



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

# Respecting people's preferences

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We're all creatures of habit with our own likes and dislikes, routines and ways of doing things. It's important to recognise and respect people's preferences and not make assumptions.

## **One size doesn't fit all**

Think about yourself:

- what time do you normally wake?
- what is the first thing you do in the morning?
- are you washed and dressed before going downstairs or do you need a cup of tea before you even think about getting washed?
- when do you brush your teeth?
- do you prefer a bath or shower?
- which order do you do things in the shower? Hair first or body first?
- do you use particular products or are happy to use anything?
- do you use a sponge, scrunchy or flannel?
- do you get your clothes ready the night before or grab anything in the morning?
- when do you have breakfast?
- what do you usually have? Or do you skip breakfast?

How do you feel if you cannot follow your normal routine?

We need to know as much detail as possible about a person with dementia's routine, so that we can follow their way of doing things, not doing it the way we do it for ourselves.

## **Non-verbal communication in dementia care**

Many of the things we do each day, we do on automatic pilot. We don't think about it, we just do it.

We do this using our procedural memory: our memory of how to do things.

People with dementia can use their procedural memory to do everyday things, maybe with a little help to start.

We are often told to explain everything we are doing to people. For some, this will make it more difficult as they are having to use different parts of their brain to understand the spoken word and translate that into an action.

Nonverbal communication is often more effective and enables people to be more independent for longer.

## Find out what people prefer

Everyone will have their food and drink preferences too. Foods they love, foods they hate.

They may like to eat little and often or enjoy a main meal at lunch time. Some will want to sit up at a table, others prefer a tray on their lap.

Some people like to be up and about and busy, others prefer quiet times. Some are up early and early to bed, others are night owls.

Personal preferences influence all of us, with or without a dementia, and the more we know about a person's preferences, the closer we can match our support to their wants and needs.

One size does not fit all.

## A case study about respecting people's preferences to help you improve your practice.

[View transcript](#)

**NIKKI HANCOCK:**

**Domiciliary Care Manager**

[00:00:01] The Raglan Project it's about looking after the person as a whole, more their emotional needs than their physical needs.

**CAROLINE PRICE:**

**Care Worker**

[00:00:08] The physical and the practical needs go hand in hand, but once you've met the emotional needs you build such a deep relationship with the person.

**JULIE HINTON:**

**Care Worker**

[00:00:18] It think the Raglan Project is different because you are more involved with the families, you're allowed to make your own decisions regarding their social well-being.

**DEBBIE WILLIAMS:**

**Care Worker**

[00:00:29] Until you can build a relationship with somebody you can't achieve anything anyway.

[00:00:35] But like the Raglan Project allowed us to work differently, build relationship and achieve excellent outcomes.

**NIKKI HANCOCK:**

[00:00:43] It's more what can we do with you rather than doing for.

[00:00:47] That's the whole point of working with dementia is to do with.

**CAROLINE PRICE:**

[00:00:52] We have the community group now that runs once a month and we go out on trips, and it's like a hub for the community and the supermarket and the shops, a lot of people feel a sense of, I don't know what the word is, responsibility basically and they want to be involved in this.

**DEBBIE WILLIAMS:**

[00:01:13] With bringing them to just the old Village Hall and the community bringing everybody together and the team, we found that when they knew they was going out the next day to a social or something, they couldn't wait to get ready and they'd try and do it themselves as well.

[00:01:28] So they was getting a lot more independent.

**CAROLINE PRICE:**

[00:01:31] It's not about sitting in a chair watching television, it's being included and that is vital and that is the most important thing, that they're included in their own being.

[00:01:42] It's not about doing for them it's about them wanting to do, and go shopping, have their hair done, all the things that they used to do.

[00:01:51] Having dementia shouldn't stop it, they should lead a full life and a varied life like we do.

**DEBBIE WILLIAMS:**

[00:01:57] So now we just see what people are like on the day.

[00:02:00] If they fancy a bath, they have one.

[00:02:02] If they don't we can do it another time.

[00:02:05] We can go back to calls or just what they, what matters most to them that's what we try and do.

**CAROLINE PRICE:**

[00:02:10] You see them actually bloom in front of your eyes.

[00:02:15] You go in and everything is what they want.

[00:02:18] That's given them the confidence to build, you know, and do what they want to do.

[00:02:24] If they want to go into town and they go round the supermarket shopping together that's what we do.

**NIKKI HANCOCK:**

[00:02:29] They need control and their own voice, everybody is, I need it.

[00:02:34] You know, you wouldn't like to be sitting there and just somebody do everything for you and you can't even offer an opinion.

[00:02:40] And the people that we visit, just because they have dementia doesn't anything away from them, they're still human beings and that's the way that the team, and hopefully the rest of Monmouthshire, treat everybody that we visit.

## Useful resources

Find out more about respecting people's preferences.

[Dementia Diaries has short recordings documenting the day-to-day lives of people living with dementia](#)

## 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](#).