



## Becoming a dementia-friendly arts venue: A practical guide

<b>Document purpose</b>	<b>Becoming a dementia-friendly arts venue: A practical guide</b> is a guide for arts venue managers and staff on how to make the environment, facilities and programming of arts venues accessible to people with dementia, their families and carers.
<b>Title</b>	<b>Becoming a dementia-friendly arts venue: A practical guide</b>
<b>Publication date</b>	November 2015
<b>Target audiences</b>	Arts venue managers (programming, customer services, front-facing staff management) of large and small organisations wishing to improve the accessibility to their venues, facilities and programming for people with dementia.
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	With thanks to the members of the Prime Minister’s Champion Group on the Arts for their contributions to this guide: David Cutler, Chair, (The Baring Foundation); Robyn Sweeney (Alzheimer’s Society); Helen Featherstone (Arts Council England); Philip Cave (Arts Council England); Jayne Howard (Arts for Health Cornwall and Isles of Scilly); Harvinder Bahra, Laura Phillips (British Museum); Anna Tanisa Gunesekera (British Museum/Age Collective); Professor Paul M Camic (Canterbury Christchurch University); Penny Allen (The Courtyard, Hereford); Maria S Pasiecznik Parsons (Creative Dementia Arts Network); Alice Thwait (Equal Arts); Jana Haragalova, Kim Klug (Historic Royal Palaces); Dr Hannah Zeilig (London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London); Alistair Brown, Sharon Heal (Museums Association); Emma Rehm, Joanne Rhymer (National Gallery); Carol Rogers MBE (National Museums Liverpool); Adam Kent (Sage Gateshead); Lucinda Harvey (Society of London Theatre); Nicky Taylor (West Yorkshire Playhouse); Esme Ward (The Whitworth and Manchester Museum at the University of Manchester/Age Friendly Manchester).
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<b>Publisher</b>	© Alzheimer’s Society 2015. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, downloaded, transmitted or stores in any medium without written permission of the publisher, except for personal or educational use. Commercial use is prohibited.

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# Foreword

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**Arts Council England believes in great art for everyone and this means that we should all be able to engage with the arts and be creative throughout our lifetime. There are 850,000 people in the UK living with dementia and, for many of them, the arts will be fundamental to enabling them to live well with their condition.**

This means that arts should not only be relevant and accessible to people living with dementia, but also to their families and carers. It is a great opportunity for arts organisations to really connect with, and serve, their communities.

Many cultural spaces have already enthusiastically taken up this opportunity. This guide has been written by people who have done just that and is full of practical advice and inspiring examples. But as we all become more aware of the enormous significance of dementia in our society, highlighted not least by Alzheimer's Society and the Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia, there is much more that the arts can, and should, be doing.

I am therefore delighted to welcome this groundbreaking but practical guide to making any cultural space dementia friendly. Encouraging cultural spaces to share good practice with one another and giving them the confidence to put changes in place is really important. Even some of the smallest changes highlighted in this guide will make a huge difference to those living with dementia and to their families and carers.

**Sir Peter Bazalgette  
Chair, Arts Council England**

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# Preface

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**Dementia is a cause that is very close to my heart due to my own personal experience so I'm really pleased that people in the arts world are taking steps to reach out to those affected by the condition.**

That is why I'm so pleased that expert contributors from the arts world have worked with Alzheimer's Society as part of the Prime Minister's Champion Group on the Arts to produce this guide. This collaboration demonstrates that our theatres, cinemas, museums, art galleries and other arts venues are committed to delivering services that support people living with dementia and facilities that remain inviting and safe spaces for people post diagnosis.

Most of us enjoy the opportunity to appreciate the world beyond our day-to-day existence – whether this is a visit to the theatre to see a play or a pantomime, or to catch a movie at our local cinema. It could equally be enjoying a spot of music at a concert venue or marvelling at works of art in an art gallery or museum exhibition.

It would be so very unfair if just because someone has a dementia diagnosis, these cultural activities suddenly become off-limits. This valuable, practical guide will help people in the arts sector to ensure that is not the case.

I applaud those arts organisations who are taking the lead on this initiative, such as the West Yorkshire Playhouse and National Museums Liverpool, as well as those like the Dominion Theatre, who is also now engaging with this work. I sincerely hope that many more will follow their lead so that people with dementia and their carers can live the social lives they want to lead after a diagnosis.

**Lesley Manville**  
**Actor and Alzheimer's Society supporter**

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# 1 Introduction

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The purpose of this guide is to help arts venues of all kinds become appealing to, and supportive of, people living with dementia and their carers. This is an important part of a wider initiative – the Prime Minister’s Challenge on Dementia. Alzheimer’s Society has taken up this challenge and has led work across a range of sectors to make our communities more dementia friendly.

With their place at the centre of our communities, heritage sites and arts and cultural venues have a major role to play in welcoming and accommodating people with dementia and their carers. Experts from across the arts sector and dementia research have come together to offer guidance on how to make this happen.

## Why become a dementia-friendly arts venue?

The case for arts venues seeking to become dementia friendly has four aspects:

- **There is a moral case.** Everyone is entitled to participate in the arts. This is part of being human and doesn’t change with a dementia diagnosis.
  - **There is a health and wellbeing case.** There is now good scientific evidence for the positive effects of the arts on the physical and mental health of people living with dementia (see Appendix).
  - **There is an artistic case.** Working alongside people with dementia can inspire creativity and motivate artists to produce great art.
  - **There is a powerful business case.** There are around 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK and this figure is set to rise as the population ages. This number, together with carers of people with dementia, represent an enormous audience that some arts venues might neglect. In addition, becoming more dementia friendly is likely to encourage all sections of the wider community into your venue – something that has been proved repeatedly when improving disability access for arts venues.
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## What will you find in this guide?

This practical guide is written for people running arts venues of all kinds – large and small, urban and rural, theatres, concert halls, museums and galleries. It covers:

- **Community engagement.** All arts venues today will be familiar with working with a range of partners to offer the best possible service. This part of the guide shows you where you can find information and support to help you engage with people living with dementia and their carers.
- **Accessibility.** Enabling people with dementia and carers to access and find their way around your venue is a key part of making it dementia friendly. This part provides advice on publicising your venue to people with dementia and making it a welcoming and safe space.
- **Programming.** When looking at your programme, what factors should you consider for audiences that include people with dementia? This part provides advice on how to programme events and activities that take their needs into account.

This guide contains some great examples of successful initiatives around the country. They show a range of ways that the points above can be adapted to meet the needs of visitors and participants at their venues. You'll also find a list of resources that provide more in-depth information about becoming dementia friendly.

This guide has been compiled by people with experience of helping arts venues to become more dementia friendly and we hope it will help your venue to take up the challenge.



Creative Dementia Arts Network

## 2 Key points: making your arts venue dementia friendly

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- **Be proactive:** identify the needs and wishes of people with dementia, their families and carers and think about how you can meet these needs.
- **Raise awareness:** make sure your staff and volunteers understand dementia and how it can affect people's ability to access your venue and the way they experience the arts.
- **Make connections:** contact organisations that work with people with dementia and carers, as well as with other organisations, to explore opportunities for consultation, training or collaborative projects.
- **Learn from others:** find out what other arts venues have done to become more dementia friendly and learn from their experiences.
- **Keep it simple:** small changes such as having extra volunteers on hand, providing a quiet space or giving people more detailed information before they visit can make a big difference.
- **Be realistic:** start small and think about how you will resource programme changes or other projects in the future.



Manchester Museum: Coffee, cake and culture

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## Case study

### National Museums Liverpool

#### House of Memories

**Purpose:** House of Memories is a highly successful dementia awareness programme. It was designed by National Museums Liverpool to promote compassion, respect and dignity in care to support people living with dementia, their carers and families. The programme was created in collaboration with the health and social care sector to promote the power of objects to elicit memories and improve communication. It builds upon the role of museums as custodians of people's memories.

**Funding:** Funded by More Independent (Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group DALLAS (Delivering assisted living lifestyles at scale) programme), Department of Health, Health Education North West, Liverpool City Council, numerous trusts/foundations and private donors.

**Summary:** From its beginnings in 2012, House of Memories expanded rapidly to encompass a suite of national museum partners and resources. Activities include an interactive training day with creative resources (to take back into domiciliary and residential settings), a free object loan service and digital memory app.

Once a person has taken part in the training day they can access Suitcase of Memories, which contains objects, memorabilia and photographs to enable reminiscence sessions. The My House of Memories digital app includes a wide range of content from 1920–1980 and is designed to stimulate memory and conversation. Users can create their own virtual memory tree to share with friends and family. The app has the capability to include new content from diverse communities and museum partners from across the UK, and the training day is open to professional carers and families.

This wider provision is shaping an inclusive events programme, which features bespoke memory walks and drop-in events aimed at encouraging isolated older people to visit. A buddy training day for family carers has been developed and National Museums Liverpool has instigated the Happy Older People network to link cultural organisations with older people across the city region.

To date, 9,000 participants have attended House of Memories and 4,000 people have downloaded the app. As one participant stated: 'An amazing day in a beautiful location, amazing facilities. We can share stories while walking around, bringing us closer together and make more memories of precious time together.'

## Case study

### Dulwich Picture Gallery, London

#### Visual to Vocal

**Purpose:** An ongoing intergenerational programme of workshops for people with early to middle-stage dementia and those who care for them, to bring paintings to life through song. The project is now in its third year.

**Funding:** Visual to Vocal costs around £12,000 to run. This includes the composer's time, the lyricist's time, the co-ordinator, all the refreshments, keeping the gallery open for a late-night performance, and filming and evaluation. It also has a small transport budget. (The cost without filming and evaluation would be around £7,000.)

**Summary:** Over eight weeks, 20 participants worked with gallery staff, a composer from English Touring Opera and music students from Dulwich College and the Royal College of Music to write lyrics and music based on a different painting each week. Rather than focusing on memory loss, the project looked at what could be gained through looking at paintings, interpreting them through creative writing and forming the words into songs. The programme concluded with a concert at the gallery.

One participant from Dulwich College said that he had felt 'very apprehensive, because you see how some dementia patients are portrayed on television, and in the movies'. However, the process of collaboration changed his opinion and at the end of the project he noted that, 'these people seem so warm and just like us when it came to music. Music connects us and makes us all equal essentially.'

An interview with a participant with dementia several months after the end of the project demonstrated her good recall of the project. She noted that, 'doing it with a group...is much nicer.' Knowing that the group consisted of similar people (who are also living with dementia: 'We're all in the same boat'), and others (musicians, gallery staff, students), was clearly an advantage for her.

Quotes courtesy of Mark Making, <http://markmaking.arts.ac.uk>



## 3 What is dementia?

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Dementia describes a set of symptoms that may include memory loss, mood changes and problems with communicating and reasoning. These symptoms occur when the brain is damaged by certain diseases. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, but there are more than 100 other types including vascular dementia and dementia with Lewy bodies.

Dementia affects people in different ways, depending on the disease as well as the person. It is one of the main causes of disability in later life, ahead of cancer, cardiovascular disease and stroke.

### Common signs and symptoms of dementia

#### Memory loss – for example, a person may:

- have problems recalling things that happened recently (although some people easily remember things from a long time ago)
- repeat themselves or continually ask the same question.

#### Difficulty thinking things through and planning – for example, a person may:

- have problems concentrating, following a series of steps, grasping new ideas or solving problems
- struggle with familiar daily tasks, such as following a recipe or using a debit or credit card.

#### Problems communicating – for example, a person may:

- have difficulty finding the right word
- struggle to follow a conversation or misinterpret things.

#### Being confused about time or place – for example, a person may:

- lose track of what time, date or season it is
- not know where they are, even in a place they are familiar with.

#### Problems with sight and visual perception – for example, a person may:

- have difficulty judging distances (for example, on stairs)
- misinterpret patterns or reflections in mirrors.

#### Mood changes or difficulties controlling emotions – for example, a person may:

- become unusually sad, frightened, angry or easily upset
  - lose interest in things and become withdrawn
  - lack self-confidence.
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## How could dementia affect someone's visit to your arts venue?

The effects of dementia differ from person to person, but someone with the condition might:

- find it more difficult to get to the venue or find their way around
- respond to a performance or installation in an unexpected way
- struggle to follow a complex story or read an exhibition guide
- find it easier to interact with art using their senses – for example, by looking at visual art, handling objects or listening to music
- worry about how staff, volunteers or other visitors will react to their symptoms.

In addition, people may have other health issues alongside dementia – such as impaired hearing or mobility problems – that could affect their ability to get around your venue or appreciate what's on offer.



Historic Royal Palaces, Sensory Palaces

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# 4 Making your arts venue more dementia friendly

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## Community engagement

Dementia-friendly communities are primarily about greater inclusion of people with dementia within their local environments. You might feel as though this is outside your area of expertise, but remember that you don't have to do it alone. Building partnerships with organisations that work with people with dementia and carers will enable you to:

- tap into existing resources and knowledge
- gather the views of people with dementia, their families and carers
- meet specific local needs and support existing agendas and strategies
- identify activity in the local community that could benefit from your resources and facilities.

The key to successful partnership working is the development of an open relationship between stakeholders, where project aims are agreed in advance and different organisational priorities are acknowledged.

### Case study

#### Equal Arts, Gateshead

Promoting wellbeing and combating isolation: arts and dementia project

**Purpose:** To engage people with dementia and carers in local arts/cultural venues in Gateshead.

**Funding:** Funded by South of Tyne Primary Care Trust (£23.75 per person p/w, £57,000 for the year).

**Summary:** The project was promoted by local medical centres with 60 participants referred by their GPs, occupational therapists, community matrons (nurses) and sheltered accommodation staff. Groups visited Shipley Art Gallery and the Discovery Museum. Taster sessions were delivered at the start of the project so participants could choose which art form they wanted to pursue. Access to transport and having a project co-ordinator on board was essential to the success of the project. Partners included the health professionals and Tyne and Wear museum staff. An independent evaluation by Northumbria University showed that participants experienced an improved sense of wellbeing after taking part in the project.

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## Finding local organisations or partners

If your organisation is not already engaged in a partnership of this kind, you could approach:

- **Alzheimer's Society** – a full list of local services is available at [alzheimers.org.uk](http://alzheimers.org.uk)
  - **Dementia Action Alliance** – a full list of local alliances is searchable at [www.dementiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dementiaaction.org.uk)
  - **Age UK** – a full list of local branches is available at [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)
  - **Local councils** – hold a wealth of information about day, residential and homecare providers and about artists and arts organisations known to the culture team and arts officers. To find the contact for your local authority visit [www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council](http://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council)
  - **Care homes** – identify local care homes and talk to the manager about ways in which you could work together.
  - **NHS trusts** – local community hospitals can play a key role in engaging people with dementia and their carers. To find out more, search 'authorities and trusts' at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
  - **National Arts and Health Alliance** – a hub for information and research on arts and health work that aims to encourage the use of the arts by health and social care providers. Visit [www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk](http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk)
  - **The National Alliance of Museums, Health and Wellbeing** – sharing information about museum health and wellbeing activities. Find out more at [www.museumsandwellbeingalliance.wordpress.com](http://www.museumsandwellbeingalliance.wordpress.com)
  - **Artist networks** – the Creative Dementia Arts Network has a large database of artists who work with people with dementia, as well as other arts organisations and venues undertaking dementia-friendly initiatives. Go to [www.creativedementia.org](http://www.creativedementia.org) or email [info@creativedementia.org](mailto:info@creativedementia.org) to make an enquiry.
  - **Colleagues and friends networks** – talk to your staff, trustees, and supporters/members of your organisation to see whether they know of local organisations that work with people with dementia, their families and carers.
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## Engaging with people with dementia, their families and carers

Listening to what people with dementia and carers want is vital if you are to meet their needs. The best way to start this process may be to consult with people through existing networks developed by partner organisations that work with people with dementia. For example, your local Alzheimer's Society or Age UK may be able to facilitate contact with users of memory cafés, carers groups or day centres.

Here are the types of questions you might ask people with dementia, their families and carers:

- What type of activities/shows would you like to see at our venue?
- What would help you interact with the services and facilities we offer (eg handling artefacts, visiting at quieter times)?
- What would encourage you to visit our venue?
- What is the best way to let you know about upcoming events?
- Would you prefer to visit at a particular time of day?
- What would be the ideal length of a visit/event?
- Besides the venue itself, what challenges do you face that make visiting difficult (eg transport)?



The Courtyard Arts Centre, Hereford

## Raising dementia awareness in your organisation

Ensuring that your staff and volunteers are dementia-aware is one of the most important things you can do to provide a positive and inclusive experience for people with dementia and carers. This is particularly important for those in customer-facing roles. It will also help staff and volunteers feel more confident in welcoming visitors with dementia.

Successful awareness-raising relies on cross-departmental working. It is not the work of just one department, and this is something to reinforce when you communicate with staff and volunteers about dementia awareness activities. It is important to engage with all teams, including those working in marketing, events, interpretation, visitor welcome and education. This ensures that everyone understands a little about dementia and how it affects the visitors at your venue.

This cross-team awareness might mean that your programming team considers different ways to improve the experience of people with dementia and carers. For example, they might identify quieter times in the schedule when schoolchildren and large groups aren't present. Alternatively, they might speak to colleagues about piloting specialist guided tours during these times with support from the local Alzheimer's Society office. You'll find more guidance on dementia-friendly programming in section 6.

### Dementia Friends

Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Friends programme can play a key role in your venue becoming more dementia friendly. Through face-to-face sessions or online videos, Dementia Friends helps people to learn more about dementia and the small ways that they can help.

Some quick and easy ways to embed this in your organisation include:

- Holding regular Dementia Friends sessions at your venue to raise awareness among your staff and volunteers, as well as visitors. These sessions can be delivered by volunteer Dementia Friends Champions or your own in-house Champions (case study opposite).
- Sending out the link to the online Dementia Friends awareness video sessions to staff, volunteers and, if appropriate, to a wider audience of members/supporters.
- Encouraging your staff to train as in-house Dementia Friends Champions and roll out their own in-house sessions, for example at team meetings or during dedicated slots in your programming.

Visit [dementiafriends.org.uk](https://dementiafriends.org.uk) to find out more about these ideas and see how the Dementia Friends programme can transform dementia awareness within your organisation.

## Case study

### Manchester Museum and Whitworth Art Gallery

Committed to becoming dementia friendly

**Purpose:** For all visitor-facing staff (learning, visitor teams, volunteers) to have attended a Dementia Friends session by September 2015.

**Funding:** Trained in-house Dementia Friends Champions to roll out sessions, nominating a key champion to oversee delivery (the deputy visitor team supervisor). The Dementia Friends Champion training session with Alzheimer's Society and the Dementia Friends sessions are free to attend.

**Summary:** The initiative was conducted as part of the University of Manchester's commitment to becoming a dementia-friendly university. Internal support came from Dementia Friends being used as a flagship programme for the university's social responsibility work. The university sent out the initial communication asking for staff volunteers to become Champions, and the Whitworth allowed aspiring Champions to take time off work to attend the training and hold sessions. Sessions were delivered to staff at Manchester Museum and John Rylands Library, and staff were also encouraged to become Dementia Friends Champions.



#### Checklist: Community engagement

- ✓ Work with other organisations.
- ✓ Engage with people with dementia, their families and carers.
- ✓ Raise awareness by rolling out the Dementia Friends programme.

## 5 Making your venue more accessible

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For people with dementia and their carers, accessing your arts venue is an undertaking that starts long before they are inside looking at a painting or waiting for a show to start. They are likely to have considered lots of factors before making the decision to visit – including what's on and how they will get there.

This section looks at 'access' in its widest sense, including how people:

- find out about what's on at your venue
- get to your venue
- get into, and find their way around, your venue.

### Information about what's on at your venue

The diversity of people with dementia, their abilities and circumstances is huge. To help reach as many people as possible, information about your arts venue and its programme should be provided in a range of different ways and places.

Questions to think about include:

- Is your printed information available not just in local libraries, community centres and memory cafés, but also in GP surgeries, memory clinics or supplied to community psychiatric nurses (CPNs)?
- Is information available in different formats and languages that meet the needs of your local community?
- How user-friendly is your website (compared to those of similar venues)?
- Do you ensure that information about your commitment to being a dementia-friendly venue appears prominently on both your own and other relevant local websites?
- Do staff and volunteers wear their Dementia Friends badges at all times?

For more sources of guidance on dementia-friendly publication and website design, see the Resources section (page 34).

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## Getting to your venue

When it comes to visiting a cultural institution or site, transport and travel can be one of the biggest obstacles faced by people with dementia and their families. By getting in touch with local community organisations, the NHS and social care services, you may be able to organise transport and make preparations for a successful visit in advance.

Anticipation is an important part of the pleasure of visiting a museum, gallery or theatre. However, having an idea of what to expect can also be reassuring. By making transport arrangements and advance preparations, you can reduce anxiety and increase confidence for people with dementia and carers, helping them to enjoy their experience more. Using a 'same place, same time, same room, same format' approach will also help to make it a familiar and trusted experience.

Questions to ask when thinking about travel to your venue include:

- Does your website have clear information about travelling to the venue via public and private transport? Is there a phone number/email address for further information?
- Are there local organisations that can help arrange visits and transport?

Local voluntary agencies may have their own minibuses or may be able to broker group fares with minibus companies on your behalf. Local authorities may have special transport available or there may be community transport schemes to help visitors get to your venue.



Manchester Museum, Coffee, cake and culture

## Case study

### Historic Royal Palaces

#### Creating 'Sensory Palaces' for people with dementia

**Purpose:** Sensory Palaces is a health and wellbeing programme for people living with dementia and their carers. This learning programme combines storytelling and the senses to better enable participants to explore some of the greatest palaces ever built.

**Funding:** Costs were minimal as a Learning and Engagement team was already established to pick up the workstreams.

**Summary:** In 2014/15, in partnership with Alzheimer's Society, the programme was piloted at Hampton Court Palace. In addition to offering expertise and advice on working with people with dementia, Alzheimer's Society advertised sessions and helped to recruit and support participants for the pilot.

Because the team had experience of working with people living with dementia, they understood that the palaces could be stressful environments for people who are easily disorientated, have mobility issues or dislike crowds. In order to better prepare the Sensory Palaces participants, the team created pre-visit information called 'easy reads' for each session.

'Easy reads' included essential information about the session (date, time, location), getting to the palace (directions by car and public transport, parking) and what participants would be doing once they arrived (meeting point, session theme, activity, timings). The text was clear, concise and illustrated as needed.

Staff found that by providing this information, people living with dementia and their carers arrived more confident and enthusiastic about the session. The 'easy reads' also helped staff to develop a clear structure, which helped participants become familiar with the visitor experience by providing a routine. Overall, this simple information seemed to help reduce anxiety and enable participants to feel more independent visiting Hampton Court Palace.

Historic Royal Palaces is an independent charity that looks after the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, the Banqueting House, Kensington Palace, Kew Palace and Hillsborough Castle. Sensory Palaces is a programme developed and delivered by the Learning and Engagement team.



## Getting into and around your venue

Making your building dementia friendly will make it better for everyone. While there may be things that you can't influence, such as the venue's overall layout, small changes can make a big difference. Making sure staff and volunteers are dementia-aware can also compensate for any challenges created by your venue's design.

As well as considering the way dementia symptoms can affect someone's experience of your venue, there are other issues to bear in mind. Some people with dementia – and sometimes their family carers – may have other health problems that affect their ability to get around.

Think about the following key areas.

### Arrival

- Is the entrance obvious and clearly signed where necessary?
- What will people's first impressions be when they enter your building? Is the foyer area visually cluttered? Is information and signage clear?
- If you are hosting a visit from a group of people with dementia and carers, is there space for people to leave mobility aids such as wheelchairs if needed? Will there be plenty of volunteers/staff members on hand to welcome and guide your visitors?

### Signage

- Lower case lettering is more accessible for everyone.
- Larger, simple fonts work best.
- Alongside text, use a range of cues and clues including symbols or drawings.
- Use all forms of relevant communication including standard Braille lettering.
- Display Dementia Friends badges and signage prominently.

### Toilets

- Use words and symbols to provide clear information about toilets.
- Make cubicle doors clearly visible – door furniture should include handles.
- Signpost entrances and exits clearly.

### Seating

- Arrange some high-backed chairs with arms in areas where people may have to wait or queue, such as the foyer, near a toilet or by the box/ticket office.
  - Provide a quiet seating area where people with dementia can take 'time out', if they are finding it difficult to cope with noise and other distractions.
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### Layout/maps

- Make sure each floor/level of your building is clearly signed – for example, level 1, level 2 etc.
- Where possible have clear sightlines – a view across a room can help a person with dementia to leave a room or head for something they want to see next.
- Use objects or unique landmarks for directions – for example, ‘the exit is next to the grandfather clock’.

## Evaluating your premises

The best way to ensure your building is accessible for people with dementia is to ask them what they think. Conduct an audit with people with dementia and carers if you are planning changes to your premises – local organisations such as Alzheimer’s Society may be able to help arrange this (page 30).

For more sources of guidance on dementia-friendly design and auditing your venue, see the Resources section (page 34).

### Case study

#### The Courtyard Arts Centre, Hereford

Giving people with dementia access to the arts

**Purpose:** The Courtyard worked closely with the local Alzheimer’s Society office, people with dementia and their carers to develop initiatives that were to be implemented over the next two years. This was to ensure that the Courtyard became a dementia-friendly venue and supported people with dementia to engage in the arts.

**Funding:** Costs were minimal as an Arts and Older People team was already established to pick up the workstream.

**Summary:** On joining the Dementia Action Alliance, the process of producing an action plan provided an opportunity to look at the venue as a space and consider how the building, staff and the Courtyard’s commitment to inclusion complemented its outreach work.

The venue itself presented several challenges. The Courtyard is a three-storey building made mainly of glass and concrete. With its highly polished wooden floors, reflective surfaces and even a glass-floored gallery space, there were many things about the physical environment that could be challenging for people living with dementia.



Through consultation with the local Alzheimer's Society office and a network of care homes and care professionals, a plan was created to support people by focusing on customer experience. It additionally looked at the aspects of the building that could be adjusted. Working towards providing a venue that people with dementia and their carers felt comfortable and safe to visit meant ensuring that they felt supported to participate. Providing dementia awareness training to all front-of-house staff was a key first step in achieving this.

Through programming and special events, The Courtyard raises awareness about dementia to current audiences, professionals and the general public. It plans to expand work providing participatory arts projects for people with dementia and build on training that supports professionals working in the arts, health and social care to provide arts-based activities.



### Checklist: Accessibility

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- ✓ Ensure you consider all aspects of accessibility for your venue, including:
  - information about your activities
  - getting to your venue
  - access inside the venue.
- ✓ Ask people with dementia what they would find most helpful.
- ✓ Make use of online guidance on dementia-friendly design.

## 6 Programming

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The symptoms of dementia, and the accompanying anxiety, frustration and loss of self-esteem, can make it difficult for people with the condition to appreciate and engage with the arts. In addition, carers might avoid taking someone with dementia to see an exhibition or performance. This may be because they are worried about how the person will cope with the environment or how other visitors will react to them.

Dementia-friendly programming is therefore all about presenting things in ways that enable visitors with dementia – and their carers – to relax, engage with and enjoy the experience. Consulting with people with dementia will help you to identify the best way forward.

### Helping visitors with dementia to access your ‘standard’ programme

Ideally, your programme will enable people with dementia to access the venue whether they visit as part of a dedicated group, or independently of a support organisation. If they visit as a group, perhaps from your local Alzheimer's Society office or other community organisation, try to talk with the group organiser beforehand about how you can make the visit run smoothly.

People with dementia who come to your venue as part of the wider public will benefit from some of the adaptations outlined in other sections of this guide. This includes having clear signage and increased awareness among staff and volunteers.

### Incorporating dementia-friendly elements within your existing programme

Consider ways in which you could complement your programme with events or activities specifically for people with dementia, for example:

- ‘relaxed’ performances or screenings that create a more conducive environment for people with dementia and carers. For example, this might include keeping the house lights slightly turned up, reducing the volume and giving people freedom to move around. For an example of relaxed performance ideas for other audiences, visit the Society of London Theatre website, [www.solt.co.uk/relaxed-performances](http://www.solt.co.uk/relaxed-performances)
  - interactive gallery/exhibition tours or discussions for people with dementia, facilitated by trained staff or volunteers, such as Meet me at the MoMA (Museum of Modern Art, New York) and the Royal Academy’s monthly ‘Coffee and Conversation’ sessions.
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Remember that the appreciation of art is not purely intellectual, but also involves the emotions and the senses – sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. Shifting attention to the senses can be a good way to help people with dementia to engage with your programme. For example, you might think about:

- whether there is anything in your collection that can be handled and touched
- how you could provide playful, innovative and spontaneous opportunities to engage with artefacts
- whether anything could be paired with music
- ways to curate a painting as an experience
- whether assistive technology, such as handheld devices and apps, could increase access, such as the House of Memories app from National Museums Liverpool.

## Enabling people with dementia to create art

You may decide to take things a step further and develop activities that empower people with dementia to get involved in the artistic process as co-creators. This won't just benefit the people with dementia who participate – collaborative projects can also be rich sources of inspiration and satisfaction for artists.

This could mean:

- bringing together people with dementia and musicians/writers/artists etc to facilitate the creation of a new performance, artwork or exhibition
- hosting participatory sessions for people with dementia – examples include Rambert's Dance for Dementia and the Victoria and Albert Museum's Art and Expression workshops.



### Checklist: Programming

- ✓ Ask people with dementia and carers what would make your programme more dementia friendly
- ✓ Adapt your existing programme to make it more accessible for people with dementia.
- ✓ Consider initiating collaborative projects that enable people with dementia to take part in the arts.

## Case study

### West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds

Involving people living with dementia in auditing and designing 'dementia-friendly performances'

**Purpose:** To put on dementia-friendly performances of shows from West Yorkshire Playhouse's main house theatre programme. People with dementia advise on the changes necessary to ensure the production is suited to their needs. Considerations include sound and lighting levels, stage action, auditorium environment, front-of-house space and staffing levels.

**Funding:** A consultation and expenses fee is paid to access auditors EDUCATE, an empowerment organisation for people living with dementia, for each formal consultation. Local consultants are offered free theatre tickets and lunch. Additional staffing costs are incurred for rehearsals, training sessions and increased staffing levels. Dementia-friendly performances are sponsored by Irwin Mitchell Solicitors. Participatory work with people living with dementia is funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation and The Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation.

**Summary:** West Yorkshire Playhouse has a long history of participatory work with older people (since 1990) and people living with dementia (since 2010). Through this work, staff have learned from people with dementia about their experiences, needs and wants. Group visits to see shows demonstrated the profound impact a theatre trip can have on people with dementia, but also highlighted some of the accessibility challenges.

In early 2014, a model of dementia-friendly performances was conceived by Community Development Manager Nicky Taylor. People with dementia visited the theatre on a non-performance day to share their thoughts on accessibility of the venue. Initial consultations were carried out by Innovations in Dementia and EDUCATE.



Further regular consultations with EDUCATE, Leeds City Council's peer support service for people living with dementia and Dementia Friendly Rothwell informed adaptations to both main house auditoriums, front-of-house, customer service and the show itself. Crucially, consultants living with dementia visit during the rehearsal process to meet directors and actors and influence decision-making during the creative process. Final adaptations are made after consultation visits to dress rehearsals and preview shows.

Pre-show information is provided to audience members and followed up with phone calls to determine individual access issues. Outreach events such as singing or storytelling sessions are led by Playhouse staff prior to performances to enhance audience members' experience of the show. Some volunteers living with dementia support these activities.

Consultants with dementia have reported feeling proud of their involvement in dementia-friendly performances, and have noted a significant impact on feelings of self-worth and self-confidence. Audience members with dementia shared their joy at seeing shows and feeling welcome in the theatre. Family members have noted their relative's improved mood and communication after attending a dementia-friendly performance. Playhouse staff expressed the profound effect these shows have on their enjoyment of their roles while some actors said the dementia-friendly performance was the most special performance of their careers.



# 7 Where to find out more

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## Organisations

The following organisations' websites offer a range of information, including case studies of arts and dementia initiatives, practical resources on aspects of dementia-friendly design and details of free dementia awareness information sessions.

### Arts 4 Dementia

Empowering people with memory loss through artistic stimulation.

**[www.arts4dementia.org.uk](http://www.arts4dementia.org.uk)**

### Age Friendly Museums Network

The Age Friendly Museums Network believes that museums and older people enrich each other and aims to develop innovative and collaborative opportunities by bringing people together. As well as museum, gallery and arts professionals, it includes those from health and social care, the voluntary sector, research professionals and older people themselves. It is supported by the Baring Foundation and offers free workshops and training, explores and shares good practice and encourages creativity and new initiatives. Committed to working in partnership, the Network seeks to support organisations and individuals to become leaders in their respective fields and to represent older voices and a positive experience of ageing. Sign up to the Network online.

**[http://eepurl.com/\\_Kbev](http://eepurl.com/_Kbev)**

### Age of Creativity

An online platform that aims to share, celebrate and inspire work in the field of arts and older people, including those with dementia.

**[www.ageofcreativity.co.uk/inspiration/dementia](http://www.ageofcreativity.co.uk/inspiration/dementia)**

### Alzheimer's Society

Information about dementia, local Alzheimer's Society services and groups and the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative.

**[alzheimers.org.uk](http://alzheimers.org.uk)**

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### **The British Museum**

The British Museum works closely with local organisations to make its collections accessible to everyone. Its publication, Advice for group leaders visiting the British Museum with older adults, offers information and advice to group leaders working with older adults who may need additional support to make their way around the museum and enjoy the collection.

**[www.britishmuseum.org/PDF/older\\_adults\\_advice.pdf](http://www.britishmuseum.org/PDF/older_adults_advice.pdf)**

### **Creative Ageing at The Courtyard, Hereford**

Dedicated to creating high-quality arts experiences for older people in care, community and venue settings, and to supporting artists to develop their practice to be inclusive for older people, particularly those living with dementia. For more information visit the website.

**[www.courtyard.org.uk/AOP](http://www.courtyard.org.uk/AOP)**

### **Creative Dementia Arts Network**

The Creative Dementia Arts Network has a range of information and resources available and a database of artists working with people with dementia, arts organisations and arts venues.

**[www.creativedementia.org](http://www.creativedementia.org)**

### **Culture Hive**

An online resource designed to discover, share and inspire best practice. It hosts a collection of case studies, collated by the contributors to this guide and others, to share inventive methods of engagement with people with dementia and carers using the arts and arts venues and facilities.

**[www.culturehive.co.uk](http://www.culturehive.co.uk)**

### **Descartes**

Arts-based workshops for educating the dementia care workforce.

**[www.uea.ac.uk/dementia-research-collaboration/our-research/descartes-arts-based-workshops-for-educating-the-dementia-care-workforce](http://www.uea.ac.uk/dementia-research-collaboration/our-research/descartes-arts-based-workshops-for-educating-the-dementia-care-workforce)**

### **Dementia Action Alliance**

An alliance of organisations across England committed to transforming the lives of people with dementia and their carers. Its website includes a number of dementia-friendly resources.

**[www.dementiaaction.org.uk/dementiafriendly](http://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/dementiafriendly)**

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### **Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project (DEEP)**

DEEP supports people with dementia to try to change services and policies that affect their lives. Its website includes guidance developed both by and with people with dementia on a range of topics, including dementia-friendly websites, publication design and tips for consulting with people with dementia.

**[www.dementiavoices.org.uk/resources/deep-guides](http://www.dementiavoices.org.uk/resources/deep-guides)**

### **Dementia Friends**

Alzheimer's Society's dementia awareness initiative, designed to change people's perceptions of dementia through free face-to-face or online sessions.

**[www.dementiafriends.org.uk](http://www.dementiafriends.org.uk)**

### **Dulwich Picture Gallery**

The Gallery runs a range of community programmes to reach out to those who may not normally have the opportunity to engage with art. Its website includes information on Visual to Vocal, an intergenerational project for people with dementia that incorporates visual art, creative writing and music.

**[www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk](http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk)**

### **Innovations in Dementia**

A community interest company that works nationally with people with dementia, partner organisations and professionals with the aim of developing and testing projects that will enhance the lives of people with dementia. Resources include a checklist for dementia-friendly environments.

**[www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/resources.htm](http://www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/resources.htm)**

### **London Arts in Health Forum**

A membership organisation that aims to develop the role of culture in wellbeing and to promote and support arts in health activity. Its website contains information about arts and wellbeing activities in London and nationally.

**[www.lahf.org.uk](http://www.lahf.org.uk)**

### **Mark Making**

An exploration of the value of arts and culture for people living with dementia.

**<http://markmaking.arts.ac.uk>**

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### **Museums Change Lives**

A Museums Association programme to encourage museums to increase their impact in society and support positive social change. Its website includes dementia project case studies.

**[www.museumsassociation.org/museums-change-lives/15012015-museums-change-lives-case-study-dementia](http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-change-lives/15012015-museums-change-lives-case-study-dementia)**

### **National Alliance of Museums, Health and Wellbeing**

Sharing information about museums and health to improve existing practice, help build resilience and provide resources and support for those working in this area of activity.

**[www.museumsandwellbeingalliance.wordpress.com](http://www.museumsandwellbeingalliance.wordpress.com)**

### **Stirling Dementia Services Development Centre**

An international centre of knowledge and expertise dedicated to improving the lives of people with dementia. Its website includes sources of information and guidance on dementia-friendly building and interior design.

**[www.dementia.stir.ac.uk/design](http://www.dementia.stir.ac.uk/design)**

### **TanDem: Nottingham-Worcester Doctoral Training Centre – in partnership with Alzheimer’s Society**

TanDem is a doctoral training centre for the arts and dementia, working to address the lacking evidence base around the positive effects of using the arts to engage and work with people with dementia, their families and carers. The work is led by the Universities of Worcester and Nottingham in partnership with Alzheimer’s Society.

**[www.worc.ac.uk/discover/tandem-phd-studentship.html](http://www.worc.ac.uk/discover/tandem-phd-studentship.html)**

### **West Yorkshire Playhouse**

West Yorkshire Playhouse is compiling a best practice guide for dementia-friendly performances with the support of The Baring Foundation. It looks forward to sharing this with other theatres and arts centres. Visit the website to see more details of its programming for people living with dementia.

**[www.wyp.org.uk](http://www.wyp.org.uk)**

### **Willis Newson**

An arts and health consultancy with expertise in dementia and arts projects.

**[www.willisnewson.co.uk](http://www.willisnewson.co.uk)**

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## Resources

A selection of guidance documents to help you make aspects of your organisation and its work more dementia friendly.

### Choosing a dementia-friendly meeting space

A factsheet produced by the DEEP network to give practical guidance on sourcing and selecting suitable meeting and event spaces when considering the needs of people with dementia.

<http://dementivoices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/DEEP-Guide-Choosing-a-meeting-space.pdf>

### Collecting the views of people with dementia

Guidance produced by the DEEP network to help organisations engage with people with dementia, so that they can ensure dementia-related projects, services or activities meet their needs.

<http://dementivoices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/DEEP-Guide-Collecting-views.pdf>

### Creating a dementia-friendly workplace – A practical guide for employers

An Alzheimer's Society guide to help employers to create a dementia-friendly workplace.

[alzheimers.org.uk/employers](http://alzheimers.org.uk/employers)

### Creating websites for people with dementia

A guide written by people with dementia involved in the DEEP network.

<http://dementivoices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/DEEP-Guide-Creating-websites.pdf>

### How to do an access audit

A guide and checklist by Innovations in Dementia to help you make your building more dementia friendly.

[www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/HowToDoAnAudit.pdf](http://www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/HowToDoAnAudit.pdf)

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### **How to help people with dementia: A guide for customer-facing staff**

Guidance produced by Alzheimer's Society for those in customer service roles on how they can help to support the people with dementia they encounter in the course of their work.

[www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/download\\_info.php?downloadID=1352](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?downloadID=1352)

### **PAS 1365:2015 – Code of practice for the recognition of dementia-friendly communities in England**

PAS 1365 gives recommendations on developing a dementia-friendly community. It is aimed at participants in a stakeholder engagement process, who may include representatives from the community, businesses, local and regional governments and the voluntary sector. It identifies eight key areas for action in creating a dementia-friendly community, including information around arts, leisure, culture and recreation.

[www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents\\_info.php?documentID=2790](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=2790)

### **Tunbridge Well Museum dementia toolkit**

A dementia toolkit designed for small to medium museums. Developed by the Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery based on a research project with Alzheimer's Society in West Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University.

<http://culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Tunbridge-Museum-Dementia-Toolkit-1.pdf>

### **Writing dementia-friendly information**

A factsheet produced by the DEEP network to give practical guidance on writing dementia-friendly information.

<http://dementiavoices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/DEEP-Guide-Writing-dementia-friendly-information.pdf>

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# Appendix

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## Research and evaluation in the arts and dementia care – the evidence base

In recent years there has been a remarkable increase in the number and quality of arts-based programmes within dementia care in the UK and internationally. Artists and arts organisations, often with little or minimal support or acknowledgement, have taken a lead in developing creative responses to the dementia challenge.

This activity has been the subject of a wide range of academic research. Research is sometimes considered to be all about statistical results. However, while numbers can tell an important story, they are not the only forms of evidence. Narrative accounts, information from interviews, video data and artistic outputs can all be valid, important and informative components of research and evaluation. This is particularly the case when addressing a complex condition such as dementia.

What follows is a brief introduction to research and evaluation within arts and dementia care. It is far from exhaustive but aims to provide useful resources and information to artists and arts organisations to support strategic planning and contribute to funding applications. It also assists in the development of new programme areas as they continue to provide creative, stimulating, innovative and engaging work for people with dementia.

### 1 What is evidence and where does it come from?

Evidence commonly refers to a body of information (sometimes referred to as proof) that may support a claim or belief. In the case of arts initiatives for people with dementia, evidence refers to the effectiveness of the initiative in achieving an outcome that creates positive changes in health or wellbeing. This evidence can be obtained using the following methods:

- Interviews with people with dementia, their families and professional carers.
- Questionnaires – some are ‘standardised’, others are designed for a specific intervention/programme.
- The use of standardised scales to measure psychological/cognitive function or to capture self-esteem/measure social networks.
- Observation via video recordings, using visual accounts or use of behavioural checklists.
- Impact on healthcare usage; influence on other activities in and outside of the home.

### 2 What type of projects does the evidence cover?

The evidence ranges from single case studies to large-scale randomised controlled trials (RCTs). To date, projects are characterised by the following factors:

- Quality of research varies from well-described procedures and measures to more anecdotal reports.
  - The arts and health community is beginning to get away from the uncritical ‘cheerleader approach’ to one that is more nuanced and critical.
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### 3 Types of evidence

Observations on the following are useful:

- quality of life
- wellbeing
- cognition
- emotion and mood
- activity level
- behavioural change (increase or decrease in targeted behaviours)
- episodic memory
- long-term memory
- verbal fluency.

### 4 What types of art form have been studied?

Many different art forms have been involved in dementia care from early to later stages.

These include:

- Singing, music, dance, poetry, writing, visual art, drama and museum object handling have all positively contributed to dementia care.
- Arts involvement ranges from listening and observing to active participation.

### 5 Arts-based dementia care research from 2000 to 2015

In a wide range of research activities over this 15 year period, the following major themes have emerged:

- Arts activities are overwhelmingly described by people in early to mid-stage dementia as enjoyable, pleasurable, engaging, stimulating, and/or positively challenging.
  - The arts provide often unexpected opportunities for learning and creativity, which appear to be 'signature' opportunities for the arts to have an impact.
  - Those activities that take place in groups have the added benefits of decreasing social isolation and increasing social engagement. These are two significant and important aspects in the life of both people with dementia and carers. Being less socially isolated and being socially engaged can have an impact on cognitive and emotional stimulation, wellbeing and episodic memory.
  - The arts can provide a novel place of contact between family members and the person with dementia that is not focused on symptoms, diagnosis or illness. The importance of this should not be underestimated as a means to support family carers as well as those with dementia.
  - Involvement of family members has been shown to be highly beneficial across a range of different art forms, most notably seen in Sarkamo et al's (2013) RCT study from Finland on singing and listening to music coaching: 'Compared with usual care... singing enhanced caregiver wellbeing, whereas music listening had a positive effect on QOL [quality of life].'
  - Aesthetic judgements by people with a dementia remain relatively stable.
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## 6 Community-based arts and health interventions

Findings from a variety of research projects include the following:

- Literary arts have been shown to have a positive social impact on people with dementia, in particular on social communication and encouraging discussion. They have also demonstrated enhanced cognitive processes, such as memory retrieval and attention, enhanced memory, listening and concentration.
- In terms of performing arts, live music performances have demonstrated improved mental wellbeing through increased communication, social contact and active participation in those with early-stage dementia.
- Singing has been found to produce increases in sustained attention for those with mild, moderate or severe dementia, although those with lower Mini mental state examination (MMSE) scores need more stimulation. The most robust evidence to date relates to singing coaching groups for those with mild dementia. The evidence showed improvements in episodic memory, executive function and general cognition as well as short-term and working memory.
- In terms of visual arts interventions, viewing and discussing visual art has been shown to lead to increases in sustained attention for those with mild to moderate dementia, as well as being intellectually engaging through stimulating memory and communication. Viewing visual art followed by making art has been shown to improve episodic memory in early and moderate dementia. It has also shown to increase verbalisation during interventions, leading to sustained engagement in activities and promoting spontaneous communication.

## 7 Arts for people in the later stages of dementia

For people in the later stages of dementia (in residential care) singing and dance can help to reduce behaviours perceived as challenging. It can also increase useful behaviours (eg brushing teeth, dressing, going to the toilet).

## 8 References

The following reviews provide a synopsis of some of the research completed to date:

- Mental Health Foundation (2011). An evidence review of the impact of participatory arts on older people. Edinburgh: Mental Health Foundation. Accessed from: [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/evidence-review-participatory-arts-older-people/](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/evidence-review-participatory-arts-older-people/)
  - Young, R., Camic, P. M. & Tischler, V. (2015). The impact of community-based arts and health interventions on cognition in people with dementia: A systematic literature review. *Ageing & Mental Health*. Advance access: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2015.1011080>
  - Zeilig, H., Killick, J. & Fox, N. (2014). The participative arts for people living with a dementia: A critical review. *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*. Advance access: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3384/ijal.1652-8670.14238>
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**Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading support and research charity for people with dementia, their families and carers. We provide information and support to people with any form of dementia and their carers through our publications, National Dementia Helpline, website, and more than 3,000 local services. We campaign for better quality of life for people with dementia and greater understanding of dementia. We also fund an innovative programme of medical and social research into the cause, cure and prevention of dementia and the care people receive.**

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