



# Four Rivers Dementia Alliance

In partnership with



**Dementia Friendly Parishes**  
*around the Yealm*

## **COMMUNITY LIAISON AND SUPPORT RETAILERS INFORMATION PACK**

**Small steps make a big difference for people living with dementia,  
their families, carers and communities**

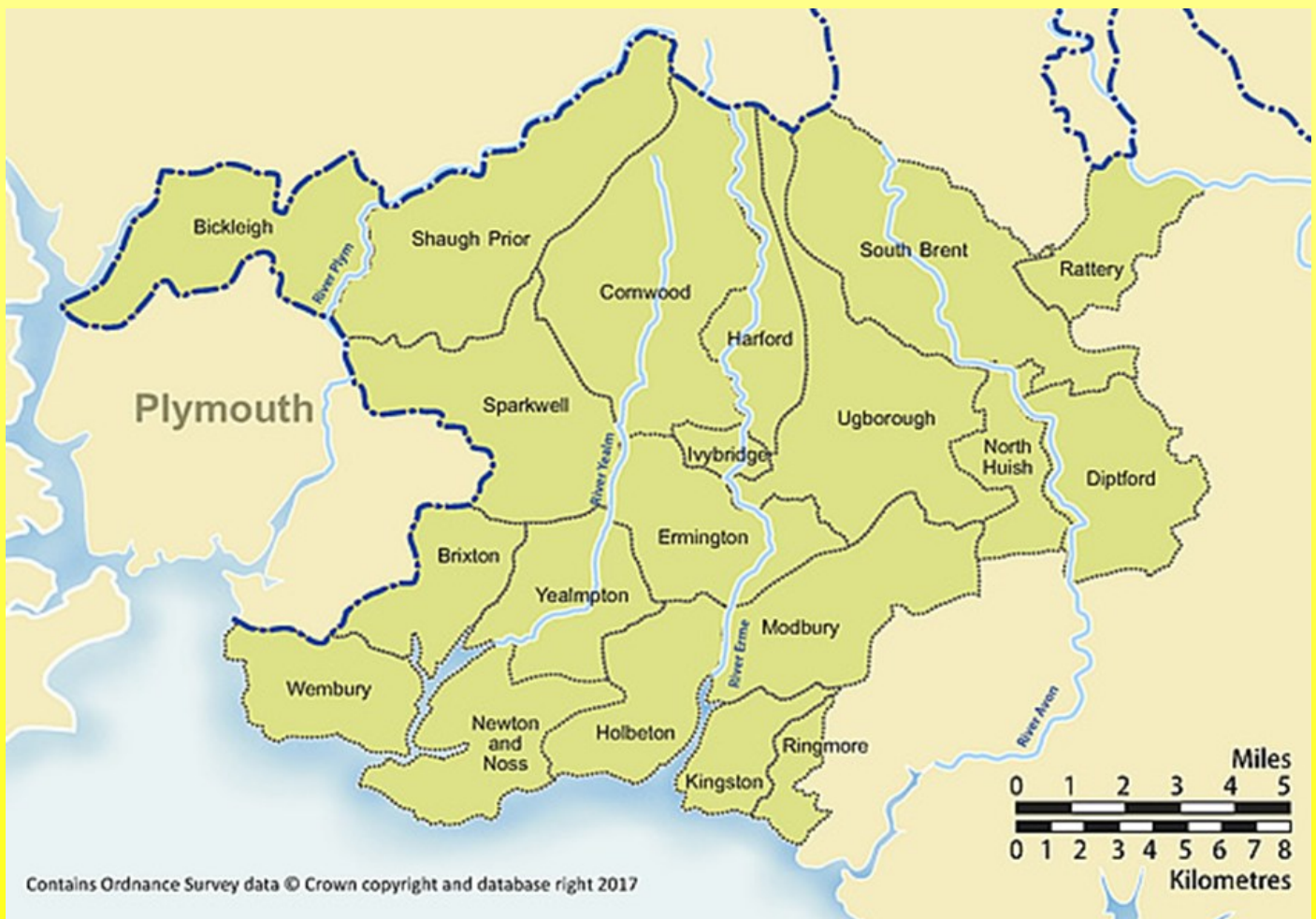


## Four Rivers Dementia Alliance




Hello, I am Claire Puckey, Community Liaison and Support Lead for Four Rivers Dementia Alliance (4RDA). I am also the Community Development Lead for Dementia Friendly Parishes Around the Yealm.


4RDA is an inclusive voluntary organisation comprised of twenty town and rural parish councils in South West Devon (located around the rivers Yealm, Plym, Erme and Avon) and a variety of other interested organisations working together to promote dementia friendly communities (Please see the map below which shows the communities we serve).






## WHAT WE DO:


 We work to build inclusive dementia friendly communities and villages in the Four Rivers area through parish and town councils and a wide variety of other organisations. These communities support people living with dementia to continue being part of community life, increase awareness of dementia amongst all members of the community and reduce stigma. They are comprised of all sectors of the community e.g. Individuals, retail, education, health and social care, leisure, voluntary, emergency, faith, transport sectors etc.


 We share ideas, develop resources and partnership projects.


 Anyone interested in improving the lives of people living with dementia, their families and carers is welcome at our meetings which are held approximately every three months/quarterly.



## WHY BEING DEMENTIA FRIENDLY IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR RETAIL BUSINESS

 **Dementia is a hidden disability which is increasingly prevalent in the UK:**

 **982,000** people are currently estimated to be living with dementia in the UK.


 This is predicted to increase to **over 1.1 million by 2030 and to 1.4 million by 2040**. (However, Public Health Analysis by the Lancet shows a rise in cases and predicts 40% more people are likely to be affected than originally thought).


 **1 person will develop dementia every 3 minutes in the UK.**


**Sources:** <https://dementiastatistics.org/> and <https://alzheimers.org.uk>

(Figures: As of November 2024).


### This means that:

 2/3 of people with dementia live in the community, so you will very likely have customers who are living with dementia coming in and out of your business regularly. Some of them will know they have it and some won't if they've not yet been diagnosed.


 You might also have colleagues who are carers and some who may go on to develop dementia themselves so having some awareness is helpful as you can start putting in place the right support.

 Shopping is very important to people living with dementia -Back in 2013, nearly 80% of people living with dementia who were surveyed by the Alzheimer's Society, said shopping was their favourite activity.

### BUT:

 63% of them did not think that shops were putting enough measures in place to help people living with dementia.

 83% of people with memory problems changed their shopping habits to places that are more accessible.

 23% said they didn't go shopping anymore.

[Alzheimer's Society Dementia-friendly retail guide: A practical guide for shops and retailers to support people affected by dementia, 2018](#)



Often people stop going shopping as their dementia progresses because they are worried about getting the support they need. But for some of your customers, going shopping is an important way for them to feel a little less lonely.

It only takes one bad experience in a shop and a lot of people living with dementia will not go back again because it's just too difficult and stressful. This is obviously a real shame for them and it means retailers lose business. If you have a good experience as a customer, you are likely to tell others and if you have a negative one, you're also likely to tell others.

People living with dementia make up a significant part of the overall consumer market with the spending of households affected by dementia in the UK predicted to be worth £22.7 billion by 2030.

Analysis by **The International Longevity Centre UK in 2022**, indicated that helping people affected by dementia to spend in the ways they would like could potentially increase the UK's consumer spending by between £110 million and £1.6 billion each year-**Your business could take a share in that.**

[International Longevity Centre UK Retail therapy: Helping people with dementia enjoy spending, 2022.](#)

If you work towards being a dementia friendly retailer, the measures you put in place to support your customers living with dementia will also be supportive to other customers with a range of needs.






You can make a big difference by making **small** changes that require **minimal** cost to implement.







## SOME OF THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SHOPPERS LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

As a retailer, it would be helpful to have some understanding of the many different things that can make shopping difficult for people living with dementia because if you know about them, you can think about ways to make the experience easier. People living with dementia can face the following challenges:

### Memory Challenges:







-  Problems remembering what they came into the shop to buy and picking up the wrong item.
-  Forgetting what they have already put in their basket and then maybe buying multiples of the same items.
-  Buying items they don't need.
-  Difficulties finding the right words to describe the item they are looking for to staff and forgetting where the item is located in the shop.
-  Forgetting to pay.

### Challenges at the till:



-  Difficulties recognising and handling different denominations of coins and notes.
-  Forgetting the PIN number of their debit or credit card.
-  Difficulties using new technology e.g. self-checkouts, weighing out produce and electronic payment methods.
-  Feeling too rushed which may lead to also feeling anxious and worrying about forgetting to pay.



### Challenges navigating around the shop:

-  Perceptual difficulties causing changes to how they perceive features of the environment e.g. flooring, reflective surfaces, patterns etc - leading to confusion, disorientation and also feelings of overwhelm due to too much background noise, loud music, overly - bright lights etc.
-  Small and crowded aisles and unclear signage, leading to confusion.
-  Potential hazards in walkways e.g. uneven flooring and obstacles, leading to possible slips and falls.
-  Fear of getting lost and/or getting disorientated and lost.
-  Difficulties finding items due to the aisles all looking too similar
-  Not knowing where to go if they need support whilst in the shop.

### Worries about how other people might react to them:

-  Worries the staff won't understand their difficulties or be able to support them in the way they need.
-  Worries about other people's reactions to them and the possibility of feeling embarrassed.



## COMMON ISSUES FOR CARERS LOOKING AFTER A PERSON LIVING WITH DEMENTIA WHEN SHOPPING:

- Also, if a person living with dementia is accompanied shopping by a family carer or friend, this can cause various difficulties for that person too and some of these include:
  - Worries that the person living with dementia might walk off and get lost or leave the shop.
  - Not having enough space to assist the person if needed (Especially in changing rooms in clothing shops or in toilets).
  - Lack of accessible parking e.g. no designated nearby disabled (or indeed any) parking spaces so there could be difficulties getting in and out of the car and walking to the shop.
  - Worries about what other people (staff/customers) will think of and how they might react to the person they care for behaving in an unusual or inappropriate way.

## BUSINESS BENEFITS TO BECOMING A DEMENTIA FRIENDLY RETAILER.

- It helps you to comply with the law** i.e. The Equality Act (2010) recognises dementia as a disability and under the act, retailers have a legal obligation to ensure they make reasonable adjustments to ensure their premises and services are as accessible and inclusive as possible for customers and staff.
- It enhances your reputation** because it demonstrates that you care about your customers and you are socially responsible. If people are treated well, they will tell others, giving your business a positive reputation, which will give you a competitive advantage and this will:
- Increase your profits** because you will be more likely to retain and attract new customers who are living with dementia, their carers, family and friends.
- It gives your customers a better experience because your customer service improves** as staff who receive dementia awareness training often feel more confident to support customers living with dementia because they have a better understanding of their needs.
- It prepares your business for the future** i.e. It is predicted that there will be over 1.1 million people living with dementia in the UK by 2030 and 1.4 million by 2040 (The number of carers will also increase) and so making some changes now ensures that you have everything in place to accommodate the increasing number of people living with and caring for someone with dementia in your community in the future.



**If you decide to take some action towards becoming dementia friendly, you can receive formal recognition i.e.**

- 🏠** You will be listed as a local business/organisation that is working to become dementia friendly on the Four Rivers Dementia Alliance website.
- 🏠** You will receive a certificate and window sticker bearing the Four Rivers “Working to Become Dementia Friendly” logo that you can display around your premises.

**It's not about prioritising one group of people's needs over everyone else.**

**When a business gets it right for people living with dementia, other people benefit from it too e.g. small changes like clear signage and providing a chair/quiet space will be appreciated by everybody.**



## FOUR RIVERS DEMENTIA ALLIANCE CONTACT DETAILS

Please get in touch if you would like to get involved and become a more dementia aware retailer.




**All the help that we can give you is completely FREE**

-  CONTACT: Claire Puckey
-  MOBILES: 07349 160447 or 07450 206312
-  EMAILS: [development@4riversdementia.org](mailto:development@4riversdementia.org)  
[info@dementiayealm.org](mailto:info@dementiayealm.org)
-  WEBSITE: [www.4riversdementia.org.uk](http://www.4riversdementia.org.uk)



## HOW CAN RETAILERS GET INVOLVED?

### Becoming a dementia friendly retailer includes:

-  Having an awareness of how dementia can impact on a person and the support they may need as a customer.
-  Thinking about ways you can support customers and staff affected by dementia.
-  Putting a plan in place to work towards becoming dementia friendly and implementing actions in the plan.

In the twenty rural parish areas covered by 4RDA, we have been working hard over the past few years to build dementia friendly communities.

By developing an understanding of dementia and a supportive approach, retailers can play a big part in helping to build a community that welcomes and enables people living with dementia to continue doing the things they want to do, stay part of the community and independent for longer which helps them to live well with dementia. You can also make a big difference to the experience of people caring for someone with dementia in their local community.

**You could consider and start implementing some of the actions suggested in the list overleaf.**

**Remember: Any action, no matter how small, can potentially help someone in your community.**

**Your business could become a member of Four Rivers Dementia Alliance.**



## SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR RETAILERS WORKING TOWARDS BECOMING DEMENTIA FRIENDLY

Four Rivers Dementia Alliance (4RDA), in partnership with Dementia Friendly Parishes Around the Yealm (DFPY \*\*) offer this list of suggested actions for retailers to help become part of inclusive dementia friendly communities.

Please note that you are **NOT** expected to become dementia-friendly straightaway by taking all the suggested actions at once and you may also decide to take other actions that are not included in this suggested list.

Also, you are **NOT** expected to identify or 'diagnose' customers with dementia. You cannot tell that someone has dementia just by looking. There are some common symptoms though like memory loss, confusion, difficulties with thinking and communicating, for example, that can suggest a person may have dementia. Some people may wear a sunflower lanyard or carry a help card that has details of the sort of help and support they might need.

It is also important to remember that you are not alone in starting your work towards becoming a dementia friendly retailer. As Community Liaison and Support Lead (4RDA) and Community Development Lead (DFPY), **Claire is available to support and advise to implement this plan.**

Once you have started working towards becoming dementia friendly, **Claire can also help to support with reviewing your progress.**



**Dementia Friendly Parishes**  
*around the Yealm*

\*\* For Further information on Dementia Friendly Parishes Around the Yealm and our partnership with them, please see their website at <https://www.dementiayealm.org>.

**☛ Ensure you raise awareness of dementia amongst your staff-** Many retailers start by attending **Dementia Friends Awareness Sessions** (1 hour to 90-minute versions are available). A Dementia Friend is someone who has attended a session and has committed to an action that will make the lives of people living with dementia a little bit better.

This will help your staff to feel more confident to support your customers living with dementia.

You could also consider including this as part of new staff induction - **Claire could deliver as many sessions as you need at times that suit you best for FREE.**

**☛ Conduct a dementia friendly assessment of the shop premises and take action to ensure it is as accessible as possible to people living with dementia - Claire can do this with you for FREE and provide a written report.**



There are several potential small changes that you could make to your premises that can make a big difference and they **don't** need to be costly.

### **A few suggestions are:**

- 🏠 Install clear dementia friendly signage in key areas of the premises to support someone who is trying to find their way around e.g. at till points, entrance/exit and if you have customer toilets, ensure signs make them easy to find and use and direct them back to the shop easily.
- 🏠 Keep as simple and uncluttered a layout as possible and avoid keep changing it as that can cause stress and confusion.
- 🏠 Reduce any loud background noise or music and announcements as these can be very disorientating and overwhelming.
- 🏠 If you can, provide a quiet seated area for customers living with dementia (or anyone else who needs it) to sit down, rest and have a bit of “time out” if noise and other distractions become overwhelming.
- 🏠 If you have a notice board, display information about dementia e.g. support organisations, local groups etc, especially during National Dementia Action Week (Every May) and World Alzheimer’s Month (Every September).
- 🏠 Have appropriate flooring e.g. not shiny and reflective, patterned or dark etc (If your current flooring is like this, perhaps you could consider changing it to matte, plain and lighter whenever you have plans to refurbish) - **Claire can advise on this.**
- 🏠 For larger shops: Consider offering a “relaxed” till point so people don’t feel so flustered and hurried if the shop is busy/ a regular “relaxed/quiet shopping” time slot or assisted shopping where a member of staff greets them at the entrance and escorts them around the shop. For smaller shops, staff could just ask customers if they need help and that will potentially benefit all customers.
- 🏠 For bigger shops with a parking area-You could consider installing family or dementia friendly parking spaces - **Claire can advise on this.**

### **🏠 Communication Strategies:**

- 🏠 Treat customers living with dementia with respect and dignity, like all customers.
- 🏠 Talk directly to the person living with dementia, not past them to a carer/companion.
- 🏠 Take your time-speak at a slightly slower pace, clearly and in a calm and reassuring tone.



- 🗣️ Use shorter, simple sentences (Straightforward language and no jargon).
- 🗣️ Be patient-let the person take their time, don't pressure or rush them.
- 🗣️ Be encouraging and reassuring, letting the person know you are trying to understand them.
- 🗣️ If the communication is difficult, don't argue or correct the person or finish their sentences for them.
- 🗣️ If the person is unable to find the right word for an item, staff could use visual aids e.g. point to an item on the shelf, ask the person to write something down etc.
- 🗣️ Ensure you have open and friendly body language, keeping good eye contact with the person and making sure your facial expression matches what you are saying.
- 🗣️ Let the person see your face - don't cover your mouth when you are talking.
- 🗣️ Wear name tags with large fonts so they can be read easily.

### 🗣️ Processes:

Keep processes simple and consistent.

- 🗣️ Offer customers practical support i.e. help with packing shopping into bags at the till. If a customer looks a bit confused, staff could offer guidance and to accompany them around the shop (Just giving directions may be difficult for some customers living with dementia to follow).
- 🗣️ If the person's speech is a bit difficult to understand, staff could take the person to the items they think they have talked about. Staff could also help by limiting the number of choices (As too much choice can lead to confusion for some people living with dementia) given to the customer e.g. perhaps ask them "Do you need tea or coffee" instead of "What are you looking for?"
- 🗣️ If a customer is struggling to pay at the till, staff could be patient and in an unobtrusive way, offer to help i.e. Offer different payment options such as setting up a 'tab' where a person's carer can pay their bill at the end of the week/month, signing for payment if the person can't remember their PIN number or support with counting out their money as recognising coins and notes can be difficult for some people living with dementia. You could also have a poster with pictures of notes and coins with the values next to them, at the tills to support customers living with dementia to pay independently without drawing attention to their difficulties.

**Claire could provide a poster for you.**



Start thinking about how you could supportively deal with situations that may arise with customers living with dementia e.g.

**The person gets distressed and wants to go home but cannot remember where it is** - Staff could take them to a quieter space and help them to calm down by having a reassuring chat/offering a glass of water and gently asking them if they could look in their bag to see if they have anything with their address on or telephone number of someone they could call to come and help them home/ or support them to get home (Only involving the police if there is no other option).

**The person forgets to pay for their shopping** (which can be a symptom of dementia and not deliberate) or puts items in their bag whilst going around the shop and leaves without paying- You could arrange for the items to be returned or paid for next time if the person is a known, regular customer or arrange for their carer to return the items or make a tab for the person so there is a record and arrange for it be paid for later on. You could ensure all staff are made aware of the person and can offer support when they come in.

**If the person seems to be buying an unusually large amount of products**-Staff could gently intervene and check that they really do want that amount.

**You could identify a link person in the business to take forward promoting dementia friendly actions and to join other local organisations working together towards making their community dementia friendly by becoming a member of Four Rivers Dementia Alliance, attending meetings whenever possible.**

**(Membership is FREE)-This will benefit your business as it will help you to get a better understanding about the support your customers need and raise your profile locally.**

**Have support in place for staff who become carers or develop dementia themselves:**

If managers, as well as shop floor staff attend dementia awareness training, they will have a better knowledge and understanding about dementia and can more effectively support colleagues who care for someone with dementia or who develop it themselves.

Put dementia-related information on staff noticeboards/in the staff room etc.

The above two actions will also help to create an environment where staff will feel it is okay to talk openly about dementia.

**Develop clear carer-friendly policies and procedures.** Under the Equality Act (2010), carers have the right to ask for flexible working and to ask for time off to look after the person they care for in emergency situations.

**Develop clear policies about how you will support staff who develop dementia to continue working for as long as possible in a safe way**-This will also reduce recruitment costs; help you retain staff and increase revenue.



- Carry out a risk assessment to focus on supporting the person to stay in work as safely as possible. From this, you can write out a support plan and agree a regular schedule to review it with the person (Dementia is progressive so the person's support needs will change over time).
- Ensure the person knows they are valued for their skills and experience.
- Signpost them to supporting services.
- Ask the person with dementia what they are struggling with and what might help make things easier for them. Agree to adjust parts of the job (if possible) when needed to support them to do their job - under the Equality Act (2010) employers must make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities, including those living with dementia so they are not at a disadvantage at work e.g.
  - Gradual reduction of working hours.
  - A flexible work pattern i.e. allow staff to take time off when they need to, to go to medical appointments or change working hours to account for their symptoms (for some people they may feel worse in the morning whilst others may feel worse later in the day).
  - Regular rest breaks.
  - Reduction in level of responsibility i.e. allocate some of the person's duties to someone else.
  - Use supportive technology.
  - Repeat instructions if needed or give them to the person in writing.
  - Training (If the person goes to a new role).
- When the staff member is no longer able to carry out their role, agree an exit strategy together.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION.**

This guide was written by Claire Puckey (Four Rivers Dementia Alliance) and was based on the information drawn from the publications listed below:

Dementia UK- Dementia at Work: A guide for employers (2024).

<https://www.dementiauk.org/wp-content/uploads/dementia-uk-dementia-at-work-for-employers.pdf>

Alzheimer's Society-Work and Dementia (2024).

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/Employment.pdf>

Dementia UK-Dementia at Work: A guide for people living with dementia, their families and carers (2025).

<https://www.dementiauk.org/wp-content/uploads/dementia-uk-dementia-at-work-for-employees.pdf>

Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project: DEEP Guide: Tips for employers who want to be more dementia friendly (2013).

<https://dementiavoices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/DEEP-Guide-Tips-for-employers.pdf>

Alzheimer's Society-Creating a dementia-friendly workplace: A practical guide for employers (2015).

[https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/migrate/downloads/creating\\_a\\_dementia-friendly\\_workplace.pdf](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/migrate/downloads/creating_a_dementia-friendly_workplace.pdf)





# Four Rivers Dementia Alliance

The following organisations have contributed to the production of this information pack.



Ivybridge  
Town  
Council

