

How can businesses take account of people with dementia when designing products and services?

RiDC

Research Institute
for Disabled Consumers

An invisible consumer group

- People with dementia continue to use products, services and public spaces.
- Many experiences are unintentionally exclusionary by design.
- Good design improves confidence, independence and participation.
- Businesses often overlook cognitive accessibility.



What RiDC has learned?

- Research across transport, attractions, theatres, financial services, utilities and consumer products.
- Barriers are often created by systems, environments and information.
- Small changes can have disproportionate benefits.
- People with dementia frequently identify issues professionals miss.



What Makes Everyday Experiences Difficult?

- Wayfinding and navigation
- Remembering sequences and instructions
- Processing busy information
- Managing unexpected changes
- Maintaining confidence in unfamiliar environments



Four case studies

- London Eye River Cruise: engagement and social interaction enhanced experience.
- Churchill Theatre: staff support and quiet arrangements mattered.
- BikeWorks: consistency and familiarity created confidence.
- London Zoo: navigation and route planning were critical.



Six Design Principles

1. Reduce cognitive load.
2. Make navigation obvious.
3. Create predictable experiences.
4. Design for confidence and independence.
5. Make help visible and easy to access.
6. Train staff to recognise and respond effectively.



The biggest mistakes businesses make

- Designing for efficiency rather than reassurance.
- Too many choices.
- Too many instructions.
- Too much information at once.
- Complexity creates exclusion.



Stop designing for people. Start designing with them.

- Involve people with dementia throughout research and testing.
- Observe real-world use.
- Challenge assumptions.
- Use lived experience as evidence.



A dementia-friendly business checklist

- Can customers find their way?
- Do they know what happens next?
- Can they recover from mistakes?
- Can they access human support quickly?
- Have we observed real users using the service?



Future research questions

- How should AI be designed for cognitive accessibility?
- What does dementia-inclusive digital design look like?
- What happens as services become increasingly automated?
- How do we balance support and autonomy?
- How should universities involve people with dementia in research?



The Real Opportunity

Designing for dementia creates better experiences for everyone.

When businesses design for people who are often overlooked, everyone benefits.

Thank you
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