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**This guidance document arose from the following NIMC training course:**

**‘Creating Connections- Museums Engaging Older People with Dementia’ which took place at NIMC Offices on 3rd June 2014.**

**As such this guidance is primarily designed to support those individuals who attended the training but could also be used as a checklist for anyone working within the sector and planning to make their museum more ‘dementia friendly’.**

Dementia is an umbrella term covering a range of conditions. The signs and symptoms of dementia can include: loss of memory, mood changes and communication issues.

When communicating with someone living with dementia:

DO Don’t

Choose a quiet place Talk down

Keep it simple Ask a lot of questions

Make and maintain eye contact Talk a lot

Listen Put under pressure

Check for understanding Ask why

When planning to make a museum dementia friendly or planning a specific project aimed at engaging those living with dementia the following could be useful:

• Contact your local Dementia Support Service- see below. As they can signpost to local groups to avail of your service and/or advice at the planning stage. It is also a good way to stay in touch with local events and to link into these.

• Think Dementia/be aware of signs

• Consider signage- use simple language and images to communicate

• Consider lighting and shadows- explain environment to alleviate fear/disorientation

• Customer service

Specifically when planning a project consider:

• Developing a series of interactions over a number of weeks so that familiarity can be built up

• A combination of outreach and in-museum activities

• Choose a time when the museum is not too busy

• Coordination with carers and group leaders

• Creating a relaxed and humorous environment

• Using a brightly lit area with seating

• Uses a small number of objects as stimulus at one time

• Be led by responses rather than asking a lot of questions

• Include a refreshment time

• Be flexible

• The potential outcomes of the project e.g. an exhibition

• Incorporating a creative dimension as this enables all to be involved

**Putting theory into action**

In light of the training session today what thoughts have you for developing a dementia friendly museum environment and secondly developing a workshop or activity designed to specifically engage older people with dementia?

Think about the capacity of your museum- is the aim to make the museum accessible for those with dementia to use and visit or is it this alongside the hope to develop specific activities/projects/workshops that seek to engage those with dementia?

When considering future action the following points may be useful:

* Think about the physical museum environment- lighting, signage, noise, seating etc.

Undertaking a dementia-friendly audit- is this something that can be easily undertaken or perhaps through the building of local links the Local Dementia Support worker would assist with this?

* Consider communication- Do maps and signs communicate messages effectively and simply? Could images be added to ensure clarity? Do other members of staff have training as to how to communicate with a range of needs? Consider sharing and disseminating the information from the training day. Think about current workshops- how are they delivered? Would the delivery mode need to be changed or adapted?
* Have you links to dementia organisations or groups locally?

If so would you plan to develop these links further? If not, do you have local information about which organisations/individuals to contact to develop a project or workshop?

* Partnership- communication is important with the Local Dementia Support Worker who will know which groups may be interested in particular activities and themes and as to whether outreach or on-site is the most suitable. They may be able to come out to have a look at the museum environment and make recommendations/suggestions prior to a group visit. Communication with the group co-ordinator is also key to establish the needs of the group and for the delivery of the session.
* When considering potential project or workshop themes think about current galleries, current and up-coming temporary exhibitions and available collections etc. When selecting theme or topic it is good practice to involve the group co-ordinator in the process.
* Consider the resources available to deliver an activity/workshop- Collections, exhibitions, handling collections/boxes etc. Of what is currently available what is suitable or could be easily adapted? Do you want to develop any specific resources?
* Group size- small numbers may be better. Ensure enough support staff will be attending with the group.
* Type of project- one off outreach/on-site, number of sessions solely museum based, solely outreach or a combination of both. Is the activity to be a small scale pilot with the hope of developing future activity from?
* Outcomes- will participants produce anything (more likely in a project of several weeks), how will success be measured? Will the pilot be used to develop further activities?

**Some links to additional information regarding dementia and museums:**

**National Museums Liverpool- Houses of Memories**

[About House of Memories | National Museums Liverpool (liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)](https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/house-of-memories/about)

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/elder/10823395/Alzheimers-A-memory-suitcase-helps-dementia.html>

**Met Museum New York**

<https://www.metmuseum.org/events/programs/access/visitors-with-dementia-and-their-care-partners>

<https://www.metmuseum.org/events/programs/access/visitors-with-dementia-and-their-care-partners/resources#:~:text=The%20Metropolitan%20Museum%20of%20Art%20welcomes%20people%20with%20dementia%20and,Museum%20and%20planning%20your%20visit>.

**MoMA, Meet Me at MoMA**

<https://www.moma.org/visit/accessibility/meetme/>

**Butler Gallery Kilkenny, Azure Project**

<https://www.butlergallery.ie/whats-on/azure-programme>

<https://www.butlergallery.ie/learn-engage/projects/ma-a-art-alzheimers>

**Age of Creativity**

<http://www.ageofcreativity.co.uk/>

National Dementia Helpline- 0300 222 1122 9am-5pm Mon-Fri; 10am-4pm Sat and Sun

Dementia Awareness Week takes place in late May.

Memory Walks take place in September.