

Dementia and communication

This brief factsheet highlights some of the main impacts dementia may have on communication. The information was supplied by members of the Scottish Dementia Working Group (www.alzheimers.org.uk).

It identifies practical action you can take to remove barriers to participation that people with dementia may face.

The effects of dementia on communication will vary significantly from person to person and over time. So it is important to recognise the needs of the particular individual.

In general, people with dementia may not find the following easy:

- finding their way to and around unfamiliar places
- noisy venues or anywhere with background distractions
- concentration
- retaining information
- reading complex or lengthy documents
- doing two things at once (e.g. writing whilst listening).

Key actions

Some of the ways you can support someone with dementia to engage are:

- give the person time to speak and express their ideas
- avoid speaking for too long
- make sure the person can see your face, and make eye contact with them
- give written reminders of appointments and other arrangements you have agreed
- keep things simple and concise
- produce written documents in an easy to read version (i.e. summarise key points and put important information in bullet points)
- budget for the person to be accompanied by a supporter, if they want that
- make sure all staff involved in events are aware of how best to support the communication of people with dementia
- provide reassurance and understanding.

Further information:

Alzheimer's Society (www.alzheimers.org.uk)