



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**
Social Care **Wales**

Dementia-friendly design

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Go to <https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/improving-care-and-support/people-with-dementia/dementia-friendly-design> for the latest version.

Learn about changes to the home environment which can help people living with a dementia to be more independent and safer at home.

Why colour contrast is important

As people's eyes age, particularly if they have dementia, they lose their ability to notice changes in colours.

- Use strong, contrasting colours to draw attention to important items and give a sense of depth to a room
- Red is best, as older eyes see it most clearly. Another colour can also be effective as long as it stands out from the background.
- Fit contrasting toilet seats and grab rails in bathrooms. If the grab rail is white, add coloured duct tape or paint the wall behind a block colour
- A brightly coloured cushion on an armchair will increase the contrast between the chair, floor and wall
- Paint doors or the architrave of the main rooms in the house, or add a dementia friendly sign, or A3 coloured card
- Ensure stair handrail contrasts with the wall and highlight the edges of stairs with brightly coloured tape
- Walls should contrast with floors
- Use red masking tape on light switch or on the back plate.

Older eyes need more light to see clearly

As people age they may need as much as 60 per cent more light to see things clearly.

- Maximise natural light by drawing curtains right back and opening blinds
- Turn on lights as the daylight fades
- Use bright bulbs and task lights
- Minimise changes in light levels between rooms. It will take a person's eyes a moment to adjust if going from a brightly lit room into a darker hallway, increasing the risk of a fall
- Ensure bedrooms can be made dark at night
- Leave the bathroom light on at night to help the person to find the toilet

- Simple changes to lighting may help people cope better with ‘sundowning’, where they become more restless and agitated when natural light drops in the evening.

Making the home less confusing

Patterned furniture, changes in floor coverings and background noise can disorient and confuse someone with dementia. Learn how to minimise this:

- Consider replacing patterned materials such as flooring, curtains, bedding, wallpaper with block colours
- Have similar flooring throughout the house. People can see a change in flooring or door thresholds as a barrier
- Remove rugs; these can be a trip hazard and be misinterpreted as a hole
- Avoid reflections from windows or overhead lights. Areas of light and shadows in the room can increase confusion. Consider hanging a voile curtain or moving furniture/equipment to minimise the effect
- Remove, cover or move mirrors if people get distressed when looking in the mirror
- Reduce unnecessary noise by turning off the television or radio if no one's using it. As dementia progresses it becomes more difficult for a person to filter sounds. The noise of the vacuum cleaner and washing machine may distract and make it more difficult to concentrate on tasks.
- Dementia-friendly clocks are available that clearly display day/night, the day of the week and the month. A large analogue clock with clear numbers can help. Apps are also available with time, day and date reminders.

Useful resources

Find out more about dementia-friendly design.

[Advice from the Alzheimer's Society about making your home dementia-friendly](#)

[Llys Jasmine, the first extra care facility in Wales to feature dedicated apartments designed for people with dementia](#)

[The dementia-friendly home app](#)

We want your feedback

Help us to improve the Dementia resource for care professionals by telling us what you think about it in our short [four question survey](#).