



# Creating websites for people with dementia

## Key messages

- More and more people with dementia are turning to the internet for information.
- We don't know all the answers – nothing can replace asking people with dementia to test website designs.
- The language used is as important as the design.

## Why involve people with dementia in website design?

Many people find using computers and the internet more difficult as their dementia progresses.

But a growing number of people will turn to the internet if they are worried about their memory.

There are lots of websites that provide information about dementia and the support available for people with dementia and their families.

Professional support workers and families use the internet to find information to show a person with dementia. They might show them on the screen or print out the information.

## 'It was aimed at me, but they missed'

Many websites contain helpful information and advice for people with dementia. But if people with dementia can't find or understand that information, it is useless.

People make an effort to find a website. Once they are on the website, it needs to be as easy to use and as engaging as possible.

## Content

- The purpose of the website and how to use it must be clear.
- Content must be interesting and grab people.
- Stories and tips from people with dementia themselves are very helpful.
- Text should be short (including documents to print such as PDFs).

## Language

The language used on websites is even more important than the language used in printed materials (see *Writing dementia-friendly information*).

The text needs to be as easy to understand as possible.

- Use clear, direct language.
- Avoid jargon or language that is too technical or scientific.
- Avoid using abbreviations.
- Some terms – such as ‘care’, ‘services’, ‘resources’ and ‘policy’ – can be off-putting or confusing for many people.

## Finding information

Websites usually rely on headings that act as links for people to find their way to different pieces of information.

The language used in headings or links therefore needs to be very clear and simple.

The words used in headings and links on websites are out of context. They aren't part of a sentence or paragraph that explains something, so they are more difficult to understand.

- Phrases like ‘get involved’ may mean something to people who work, volunteer or fundraise for charities but may have little meaning for people with dementia.
- Avoid phrases that are too broad, such as ‘planning ahead’. The specific meaning may be missed.
- Avoid words or phrases that don't have a clear meaning: for example, the words ‘services’ and ‘resources’ can be used in many different ways.

- Be precise – for example does ‘news’ mean news about the organisation, news about dementia or just general news, say from the BBC?
- Avoid headings that are too similar eg ‘Young onset dementia’ and ‘Living with young onset dementia’.

## Design

- Use a large text size.
- Use bold and colour to highlight important information.
- Use plain backgrounds to avoid distraction.
- Avoid using lots of different fonts and fancy designs that may be confusing.
- Make sure links to other pages are clear.
- Use short pieces of text so people don’t need to scroll down.
- Make it clear how to get back to the beginning of the website.

## Using pictures

Pictures can make a website look more attractive and welcoming.

But pictures should be used with care:

- Pictures can be confusing and distracting.
- Pictures need to be meaningful and relevant.
- Pictures need to be simple and engaging.

## How to involve DEEP groups / people with dementia in website design

Involving people with dementia in website design need not be difficult or tedious.

People don’t necessarily have to look at design ideas for the website on a computer screen. You can print off components of the proposed design or text.

The most important thing to ask people about is headings and links. Ask people what they think the headings are about.

Ask people about images that might be used. Make sure the pictures are easy to understand and don’t cause confusion.

People in the early stages of dementia are often happy to look at passages of text and comment on how easy they are to understand.

This guide was created with the help of Educate (Stockport) and Young Dementia UK

DEEP guides aim to support the involvement of people with dementia. Some are aimed at DEEP groups, others at organisations wanting to work well with people with dementia. They have all been co-produced with people with dementia and will be updated regularly throughout the project. Suggestions for new guides are welcome – contact Rachael Litherland at Innovations in Dementia: email [rachael@myid.org.uk](mailto:rachael@myid.org.uk) or telephone 01392 420076.

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