

Guidance for hosting a Dementia Friendly Audit of your venue

Dementia Friendly Venues Charter

Introduction

“How can people affected by dementia audit our venue?”

This is the most frequently asked question from venues who have signed up to the Charter. This document will provide the basic outline for putting on a Dementia Friendly Audit. Here is what will be covered:

- Planning for your Dementia Friendly Audit
- Inviting people affected by dementia to audit your venue
- What to do leading up to the audit
- What to consider on the day of your audit
- Following up with people affected by dementia after your audit
- Top tips from people affected by dementia

Please note that this guidance will be provided to a broad spectrum of venues. If you find that you have specific questions or considerations based on your venue type, or even unique to your venue, please contact yoursay@alzheimers.org.uk for further support.

Planning for your Dementia Friendly Audit

- 1) Consider what you wish to achieve from the audit. Are there specific questions you want answered? Are there things that cannot be changed? You will want to have some freedom and flexibility in your audit, to allow people affected by dementia to see things most of us would not consider. However, having some key questions, or areas you wish to discuss, can focus conversation and help if someone is overwhelmed by completely open questions. Similarly, it will be frustrating for everyone involved if time and energy is spent on something that you already know cannot be influenced.
- 2) Who will be the main point of contact? Ideally the people auditing your venue will have one single point of contact throughout. Where this is not possible, aim to keep to two or three people at most. Try to keep some consistency in who is responsible for what. For example, one person may handle all of the contact prior to the day, with a different person conducting the tour/audit. If you are handing over to someone else, notify the person(s) affected by dementia about who this will be, who they are and what they will be responsible for.
- 3) Timescale. Do you have a specific reason for conducting an audit? Perhaps you want to host a dementia friendly performance/screening/exhibition. Or is this a general audit of your venue, to ensure you are as accessible as possible going forward? If it is a general audit, take the luxury of time. Set yourself a generous deadline and begin making

contact with the people you'd like to invite 3 – 4 weeks in advance. If you have a specific reason for your audit, you should still aim to give at least 2 weeks' notice to those who will be auditing your venue. Do not impose the pressure of deadlines onto people affected by dementia.

- 4) How many people should you involve? In most cases, multiple voices will lead to better outcomes. You will get a range of perspectives and people can build on each other's feedback. You will want this to be a manageable experience for you and those carrying out the audit, so do cap your numbers. If you are working with a preexisting group, then you can have a larger number, as they will be familiar with each other and may well come with additional support. If you are inviting a few individuals, keep the group to within 2 and 6 members. You will still gain valuable insights from a solo visit. This may occur due to tight timeframes, on the day apologies or the nature of your venue. If it is an audit with one person, make sure you have considered how an individual audit may differ from a group.
- 5) What are people auditing? Do you want to focus on the venue, or what a typical day may be like for people affected by dementia? If it is the venue, find a quiet time to put on the audit. Even if you want to know the experience of people on a typical day, still try to find a time of moderate business, rather than peak.
- 6) What is your plan of action once you have gathered this feedback? Who can action or signoff on any suggestions made? If it is not the person conducting the audit, the decision-makers should be spoken to ahead of the day. Agree when you will debrief after the audit. People auditing your venue will feel truly valued if you have already planned in how you are going to take their suggestions forward.

Inviting people affected by dementia to audit your venue

- 1) Where to find people. Do you have a group already set up? If not, this is an ideal opportunity to establish one. These people could regularly provide you feedback on the venue or any specific events you put on. It is a chance to constantly learn, rather than try to achieve everything in one go. You could put a call out to people on your mailing list or followers on Social Media. There is a risk of course that people without a diagnosis may try to gain access to a tour of your venue. You can also let your Alzheimer's Society contact know about your plans. They may be able to identify people on our Dementia Voice Database who are interested in auditing arts and culture venues. Perhaps this is part of a larger piece of work. Have you offered patrons living with dementia the chance to make themselves known so that you can provide support and opportunities to influence your venue?
- 2) Once you have identified who you would like to invite, make sure you know their contact preferences. Some people find email best, as there is no pressure to reply on the spot. Many do not have email, or do not check it regularly. They may also simply prefer hearing from someone over the phone.

What to do leading up to the audit

- 1) Once you have found your invitees – make sure you have established their contact preferences going forward and how regularly they would prefer reminders of the event. Especially if you are planning in advance, people may want a few reminders and then one the day before. The day before will probably be best as a phone call. This may be more memorable and gives a chance for any last minute questions or requests they may have.
- 2) Check what support people will need on the day. You absolutely must confirm who will be meeting them and where. If they are living with dementia, are they coming alone, or will they need support from a carer, friend or family member? If travelling alone, do they need someone to meet them somewhere other than the venue? If you have the budget, can you offer to cover expenses? If so, can you offer to reimburse for a cab, or even handle the booking of the cab yourself? If someone is making their own way to you, what do they need? Can you provide a map and some pictures of nearby landmarks?

Images that are useful include:

- The outside of your venue (preferably clearly indicating the entrance)
- The nearest tube, rail or bus stops (also an image of the particular bus can be useful)
- A picture of the person who will be meeting them

What to consider on the day of your audit

- 1) Where you are meeting people – are they able to make it to your venue unassisted? If an alternative meeting point is agreed, are timings clear and do they have a contact number for you?
- 2) What to do if someone does not arrive – Does your venue have a process? Do you have an emergency contact if you cannot reach the person?
- 3) Introduce the day, what you would like to gain and anything that cannot be influenced – Keep this brief and clear. This will also help you if you need to repeat any of this throughout the visit.
- 4) Can you provide something accessible such as a checklist of what you wish to cover? Examples are available online, or you can speak to your Alzheimer's Society Contact. You may wish to provide each person with a copy and clipboard, or you may have one yourself and take them through it before starting the tour.
- 5) Have a clear route around the venue – Try to plot the easiest and most obvious route. If you have a large venue, is it feasible to tour it all in one session? If it is worth splitting across multiple visits, there is also the option to involve different people each time. People affected by dementia we consulted requested it be kept below two hours, preferably less.

- 6) Build in breaks and be flexible during the audit itself - Include rest points along the way. If someone should be separated from the group, set a meeting point and ensure all venue colleagues know of the event so that they can offer assistance.

Following up with people affected by dementia after your audit

- 1) Follow up within a week to thank those involved for their contributions. If you have any examples of what you have taken onboard, share them here. Provide an indication of when you will next be in touch and what you will be sharing with them.
- 2) “You said we did” – Follow up once you have made changes. If you could not act on a suggestion, provide details as to why. You should set a date for when this feedback will come, so that you can let people know on the day or in your thank you call/email. It is fine if this date has to shift, but make sure you still feedback when you originally agreed. It is far better to contact someone and let them know something is going to take longer, than to say nothing.

Top tips from people affected by dementia

- The greeting is top priority. Let us know where you are going to meet us, be there and be prepared. We will be far more at ease if we know before we go that we will be in safe hands when we arrive.
- Let us know what support is already available. Don't wait for us to ask for it if you can already provide it.
- We're likely to need a carer, friend or family member with us, so let us know if we are able to bring someone from the outset.
- If you've had any evaluations done in the past, tell us what the outcome was, so we know what's possible and what you do with feedback.
- I'd like to know who in your venue has had training or experience in dementia. Who can I turn to if I need help? If possible, have something that makes them stand out, like a lanyard or item of clothing. I'd also like to talk to them, to see what they know and how they already support people with dementia.
- Many of us have other accessibility issues, such as finding stairs a challenge. Let us know how accessible the venue is ahead of time, especially the toilets.
- Have somewhere I can go if I get overwhelmed. Reassure me by telling me where that is before I even get to the venue.
- It is vital that you follow up promptly after we visit. Let us know what the next steps are. As soon as possible (preferably within a week to two weeks) let us know what is going to be done as a result of our suggestions. What will change and when? If something cannot be acted upon, be very clear as to why not. If it was never going to be possible, tell us before we start giving feedback, so that nobody's time is wasted.

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Alzheimer's Society Dementia Voice National Groups – 8 people living with dementia and 7 carers, consulted separately.

Kent Forget Me Nots – A group of people living with a diagnosis of dementia