

Age and Dementia Friendly

Real life stories



Raymond D White, Optometrist

Ray White is an optometrist who offers a personalised service for older people in Leeds, which includes home visits and supporting people who live in care homes.

Building rapport and offering individualised support is central to Ray's approach: 'everyone should be treated as we would want to be'. He has been on a learning curve. Although academic training produces highly educated medics they are not always very customer focused, and Ray has had to be creative and 'think outside the box'. This is key to developing methods to do eye tests with people who are living with dementia. It has strengthened his professional integrity and sense of job satisfaction.



As well as offering an eye test, Ray refers people to other professionals and offers practical 'dementia friendly' tips like avoiding patterned carpets, using blue toilet seats so it's easier for people to see, and choosing a photograph of the person when they were younger as they may not recognise themselves in more recent pictures.

Suitable lighting is also very important. Sometimes Ray will work with people in their own home or in a care home to reposition lights and increase the illumination. If the person's eyesight can be improved it can help them see the television, recognise their friends and relatives, enjoy looking at photograph albums, improve their balance and so reduce risks of falls. Some of these may seem like small things but they can be life-changing.

People who are living with dementia may also have conditions like cataracts and macular degeneration, which affect their sight, but diagnosis can be difficult if they have limited communication, as it may be hard for them to describe their sight loss. Some conditions can be helped by surgery, but this can also be challenging for people who are living with dementia.

The origins of Ray's work with older people date back to the 1980s, when home visits were not the norm, and he started looking into the visual effects of dementia. It became evident to him that plenty of people were housebound, often living with dementia and other conditions and that there was unmet need regarding vision testing. Fast forward to more recently when he was the first optometrist to register as Dementia Friendly.

For someone thinking about developing their services for people who are living with dementia Ray recommends being aware of your professional boundaries, to be patient and tolerant if you encounter difficult behaviours and that the sense of achievement when you can make someone's life better is very satisfying.

Leeds Playhouse

Nicky Taylor is responsible for Leeds Playhouse's pioneering creative work with people living with dementia which has developed over the past ten years. It was whilst leading the theatre's Heydays programme for over 55s that Nicky realised the busy nature of the project was overwhelming for some participants. She could see that some people were showing early signs of dementia and were struggling and starting to grow more isolated from the group. Nicky was trying to manage the changing needs of people and others' attitudes towards them.

Leeds Playhouse wanted people to get as much out of their activities as they always had. Heydays giving them so much fulfillment and joy, Nicky wanted to make sure that this was not lost when it was needed the most!

So Leeds Playhouse set up small scale projects with calmer, tailored activities and with more support in place. They worked with partners from Leeds City Council's Peer Support Service to find out what people wanted and how the sessions could be as dementia friendly as possible. These sessions are focused on the expression of feelings, thoughts and opinions rather than remembering facts. Whatever people bring of themselves on that day is welcomed. They are fantastically creative sessions full of song, music, drama, visual arts and storytelling - imagining a story together and bringing that to life with action. There is lots of laughter and a clear bond develops between people. There is an unspoken support for each other and a willingness to try something new and have a giggle together.

Nicky has seen a real change in attitude towards dementia and now some of the members of the Heydays group volunteer at the sessions for people living with dementia.

Leeds Playhouse also runs enhanced theatre performances for people living with dementia. Themed sessions before the performance help to develop an understanding of the production and there is a chance for people to meet the actors. People with dementia can attend with a partner, carer or friend and do something "normal" together which can be really powerful.

Bookings at dementia friendly performances are limited to approximately three quarters of the capacity of the theatre to allow some room for movement and while most people in the audience are directly affected by dementia, anyone who supports the idea of a dementia friendly community is welcome to attend.

Leeds Playhouse encourages an intergenerational audience and often schools bring young people to the performance - after all the theatre would normally have a mixed age group at a full house! The children often help by selling ice-creams or showing people the way. This intergenerational element helps to raise awareness of dementia and reduce the stigma. One person develops dementia every three minutes in the UK so people who are living with that diagnosis are not alone and Leeds Playhouse is keen to make sure that they never feel like they are.

When asked what advice she would give to others who want their business to be dementia friendly Nicky says that taking part in a Dementia Friends awareness session is a great starting point, but crucially to talk to people with lived experience rather than making assumptions about what people might need. This could simply start with inviting someone for a cup of tea and a chat! Many people living with dementia have a lot to offer and want to be involved in their communities. By taking a positive approach people who are living with dementia can be supported to take part as equals, shaping a truly dementia friendly society.

Full Circle Funerals

Independent Funeral Director

Full Circle Funerals is a local independent funeral director with funeral homes in Bramley (The Globe) and Guiseley. They opened in 2016 and believe passionately about creating a safe space for bereaved people to talk about what they want and need for a funeral.

Ruth Owen, Independent Funeral Director at Full Circle Funerals, explains what being Age and Dementia Friendly means to them.



"We became Dementia Friends in 2017 when we all attended Dementia Friends Information Sessions for the first time. What an inspirational evening that was! I then became a Dementia Friends Champion in 2018, all the while looking at our premises and making sure that they were Dementia Friendly places. We wanted to be sure that the whole team had a greater understanding of what it may mean to live with Dementia and to care for someone with Dementia. For myself, I found the information sessions hugely enlightening into my own personal experience of being a carer and felt that we could all benefit from having that awareness.

We have a Dementia Friends policy which means that every team member receives the information session yearly and we check our property regularly. We joined the Dementia Action Alliance as it was known then. I also have the privilege of being on the Leeds Dementia Friendly Steering Group. We also work with a lady who makes 'Twiddlemuffs' for us which we in turn pass onto care homes and local dementia groups.

By the nature of being a funeral director, we interact with older people on a regular basis. This might be to make funeral arrangements or to advise about funeral wishes and pre-paid funeral plans – it might be that we do this in our service or whilst attending health and well-being events across the city (such as recent events at OPAL in Horsforth, AVSED in Guiseley and taking part in the Kinder Leeds Festival). We are also partners on the Leeds Dying Matters Partnership and work with Lippy People, a Leeds based charity who have recently led a project supporting bereaved men over the age of 60 to create story telling videos about their lives.

For us, being an Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly space means that we can reassure people in our local community that we offer a safe space. We can provide a place of emotional safety if they are having a challenging time, offer a place to sit, somewhere to have a pause and to be met with a friendly face who understands that you might just need to speak to someone in confidence."

If you would like to know more about Full Circle Funerals, contact:

Telephone: 0113 3200049 or 01943 262626

Website: fullcirclefunerals.co.uk/funeral-directors-leeds/

Funerals Your Way Book (making funerals accessible to everyone):
fullcirclefunerals.co.uk/learning-together/funeral-self-help-book/





Home Group

Integrated Housing and Care

Home Group is one of the UK's largest providers of integrated housing and care – its mission is to build homes, independence and aspirations. They do this in various ways across England and Scotland, including social housing, mental health support and services for people with learning disabilities and/or autism. Lindsay Courtney, Head of Clinical Practice and a qualified occupational therapist, explains why joining the Age and Dementia Friendly scheme in Leeds has been important to them.



"Central to our work in Leeds is the creation of four new community wellbeing services across the city. The first was Amblers Orchard in Tingley. Amblers Orchard consists of 63 one and two bed apartments, all available for affordable rent, as well as a 24/7 support team. The second, Greenmill Gardens in Seacroft, will be open by the end of the summer 2022.

They form part of Leeds City Council's ambitious £30 million extra care housing programme which will see a total of seven state of the art buildings constructed, providing over 400 more places.

Home Group's approach to these services is to connect communities and offer a place for multigenerational interaction. We want people to feel empowered and encouraged to maintain and develop their skills, as well as learning new ones!

The aim is to keep our customers active for longer, less isolated and enjoying the things they love, while reducing their dependency on primary care by managing conditions through our service.

Within our community wellbeing services, we're also creating areas for local people to use, including salons, cafés and activity spaces, allowing residents to better integrate and build relationships with the wider community, rather than becoming increasingly isolated.

A further part of our approach is ensuring they are dementia friendly, as there is increasing evidence that well-designed interiors genuinely enhance the lives of people who live within and use them.

That's why we've made being dementia friendly part of our interior design procurement framework across all of Home Group's community wellbeing services. We want to create communal spaces that are truly accessible for all our residents and visitors.

While there's still a lot to be done, our work in Leeds is a statement of our commitment to tackle these challenges."

Amblers Orchard welcomes new referrals for customers looking to live there but also encourages the use of the age and dementia friendly café and salon by local older people who would benefit from these services.

Anyone interested in Amblers Orchard or Seacroft get in touch with Home Group by emailing: amblers@homegroup.org.uk or calling 07917 350499.



Working to become
**Dementia
Friendly**
2022

