

Communicating with a customer with dementia

If you work in a customer-serving role, the chances are you will support customers who live with dementia. Dementia affects everyone differently so it's important to know that you may have to communicate in different ways to suit each individual.

Keep in mind that as well as difficulties in how people with dementia use words and language, they may have hearing and sight problems, which can also make it harder to communicate. Below are some tips and advice, to help you give a positive experience.

Positive and friendly

Keep your tone of voice positive and friendly. Communication isn't just verbal. Body language plays a big part so if you are relaxed and calm, chances are this will be mirrored.

Get their attention

Before speaking, make sure you have eye contact. If possible, minimise distractions and background noises to help support better communication.

Keep it short and simple

Do not overcomplicate sentences or questions. Keep them short, simple and be concise. Avoid asking too many questions at once.

Listen carefully and be patient

Listen carefully to what the person is saying. Give the person your full attention. They may need plenty of time to process the information and respond. There is no rush.

Rephrase it

If the person doesn't understand what you're saying, even after you repeat it, try saying it in a slightly different way instead. Could you use cues or objects in the room to help get your message across?

Acknowledge it

Acknowledge what the person has said and be encouraging. Eye contact and smiling are great ways to do this!

More information

For more information on supporting people with dementia in Sheffield:

Visit www.ageuk.org.uk/sheffield and find "Dementia services" within "Our services"

Call Age UK Sheffield on (0114) 250 2850

E-mail dementiaadvice@ageuksheffield.org.uk

To find out more about how to be dementia friendly contact sdaa@ageuksheffield.org.uk