Environments will be dementia friendly and support independence and well-being.

This will be supported by:

• minimal moves to avoid unnecessary distress
• appropriate lighting and floor coverings plus aids to support orientation and visual stimulation
• personalising bed area
• adequate space and resources to support activity and stimulation
• availability of staff to support rehabilitation eg occupational therapy, physiotherapy, activity coordinators
• inclusion of trained volunteers to support activity and pastoral care.

References and further information

Based on findings of surveys from over 700 professionals and almost 1500 family carers, supporters and people with dementia. See www.rcn.org.uk/dementia

• Stakeholders supporting this work have included DH, ROG RCN, University of Sunderland, College of Occupational Therapists, College of Emergency Medicine, BGS, Kings Fund, Alzheimer’s Society, Age UK, Dementia UK

• See Dementia Commissioning package for supporting better care in general hospitals. Available at: www.dh.gov.uk

• National Institute for Clinical Excellence and Social Care in England, ‘Supporting people with dementia and their carers in hospital’. Available at: www.nice.org.uk


We believe that more can be done to improve the care of people with dementia in hospital settings. These principles have been identified as essential in ensuring the appropriate delivery of care. Join us in putting these principles into practice and make SPACE for good dementia care.

SPACE – top five ingredients to support good dementia care

1) Staff who are skilled and have time to care
2) Partnership working with carers
3) Assessment and early identification of dementia
4) Care plans which are person centred and individualised
5) Environments that are dementia friendly

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies. www.rcn.org.uk/dementia

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Commitment to the care of people with dementia in hospital settings

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Hospital environments can be particularly confusing for people living with dementia. It is therefore essential that unnecessary admissions are avoided and every effort made to support people with dementia in their own environments. However, at times treatment may be required in a hospital setting. When this happens, people with dementia need to have their dementia recognised so that appropriate care and treatment is delivered, irrespective of the reason for admission.

The following principles have been identified by people with dementia, family, carers and friends, as well as by professionals. They are important for all those responsible for care.

1. They form a shared commitment to improving care and are supported by a range of stakeholders who have been involved in the development of this work.

2. Each principle is considered essential to ensure the appropriate delivery of care, and factors are identified which will support their delivery based on guidance and best practice.

- recognition and assessment of carers needs
- involvement of families/friends in assessment, care planning and decision making
- flexible visiting and flexible approaches to routines so that family carers/supporters can be involved directly in care where desired.

This will be supported by:
- use of agreed screening and assessment tools
- skilled knowledgeable practitioners
- clear delirium protocols and dementia pathways
- clinical review of medication to support the appropriate use of antipsychotic medication.

3. Family carers and friends are seen as partners in care.

A dementia assessment will be offered to all those at risk, to support early identification and appropriate care.

This will be supported by:
- good quality training and education in dementia that is easy to access, practical and focuses on attitudes/approach and communication. Training should be made available to all staff based on an analysis of training needs and incorporate perspectives of people with dementia and carers.
- availability of identified clinical leads for dementia eg dementia specialists/nurses, mental health liaison, dementia champions.
- careful consideration of staffing levels which ensures that staff mix, ratio and numbers of staff are adequate to support the complex needs and numbers of people with dementia being cared for.

This will be supported by:
- use of agreed screening and assessment tools
- skilled knowledgeable practitioners
- clear delirium protocols and dementia pathways
- clinical review of medication to support the appropriate use of antipsychotic medication.

4. Staff will be informed, skilled and have enough time to care.

Care planning will be person-centred and responsive to individual needs and support nutrition, dignity, comfort, continence, rehabilitation, activity and palliative care.

This will be supported by:
- routine gathering of personal life story information
- involvement of family and friends in care planning
- regular mental capacity assessments, advance care planning, nutritional tools, pain assessments and safety education
- provision of appropriate support with feeding
- provision of appropriate activity to encourage social engagement, maintenance of function and recovery
- availability of dementia specialists/leads
- availability of palliative care specialists.

Care planning will be person-centred and responsive to individual needs and support nutrition, dignity, comfort, continence, rehabilitation, activity and palliative care.

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