



Tips for recognising and understanding the needs of people with dementia

The more people
understand about
dementia and talk about it...

changes in memory

problems with talking and
communication

standing and staring

difficulties with space

difficulties with
movement

repetitiveness

confusion

*difficulties in decision
making*

...the more we can
change attitudes

Produced in February 2013 by the Bolton Dementia Partnership

This booklet has been modified from the original with kind
permission from NHS Gloucestershire

The tips in this booklet come from the personal experiences of Norman 'Norrms' McNamara.

Norrms, who was born in Bolton, was diagnosed with dementia at the age of 50. We would like to thank him for sharing his thoughts.



“Thank you for your understanding, and please remember, the person who is having these difficult times in front of you could one day be you.”

Norrms McNamara

For more information or support contact your family doctor, or visit www.bolton.gov.uk/dementia for a wide range of information to help people with dementia and their carers.

CONFUSION, STANDING AND STARING

People with dementia sometimes stand and stare. It can look like they are daydreaming or bewildered.

Confusion is common in dementia, as is memory loss.



NORMS SAYS:

***“A reassuring smile or a helping hand to guide the person to what they are looking for will help. If they can easily see what they want, that will often relieve anxiety.*”**

“Good, clear signs in shops and streets really help.”

SPACE AND MOVEMENT

Sometimes people with dementia can misjudge space or have difficulty moving; they bump into things or look very unsure about where to step. They may reach for something and not understand why they haven't been able to get it, making them frustrated and angry.



NORMS says:

“Clear signs, a convenient chair for the person to rest, help to find what the person is looking for - these are all helpful.

“Sitting with the person for a short while until they have rested or regained their composure also helps them feel safe.

Don't take it personally if the person expresses frustration towards you; it can be hard to feel a failure.”

TALKING AND COMMUNICATING

Sometimes people with dementia repeat themselves – this is due to memory difficulties that create problems with registering what was said, and then difficulty in recalling the information.



They may stammer or stutter, or really struggle to find the right word.

Sometimes, if they are upset, the person will not make sense to you, and you will not make sense to them.

NORMS says:

“Make sure you face the person, showing care and respect

“Give them time – don’t fill in missing words unless you have to.

“Try to find other ways to communicate – perhaps show the person an item and ask them to point to the one they want.”

REPETITIVENESS

People with dementia sometimes repeat the same action – such as putting several of the same items in their shopping basket, or going back to the bank for the third time in a row to withdraw the same amount of money.



NORMS says:

“If the person keeps appearing in your shop or business, gently tell them that they were there earlier and explain what they did. Consider noting down when they were there, and what they did. Ask the person to keep the note, and if they come back that day, ask them to read it.

“Because dementia causes memory loss, it might be kind to gently say they have three loaves of bread in their basket, and ask whether they want to put one back.”

TALKING ABOUT DEMENTIA

Some people with dementia don't mind who knows, while others may be embarrassed or in denial.

Dementia is a disability of the mind, just as cancer is a disease of the body. Dementia is not age related, but there are more older people who live with it.

The first person diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease was a 52-year-old woman more than 100 years ago.



NORMS SAYS:

“It's your approach that matters. Be open and honest, but don't ask someone if they have dementia.

“If someone tells you they have dementia, ask them what kind of dementia. Knowing that it is Alzheimer's disease or vascular dementia, for example, can help you to ask the right questions, such as: 'tell me what helps you'”

EVERYDAY CHALLENGES

TRANSPORT

“Make sure routes are clearly displayed on the bus. If you notice a person walking aimlessly around a car park, or looking for their car, suggest they check their pockets to find their keys, and click the fob, which may help them find it.”



CHECKOUTS

“Offer to switch off the conveyor belt or consider setting up a designated aisle or ‘slow lane’ for people who are not in a hurry or who may find the scanning process overwhelming.”

EVERYDAY CHALLENGES

MANAGING MONEY

“Sometimes a person with dementia has trouble understanding money – both coins and notes.

They may struggle to grasp what they have to do. Patience and understanding will help enormously.



“If the person holds out some money in their hand, gently take the right amount and make sure the person puts their change away in a safe place.

THIS LEAFLET IS PRODUCED BY THE BOLTON DEMENTIA PARTNERSHIP, WHICH INCLUDES: AGE UK BOLTON; THE ASIAN ELDERS RESOURCE CENTRE; THE ALZHEIMER'S SOCIETY; BOLTON ARERS SUPPORT; BOLTON CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP; BOLTON COUNCIL; BOLTON HOSPICE; BOLTON LINK; BOLTON NHS FOUNDATION TRUST; THE DEMENTIA SUPPORT GROUP; GREATER MANCHESTER WEST MENTAL HEALTH NHS FOUNDATION TRUST; THE INDEPENDENT CARE AND HOUSING SECTORS; AND THE YOUNG ONSET GROUP.