

‘Coping with Dementia’ Leaflet Rationale

This leaflet has been produced for the purpose of supporting sufferers of dementia and the individuals that care for them. The format is tri-fold A4, with one side addressing issues faced by people experiencing dementia, and the reverse side specifically directed towards those providing care and support. The design itself is bespoke and no template was used in its creation. Some simple graphics were employed to create a distinctive look, with a view to possible future projects adopting a similar theme, therefore identifying them as relatable publications. The leaflet was designed to be folded ‘concertina’ style, for ease of opening, and laid out in such a way as for the final page to contain the supplementary contact information.

Consideration was given to dedicating the leaflet entirely to dementia sufferers but the complexities of the condition in terms of cause, severity and manifestation would mean the information would still only have been introductory. With that in mind, the leaflet was designed to address carers also and as not everyone is cared for by a family member or friend, it would then provide an opportunity for them to explore the issues and challenges together, encouraging them to build a relationship or rapport. The importance of dialogue and conversation (where possible) is something the NHS (2017a) highlights as good practice with such a degenerative condition, where there is often a reluctance to engage in conversation, as the illness progresses.

A clear bold font was used to distinguish the headings from the main text and *Trebuchet*, a sans serif font (Microsoft, 2017), was utilised for the body of text to ensure clarity for easy reading. Sans serif fonts are recommended for use in dementia literature by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Frost, 2015, p.7), as studies have shown these are less confusing than elaborate fonts. The Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project (2013) suggest information works most effectively when presented in small, manageable sections, avoiding italics, and using colours for separation. The result will help to maintain reader interest and assist with concentration. They recommend finishing sentences on the same page as they start and avoiding the use of multiple columns on a single page.

The choice of colour was also an important factor. Dementia can have a significant impact on how individuals perceive colour. NHS Wales (2018) introduced a policy of serving meals on blue crockery at Ysbyty Gwynedd for all patients affected by dementia. Their decision was

based on research that showed eating from blue plates increased a person's appetite by up to 25%. An early study conducted by Wijk et al. (1999) suggested that the accelerated cognitive decline experienced by sufferers of Alzheimer's, resulted in a difficulty naming and recognizing certain colours. Some colours such as red, blue and green (notably primary colours) were less affected. The use of colour alone however, does not reveal the whole story. The most recent material published by the Alzheimer's Society (2017) regarding the issue recognises the significance of contrast and hue, rather than purely colour. So although the colour choice was important (in this case a limited, but predominantly blue palette), the careful use of contrast was also a major consideration. A proof copy was printed to ensure the colour and contrast balance was complimentary.

A brief overview of some of the issues relative to the condition was provided. This was to encourage carers and sufferers to expand their knowledge of dementia, without overloading them with information. References to legislation, policies and theory were included in the leaflet but as with all the material, size restrictions meant content was limited, and was therefore by no means comprehensive. For that reason, readers were encouraged to explore the subject further, particularly around important issues such as consent and The Mental Capacity Act (HMSO, 1983) and giving voice to not only the clients, but also their carers as found in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (Welsh Government, 2014). Finally, the overall feel of the publication was intended to reflect some of the positive aspects of dealing with dementia, rather than just negatives. Encouraging people to socialise and remain active, avoiding the stigma and labelling that can often have a negative effect on individual well-being. Sabat and Harré (1992) suggest that although Alzheimer's sufferers retain their true individual identity, even in the later stages of illness, the real threat of identity loss comes from the way Alzheimer's sufferers are perceived through societal prejudices.

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References for images

Image 1: Author's own image

Image 2: Max Pixel (no date) *Free photo Alzheimer's Age Woman Old Care Costs Dementia*. [online] Available at: <https://www.maxpixel.net/Alzheimers-Age-Woman-Old-Care-Costs-Dementia-63612> [Accessed 28 Feb. 2019].

Image 3: Max Pixel (no date) *Free photo Dementia Alzheimer's Forgetfulness Dependent Forget*. [online] Available at: <https://www.maxpixel.net/Dementia-Alzheimers-Forgetfulness-Dependent-Forget-3051832> [Accessed 27 Feb. 2019].