

Libraries and people with dementia



Innovations
in Dementia



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Introduction

We know that libraries are a safe place of connection and opportunity for people – they are trusted places full of trusted people.

In April this year, Innovations in Dementia, a national community interest company, surveyed **74 staff members** from **54 libraries** across the UK about what was currently happening for people with dementia, and about ideas for future developments.

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey. This included librarians, managers, and people with additional responsibilities such as development, heritage, health, wellbeing and volunteers. We are delighted to share the results with you.



Customers with dementia

96% of respondents said that people with dementia are customers at their library. **64%** said they had direct contact with customers. Most of the remaining **36%** of staff were working in strategic or behind the scenes roles.

What does your library currently offer customers with dementia?

These were the **top three** offers that libraries made to people with dementia, in rank order:

- 1 Dementia specific** books and resources
- 2 General library services** – including an acknowledgement that library services should be **inclusive for everyone**
- 3 Dementia groups** – including shared reading groups and dementia cafes

There were also other initiatives such as care home services, music events, theatre events and loaning of reminiscence objects, memory bags and puzzles.



What do you think people with dementia want from the library service?

These were the **top four** responses, in rank order:

- 1** A **safe and friendly space**, in your local community. A place where you feel valued
- 2** Dementia specific **resources**, activities and events
- 3** A **dementia aware/trained workforce**, who understand and know how to support you to access the library
- 4** Opportunities for **connections** with other people (not only with people with dementia)

There was also a perception that people with dementia want help with practical things (e.g. applying for a bus pass or Blue Badge) as well as signposting to relevant services. Dementia accessible environments were noted as positive for people e.g. good signage and easy spaces to navigate.

There was an acknowledgement that many people don't want to be identified as having dementia and want to be able to access general library services as other customers do.

How do you feel in your contact with people with dementia?

The majority of respondents felt 'comfortable' or 'OK' in their interactions with people with dementia. Dementia training/awareness was highlighted as something that helped them to feel more confident. There was a regular caveat reported, that it was helpful if the person with dementia was supported by a friend or family member whilst at the library.

Some people did say they '**felt out of their depth**' and that they, or their library, could be doing much more to support people with dementia.

What would help you (or your library) in your contact with people with dementia?

These were the **top four** responses, in rank order:

- 1** Dementia training. As well as general awareness raising there were requests for practical solutions to 'tricky situations'. There were references to prior learning (such as Dementia Friends sessions) but many people felt that they could do with a refresh.
- 2** Knowledge of what is available locally for people with dementia. This included suggestions that local dementia services could be available from the library, but also knowing about the best places to signpost people to
- 3** More dementia accessible resources, activities and events.
- 4** Dementia accessible environments at the library, including quiet spaces and good signage

There was an acknowledgement that more money and more time can help to get new ideas and approaches off the ground. There were some suggestions for a national network or common approach across libraries in relation to dementia. Some people also thought it would be possible and positive to set up dementia groups in the library – particularly because of the sense that this is a safe and friendly space.

Computers and people with dementia

We asked a question about whether you would feel confident to support people with dementia to use the library computers. We know that there is a digital divide for older people (including people with dementia) but we are also aware of the on-line resources that exist for people with dementia, as well as the virtual ways that people can connect to each other.

66% of respondents said that they would be confident to support people with dementia to use computers. We do not know how many respondents actually support people with dementia to use library computers at the moment.

Next steps

We have a strong sense, including comments from people with dementia, that libraries are a safe space embedded in local communities. They are a trusted place of solace, information, connection, and community.

We are interested in the potential to grow a community embedded movement where people with dementia feel connected and valued and library staff feel inspired and confident.

We would love to talk more (and more deeply) with you about your library's dementia response. We are trying to develop a picture of what is currently happening in libraries. We also want to know what kind of interest there is in exploring new ways of supporting people with dementia in libraries.

We are holding a Zoom conversation on Thursday 28th July from 10.30am-12.00pm

You can book through this Eventbrite link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/libraries-and-people-with-dementia-tickets-375084366437>

Best wishes



Damian

and



Rachael



Or scan the QR code above to book your place

Innovations in Dementia

Is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company (CIC). People with dementia are at the heart and start of all our work. We promote a positive but realistic view of dementia, demonstrating that, although it is life changing, it does not have to be life ending. We support people with dementia to live with hope and keep control of their lives.

To find out more scan the QR code below.



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