friendly scheme

- It must be grounded in what people with dementia tell us they want.

People have told us that the most important feature of a dementia friendly community is the people that they encounter within it.

Building awareness of dementia at management level and crucially in customer facing staff must be seen as a priority.

- It must be grounded in what is possible and realistic from the perspective of local businesses.
- It must involve a commitment by businesses to, as a minimum requirement, provide awareness raising for staff, using the “Help Pack for Customer Facing Staff” as a minimum requirement.

In an ideal world, all staff would be highly trained and skilled in supporting people with dementia as customers. However, experience suggests that it is unlikely that many businesses would sign up to this level of commitment.

However, experience also suggests that many businesses that operate effective customer care, either by accident or by design already have many of the attributes and skills in place needed to become more dementia-friendly.

This suggests that, especially for staff who already employ good customer care, the level of additional training or support needed in order to extend their support to customers with dementia may be significantly lower than they expect.

- It must be "owned" by an organisation or alliance of organisations willing to support both businesses and people with dementia in its use.

Please note the use of the word "owned" rather than the word "accredited". Whichever organisation has ownership of the scheme will need to be prepared to commit to a certain level of administrative, awareness-raising and promotional activity, but should avoid suggesting that buy-in by businesses implies any kind of accreditation. To do so would not only imply responsibility for the actions or omissions of participants, but users might also infer a degree of conformity to standards which go beyond the aspirational statements and awareness raising we might reasonably expect businesses to accept.

In the future it may be possible to think about more formal standards, which would lend credibility to the idea of accredited kite-marking - but this a complex area not least because of the significant variation in the needs of people with dementia.

As Alzheimer's advocate Christine Bryden is quoted as saying "once you've met one person with dementia, you've met one person with dementia".

- It must involve businesses signing up to a charter, or "dementia declaration" that may be aspirational, but which commits them to reviewing the ways in which they support customers with dementia.

Elements of a Memory Aware scheme

1. Awareness-raising for staff

At the most basic level of awareness, staff should be aware of:

- How the help card scheme works
- How dementia might affect people using their business.
- Top tips for helping someone who might be struggling.
- What to do if you need help or are concerned.
- See "awareness raising tools" for more information. The "Help Pack for Customer Facing Staff" should be regarded as a minimum requirement.

2. Help cards for people with dementia.

- There are a number of help cards available for people with dementia to alert others to their condition.
- The Alzheimer's Society produce a card which is widely used.
- This card, produced by Alzheimer's Scotland goes one step further in allowing the person with dementia to choose from a checklist of particular ways in which the person might help them.



This card, produced as part of the “My Voice My Choice” project run by Sheffield learning Disabilities Partnership Board goes further still, and allows the person to personalise the card even further.

You can find out more about the scheme here:

<https://www.signpostsheffield.org.uk/my-voice/communication/card.html>



Write what helps you here

This level of personalisation has distinct advantages in that:

- It allows the person with dementia themselves to explain how their dementia affects them and determine how, (and whether) they want to be helped.
- It gives the best possible instructions to the person reading the card, and means that the person with dementia is most likely to get the help they need, rather than help based on a more generic understanding of what works for "most" people with dementia.

An ideal card for people with dementia should:

- ✓ Allow the person to choose versions which refer to either dementia, a specific form of dementia, or to more generic "memory problems"
- ✓ Allow the person to specify how the dementia might affect them
- ✓ Allow the person to specify how they want to be helped
- ✓ Allow the person to specify how they can best be understood
- ✓ Allow the person to specify how best to communicate with them

Guidance should also be developed and provided for the person with dementia and their carers on how to fill out the card, and how and where to use it.

3. Posters for participating businesses

Businesses which sign up to the scheme are provided with a poster, or sticker, featuring the scheme logo which they can display in their window, as well as digital versions for use online and in other promotional materials.

An example of possible logo:



4. Marketing the scheme

To businesses

Dementia Action Alliances provide an ideal platform for developing a Memory Aware scheme. In the absence of an alliance, the scheme could be targeted initially at a small number of businesses known to be used by people with dementia.

Chambers of commerce and trading associations, town centre or shopping centre managers also provide a valuable route to local businesses.

It is important to make a clear business case for the scheme. For more information on making the business case see the document “briefing note for businesses”

To people with dementia and their carers

One important feature of this scheme is that it puts people with dementia in control of determining how they describe their condition, how it affects them, and how they want to be helped.

Some people may need help to think about how best to articulate their needs, and guidance notes and 1-1 or peer support have a role to play.