



April 2026 Newsletter

This month's items:

1. [First collaborative Sandpit Event on the Indoor & Outdoor theme](#)
2. [Co-design workshop in Manchester- 22 and 23 June 2026](#)
3. [Can Artificial Intelligence-based tools support people diagnosed with pre- and post-dementia stages?](#)
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First collaborative Sandpit Event on the Indoor & Outdoor theme, 28th May 2026, London

This sandpit event is dedicated entirely to our first core theme: **Indoor and outdoor spaces**. Indoor and outdoor environments can be confusing to navigate and often present challenges such as poor

natural light, uneven surfaces, changing light conditions, and lack of seating. For this sandpit, we are moving beyond the traditional medical model of basic passive monitoring, focusing instead on active empowerment. We are seeking project ideas that bridge environmental science, digital innovation, and community integration.

By bringing together academics, health and social care professionals, technology industries, policymakers, community organisations, and people with lived experience of dementia, we aim to co-design innovative ideas to prepare for the upcoming Summer Feasibility Funds call for small projects.

Event Details & Support

- **Date:** 28 May 2026
- **Location:** UCL Institute of Education (IOE), London
- **Format:** In-person collaborative workshop
- **Funding for Attendance:** In line with our commitment to NIHR Public Involvement standards, people with lived experience of dementia and their carers will have travel expenses reimbursed and receive compensation for their participation at NIHR INVOLVE rates.

Who this sandpit is for:

- People with lived experience of dementia
- Researchers with knowledge of science, engineering, design or technology related to indoor and outdoor spaces
- Companies and service providers with relevant expertise

Places are limited so [please register here](#) early to avoid disappointment.

[Take part in a co-design workshop in Manchester, 22 and 23 June 2026](#)

We would like to bring together people with dementia and researchers to openly explore how technologies could support connections and everyday life. Participants will be supported to unpack elements of their everyday experience of dementia, and through co-design, imagine ways simple and complex technologies might give people more freedom and more happiness day to day. Travel costs will be covered and there will be refreshments and lunch both days, with overnight accommodation paid for if desired.

The drop-in sessions are from **10:30 to 15:00 each day**, and participants can choose how long to stay.

If you are someone with lived experience of dementia and would like to take part, please provide us with your name and contact email on this form so we can provide further information. Please feel free to forward to interested parties.

Can Artificial Intelligence-based tools support people diagnosed with pre- and post-dementia stages?



This was the question being considered by a team of researchers from the University of Sheffield.

These Artificial Intelligence-based (AI) tools include avatars based on large language model chatbots. An avatar is a digital image or icon representing a user in virtual worlds, games, or social media. These avatars are able to respond to questions and interact verbally with people.

Participants from the ISRAAC Somali Community Association engaged in hands-on interaction with the technologies, followed by structured group discussions to share their perceptions, concerns, and potential use

cases. Early insights suggest a strong interest in these tools as a supplementary source of information, particularly when designed with clear language and cultural sensitivity. The session also highlighted important considerations around trust, accessibility, and language barriers, which will inform the design of future workshops and the overall development of inclusive neurotechnology approaches.



Dementia Research Awards 2026

Congratulations to Prof. Christian Morgner for being one of the finalists of the Dementia Research Award: "*Recognising a researcher*"

or research team whose work has advanced our understanding of dementia, improved care practices, and brought hope for future treatments."

Congratulations also to Together Dementia Support who were nominated for Respite and Carer Support Award, and Sheffield Memory Hub who were nominated in three categories:

- (1)** Independent Small Provider Award;
 - (2)** EDI in Practice: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Award; and
 - (3)** Creative Arts & Culture in Dementia Award
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Funding opportunity

The Working With Dementia Network Plus Research has launched their first call for projects.

This new fund will support innovative, transdisciplinary research that expands the evidence on the topic of dementia and employment. Our aim is to help improve both labour market experiences and working life for people living with dementia and their carers.

Expressions of Interest close: **1st June 2026.**

Find out more about the Fund and how to apply at: [Research Grant Funding](#)