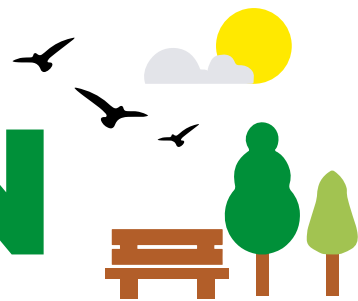


ENLIVEN



Practical tips for businesses when designing and delivering dementia-inclusive outdoor visitor experiences

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Purpose of the Guide

This short summary Guide provides advice for visitor economy businesses based on findings from demonstration projects¹ and business research undertaken during the ENLIVEN project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and Innovate UK². The project focus was to enable people living with dementia to stay active, independent, and socially connected through increased outdoor activity associated with the UK visitor economy.

The purpose of the Guide is to use the research evidence we have assembled to help inform and disseminate the key organisational and project learning from a multitude of sources on engaging people with dementia in the outdoors and nature. This is to enable visitor economy businesses wishing to develop or strengthen their offer and visitor experience for people living with dementia, to help them understand what works and what does not work in a practitioner setting. The Guide is not a panacea to addressing all the barriers and obstacles which people living with dementia face when accessing the outdoors at visitor sites. Instead it is a pragmatic, experience-based collection of key findings and top tips. These tips have emerged from our research and discussions with people living with dementia, businesses and the stakeholders with whom we have co-created projects to enhance the opportunities for people to live well with dementia.



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Why is the Guide important?

The economic rationale for dementia-inclusivity is widely recognised in other Guides³ and research from Visit England has valued the accessible tourism market at £15.3 billion, with access issues impacting a quarter of all visitors in some way. Dementia is one facet of the need for careful consideration of accessibility issues in the visitor experience. This is because dementia brings gradual changes in the mental abilities that underpin what people do and this is why they may need extra support. With this kind of support, they can still engage in meaningful activities and participate in society. One aspect of normal life that is vital for our well-being is the opportunity to get outdoors and access the natural environment, and nature is acknowledged as having beneficial effects for people living with dementia.

Dementia is an issue that attracts a great deal of interest among organisations due to the common association with an ageing population (although dementia can affect younger age groups) and this association raises many wider accessibility issues, but it is the cognitive impairment and mobility challenges that arise with dementia that we focus on here. The Guide offers practical advice in a very concise manner which is not currently available for the visitor economy around this very specialised theme, particularly when hosting groups of people living with dementia and when running events.

How to use the Guide

The principal objective of the Guide is to disseminate some of the best practice that exists within the visitor economy sector on creating more dementia-inclusive outdoor experiences and to address the constant feedback we have received in all the research studies over the last decade. That feedback consistently emphasises that visitor economy businesses seek accessible and digestible sources of evidenced-based information that are simple and practical. These organisations also seek suitable case studies of project development, implementation and evidence of their successful outcomes that can help inspire further innovation and network development to build momentum in advocating the case for dementia-inclusivity. In this Guide, our top tips emanate from our three year research programme of work that underpinned the pursuit of dementia-inclusivity for visitor economy businesses. We signpost examples of best practice and also identify the operational and practical issues for managers as well as providing the wider research context in the associated report – *Using Nature to Make Your Visitor Economy Business more Dementia-Inclusive*⁴ – that can be consulted for further information.

Creating the Dementia-Inclusive Visitor Experience: Key Facets

One of the many criticisms of much of the work on accessible tourism and leisure is that people who use the services and infrastructure that have been deemed to be ‘accessible’ approach the subject through their own lens. This means the actual users and the barriers they face may not be fully appreciated. Other criticisms are that the focus on some areas of accessible tourism and leisure tend to dwell on known infrastructure issues (e.g. toilet provision, ramps and parking spaces) without looking at the visitor pathways through a site in a holistic manner. In other words, the touch points a visitor has at a site will be more than the infrastructure, as many subjective issues impact the experience and enjoyment a truly inclusive experience will create⁵.

If one looks at a visitor journey from home to a visitor site and the journey through that site, through the eyes of an accessible user, then the touch points during a visit become more obvious including any known problem areas. The visitor experience is very much dependent upon the ability to pass from home to a visitor site and back with the minimum of negotiation of barriers and obstacles for people living with dementia. Whilst a wide range of factors will shape the visitor experience, we have grouped these into several categories that interconnect when creating a dementia-inclusive experience as a starting point (Figure 1).

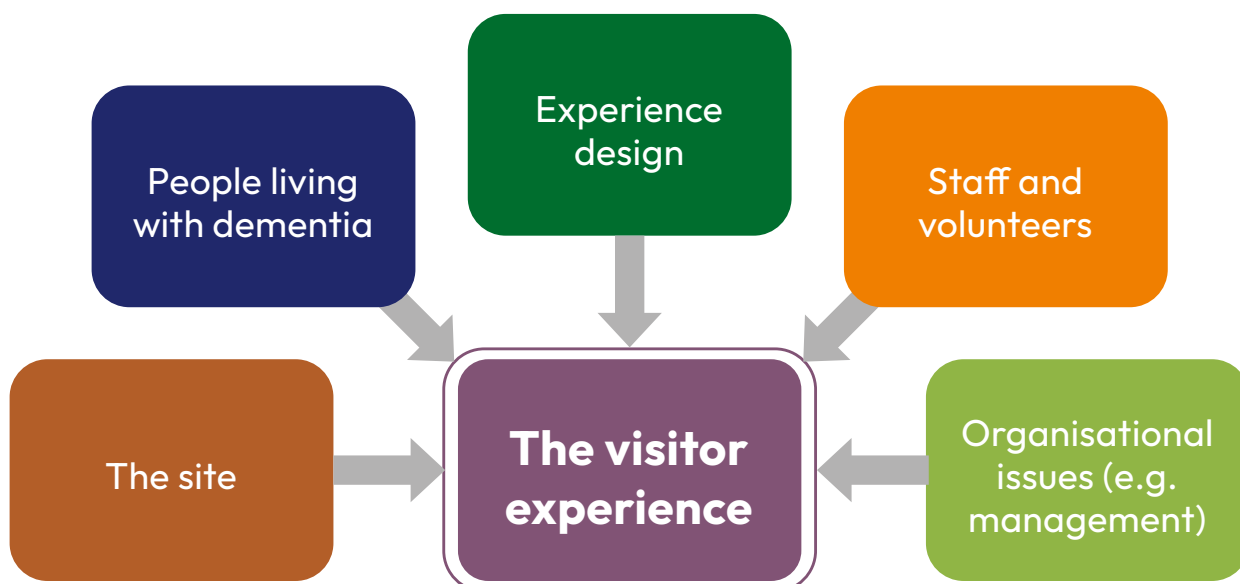


Figure 1: Domains that impact the visitor experience for people living with dementia

The site

The site remains the overall context for outdoor experiences and to help create an inclusive experience a number of useful tools can be deployed, such as site audits as part of the on-site visitor journey, the creation of printed and downloadable accessibility guides, and environmental design resources for specific needs. For example, design principles developed for nature and the outdoors that have relevance for visitor sites can be grouped around six principles to make them dementia-inclusive, and expanding upon the six areas that Mitchell et al.⁶ identified in outdoor visits, these are:

- Familiarity of established places and sites, that can be enhanced by ensuring information is available pre-visit to assure people about the site they are visiting
- Legibility of the landscape which is how people wayfind⁷ and navigate around the environment, such as suitable signage. Too many visual stimuli and too much clutter on site can cause confusion and this impacts the experience and negatively affects wayfinding on site
- Distinctiveness of the environment being visited
- Accessibility of the site or location being visited
- Comfort, which typically involves the provision of appropriate infrastructure such as seating and toilets
- Safety is expressed in many ways, ranging from physical safety measures such as removing obvious

trip hazards and provision of suitable walking surfaces to removing barriers relating to perceived risks, a feature that is often expressed by carers and supporters of people living with dementia in terms of needing an environment that does not promote confusion and bewilderment in wayfinding.

Other key issues are:

- An accessible website including information for wheelchair users and accessibility statements
- Visual guides so visitors can see whether the site was suitable for them.
- Welcome and entry information, signage, toilet provision, and facilities to promote visitor social engagement such as cafés, shops and interpretive services.
- Welcoming and accessible open spaces in nature that have simple layouts, uncomplicated design, several key landmarks and limited signage that is plain with large black text⁸.

To help in this process the main Guide⁹ provides a simple-to-use audit tool which organisations can employ to initially identify issues which can then be followed up with a visit by people living with dementia to assess the site through the lens of a user with dementia. Strawberry Hill House, one of the ENLIVEN projects, illustrates how it approached these issues in a holistic manner to enhance the dementia-inclusivity of the site and its nature offer.



Image 1: Strawberry Hill House, ©Strawberry Hill House

Case Study:

Strawberry Hill House

Strawberry Hill House and Garden, created by Horace Walpole in the 18th Century, has been open to visitors for over 250 years. This extraordinary building is internationally famous as Britain's finest example of Georgian Gothic revival architecture whilst the garden offers an escape for those looking for tranquillity in a natural setting. The ENLIVEN project at this site was designed to make people living with dementia and carers feel confident that they could visit Strawberry Hill Gardens, knowing that it was a safe and secure environment. To achieve this, the project started from first principles to devise an action plan to make the gardens more dementia-inclusive. This involved co-designing and pilot testing initiatives to make the 'Feel Good Garden' more dementia-inclusive, drawing on

expertise within the ENLIVEN team in sensory design alongside consultations with people with dementia. An event was held to launch the improvements and promote the site to those living with dementia and their supporters. The team at Strawberry Hill House also co-created with ENLIVEN a sensory trail through the gardens (Figure 2) for people living with dementia and made a film to serve as an access guide (strawberryhillhouse.org.uk/accessibility) with a text version available to help plan the visit to make their site more welcoming and broaden its appeal to those with access needs. This shows the unintended consequences of making a site more dementia-inclusive have improved accessibility for other groups.

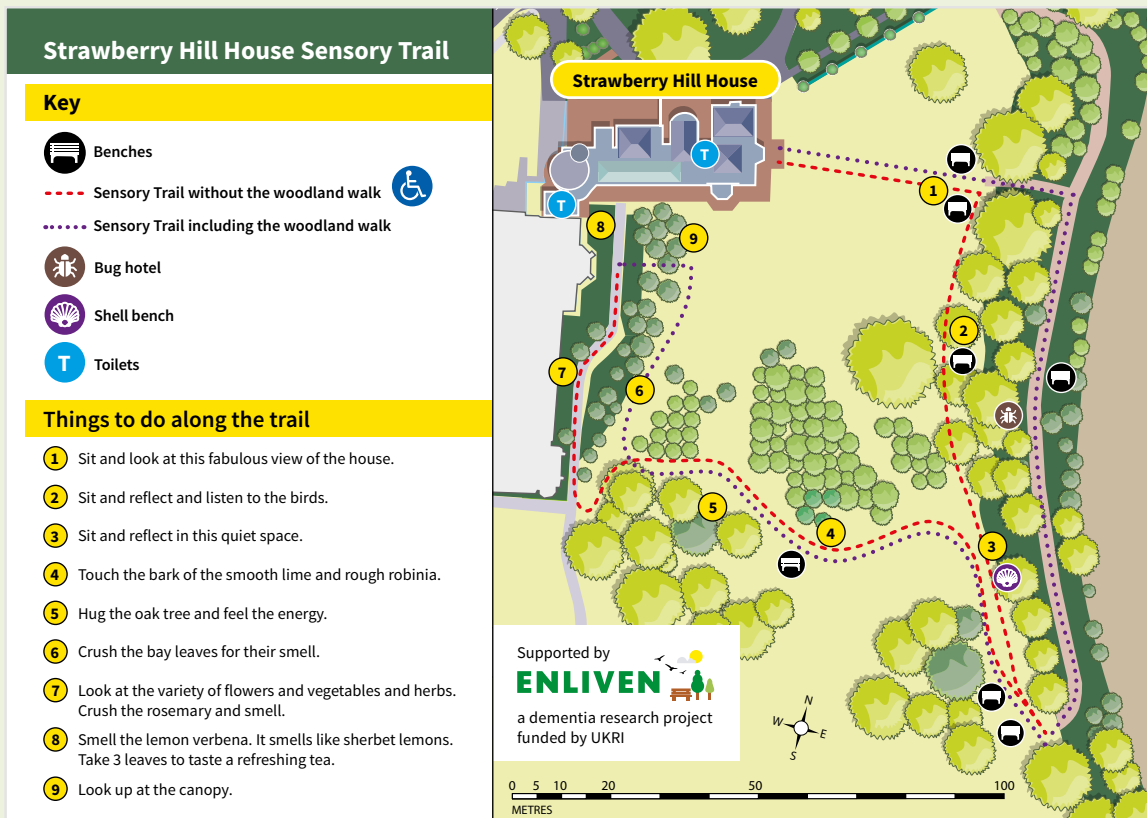


Figure 2: Strawberry Hill House Sensory Trail

People living with dementia

Any attempt to promote dementia-inclusivity needs to begin with the perspective of the person living with dementia; a people-centric approach is necessary because not all barriers to accessibility are physical. Some are psychosocial meaning that they may be perceived barriers or a reticence to engage in an activity or to visit nature post-diagnosis due to loss of confidence. But as our research has shown, people living with dementia can help create a win-win for visitor economy businesses: their well-being is significantly enhanced through the benefits of being in nature and as critical friends they can help improve provision and identify accessibility issues. More specifically the social and well-being effects of visiting nature include improved mood, a sense of freedom, the opportunity to enjoy the

calming effect of nature as a route to mental stimulation of the senses, and happiness. There are also less obvious benefits such as social connectedness, and being around people or in company, that break down the loneliness often felt by people post-diagnosis. From an operational perspective, regular interaction with the audience and monitoring their needs and responses through a diverse range of evaluation tools helped to make design changes as the projects progressed. Where focus groups and surveys were used, within the constraints on some individuals' abilities to respond verbally, it was evident that these provided an unparalleled opportunity for the organisations to gain feedback in a structured and unstructured manner as the case study of the Tower of London illustrates.



Image 2: Tower of London, ©Rabia Abbas

Case Study: Tower of London

Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) is an independent charity that manages and cares for a range of Crown heritage sites and collections, welcoming over 5 million visitors a year to iconic places in British history. The Tower of London (hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london) is the UK's most visited paid visitor attraction, receiving over 2 million visits in 2022, which translates to up to 15,000 visits a day in the peak season. HRP is a leader in inclusive access to heritage sites, having developed a Sensory Palaces initiative for people with sensory needs at Hampton Court, established the Dementia-Friendly Heritage Network in 2016 and launched a resource guide for heritage site managers¹⁰. The Team at HRP were also leading on the Mayor of London's Dementia-Friendly Arts Venue Guide along with leading on dementia

for the UK Government Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The Tower of London adopted a people-centric approach based on their Sensory Palaces programme to co-create a dementia-inclusive outdoor experience in an innovative connection with nature: the moat at The Tower of London. The moat reached an international media audience when it was used as a site of remembrance with the 2014 ceramic poppies display, Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red, marking the outbreak of World War One, and again in 2018 in Beyond the Deepening Shadow. The 2018 use of the moat included a nightly candle lighting ceremony celebrating the end of World War One.

These events attracted 5 million visitors to the Tower. In 2023 the moat opened to the public for the first time, planted with 20 million wild flower seeds. The first of its kind globally, the moat project sought to support and empower people with cognitive impairment to explore and engage with nature. Working collaboratively with people living with dementia and carers, the project sought to create a sense of calm and wellbeing, with a focus on exploring pollinators, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, and art-making.

People living with dementia and their carers had critical contributions to make in working with HRP, external stakeholders and the research team in all aspects of the experience design and delivery in a very practical and meaningful way. This process used focus groups among the three groups who initially visited with no prior knowledge of the moat, having been provided with the Tower of London's access guide. The three groups were from day care centres across London and the South

East of England and were transported by coach to the site, where they were met and greeted and the visitor experience commenced on site. The initial visit also helped create enhanced engagement with the project for subsequent visits as focus groups were conducted in a free flow manner as an immediate source of feedback whilst the experience was fresh in their minds. Some 58 people living with dementia participated in the visits and focus groups and on the revisit, enhancements were made to address any touch points that were challenging or requiring assistance. As a historic site with cobbled surfaces, slopes and flagstones the groups all revisited and reported highly positive outcomes, including the connection with nature, the moat, archaeological remains and memory box creation on the second visit. The Tower of London received detailed evaluation feedback that enabled it to then help with the next stage of the moat project and its development in 2024.

The example of the Tower of London illustrates that people living with dementia are not a passive and simply receptive audience. They have diverse needs and whilst this can be challenging in delivery terms, interactive elements of the experience create enjoyment and high levels of engagement. In some cases, pushing boundaries and challenging expectations about what people could manage, such as facilitating requests for visits into

poorly lit and darkened environments, such as the Crown Jewels exhibit at the Tower of London, in a carefully planned and managed manner yielded highly positive outcomes. It also shows that people living with dementia and their carers have to make their own decisions on what they feel they can manage and engage in, so it is vital that organisations do not prejudge and label the groups with their own prejudices.

Experience design

The visitor experience is often framed in terms of the satisfaction a visitor derives from physical and emotional interactions with the multiple phenomena at a site, destination or place. It has evolved into an approach geared towards the evaluation of visitor services and the way they are delivered in terms of different forms of provision and interpretation (e.g. signage, guided tours, display boards, exhibits and audio-visual displays) they use to communicate ideas and to help people understand what they are viewing or experiencing. As a communication process, interpretation helps to create the visit as a memorable event in the mind of the visitor. Until comparatively recently visitor studies research has not recognised the needs of visitors with memory issues and the need to create enjoyment in the moment. This requires a different approach and one more akin to how the hospitality sector operates with instant consumption as the experiential element where food is tasted and consumed in multi-sensory environments in the moment. However, the mindset needs to shift away from the ingrained ethos of creating unforgettable experiences as people living with dementia will typically focus on *the moment*¹. A good example of this is the Dartmoor Active Leisure project with the Dartmoor National Park, a multi-stakeholder project with one very notable 'in the moment' event held in the National Park involving using an electric trishaw to experience nature (see front cover image). This novel project was also combined with improving the capabilities of a small adventure activity business in the development of a new cycling opportunity for people with dementia.

Staff and volunteers

The key to creating an 'in the moment' experience, as widely reported, was the provision of a warm welcome that made visitors feel at ease, evident throughout all of the studies we undertook and consistent with wider thinking in the visitor services domain by theorists and practitioners. The experience is normally determined by the quality and sincerity of the welcome as all of the people with dementia in our projects reported feeling welcome, looked after, and safe, and finding staff very responsive, and this was independently verified through participant observation. A key element in this, beyond the personalities and traits of staff, was the training and preparation for visits. In many cases a high ratio of support staff to visitors not only increased engagement through informal discussion and interaction, but helped facilitate a group dynamic and personalisation, especially where participants needed additional support with mobility or other needs as illustrated by the case study of Kew Gardens.



Image 3: The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew is a world-famous visitor experience structured around nature and its indoor rainforest in the Palm House which is also an active research environment for its conservation work. ©S J Page

Case Study:

Kew Gardens

A site of international acclaim, The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (Kew Gardens; [kew.org](https://www.kew.org)) offers a visitor experience that celebrates horticulture and botanical science, heritage and plants, welcoming nearly two million visitors in 2022 - England's second most visited 'paid for' attraction. Kew is a UNESCO World Heritage Site extending over 330 acres with renowned and iconic features, including the Temperate House, the world's largest Victorian glasshouse, and a range of classic and pioneering gardens and landscapes. The ENLIVEN project at Kew fitted into the site's wider agenda of addressing equality, diversity and inclusivity by reaching out to more ethnically diverse communities in London ([kew.org/about-us/equality-diversity-inclusion](https://www.kew.org/about-us/equality-diversity-inclusion)). Working with the Community Access and Learning Team, the project used reminiscence practice as a tool to engage people with dementia from

diverse backgrounds with plants and nature, with a focus on the international collections that could connect participants with experiences from their past. Underpinning this project was a series of initial consultations and art workshops with an African-Caribbean community group of people with dementia, and with volunteers, some of whom were from the Windrush generation. The project ran 7 weekly sessions with a programme of reminiscence activities and appropriate training for staff and 8 volunteers for a typical group size of 12, with the aim of reminiscence practice becoming an ongoing element of the learning programme beyond the duration of the project. The high staff/volunteer: participant ratios helped with engagement with the project and the high levels of satisfaction the participants experienced.

Organisational issues

For the host businesses, especially those who were not used to working with this market, a range of lessons emerged that affected the way the projects evolved and were delivered and then evaluated:

- Partnership working was a key element of all projects with the challenge highlighted by one project lead: 'The brilliant thing about doing community engagement is that you're working with other organisations and other people. And the hardest thing about community engagement is that you're working with other organisations and other people'. This created rich experiences but made them very time consuming to coordinate. In some cases, management challenges meant that projects stalled or ran out of steam and a critical intervention was needed to kick start the process again.
- Managing volunteers (where they were available) was a highly variable experience. They brought many positive elements to engaging people living with dementia with the practical elements of the activities and experiences and creating interest. However, in some instances, the absence of a clear volunteer strategy and a pre-planned role for floating volunteers in the delivery setting needed enhanced management to tie them more fully to the project aims.
- The most successful projects in terms of deep experiences were based on the personal skills and expertise of the experience design and delivery team. In particular, the adaptability of the team was paramount.
- Scale of project and group size was critical. This ranged from very small groups to over 30 people. Adaptability and the level of enjoyment and social connectedness did not appear to vary by group size, particularly where larger groups were managed into smaller ones for refreshments or doing activities where the need arose.
- Being prepared to accept criticism and adapting the experience accordingly by keeping flexibility in the schedule and making changes to the delivery on subsequent visits to demonstrate how the feedback impacted provision was crucial. What worked well on one occasion may not on a subsequent delivery with a different group, for example.
- Gaining senior management commitment to the projects was seen as crucial for helping leverage support for the work.

Stakeholder Involvement

In most cases, the projects were reliant upon a supply chain that involved different organisations who connected with people living with dementia (e.g. Age Concern, DEEP Groups, Young Onset Dementia Groups and Memory Cafés)¹² that could help at all stages of the project design and implementation as critical friends. In some cases, a web of organisations was interconnected with the projects which expanded the potential catchment for the project.

Coordinating these and integrating different agendas was often a difficult process, sometimes with organisations talking at crossed purposes or other

agendas being promoted alongside the project remit. A clear project brief with clear goals and principles engaged a wider pool of organisations who contributed or benefited from the interaction but they also delayed delivery where their schedules could not be accommodated.

Project Management

Clear leadership of each project to kick start the development process was needed to steer it through to timely completion as a number of critical points of failure emerged:

- An absence in the wider stakeholder group of the core project management skills needed to understand start and end points for the work and a common purpose.
- Too many conflicting demands with the project sometimes being sidelined by stakeholders.
- Personnel change and changing interest and agendas as the project progressed
- Underestimating the commitment to the project and deliverables within a specific timeframe.
- Not keeping lines of communication updated, especially where commitments to pre-agreed outcomes were uncertain.
- People skills remain critical in the delivery process to enthuse, engage and carry the group along.

Creating your dementia-inclusive experience: Top Tips

From our research, a simplified way of looking at how to develop a dementia-inclusive experience emerges, as Figure 3 suggests. Here, a series of sequential steps exist, from the inception stage where an organisation decides to make this a priority as part of its inclusivity agenda through to the final delivery of a dementia-inclusive visitor experience. This summarises the lessons learned from the projects on how businesses began their dementia-inclusive journey, while a number were at a more advanced stage and were trialling new ideas and experiences to deepen their provision. Whatever position the organisation is in on this schematic diagram, it is important that the experience design is co-created, trialled and evaluated before embarking on implementation.

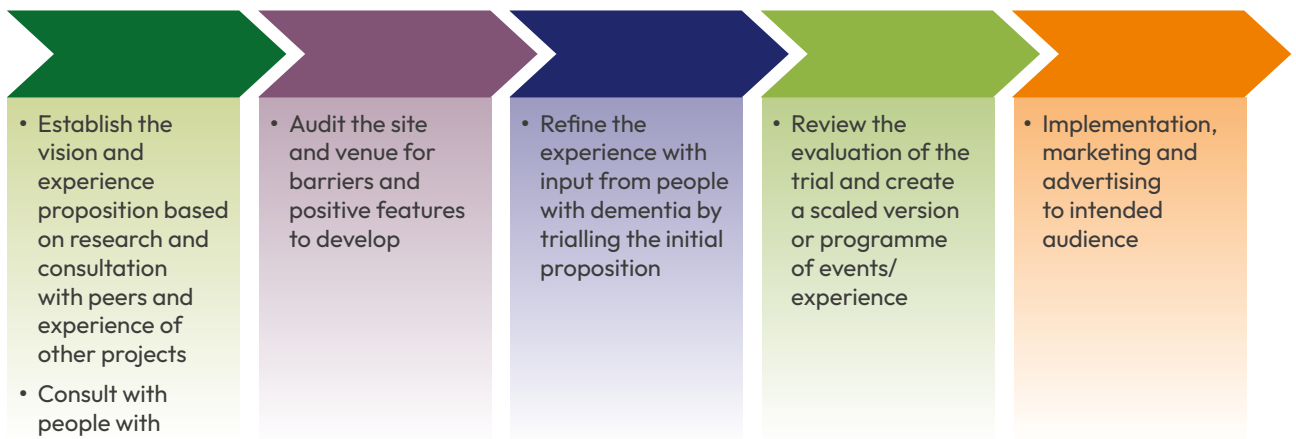


Figure 3: Steps to creating a dementia-inclusive visitor proposition

From these generic steps a series of top tips can be formulated that can be understood holistically. Following these, the creation of the visitor proposition can then be implemented in a manner that allows all the resources of the

organisation to be harnessed and some of the top tips for organising and a nature-based event can be grouped into marketing and advertising and on-site communication (Figure 4).

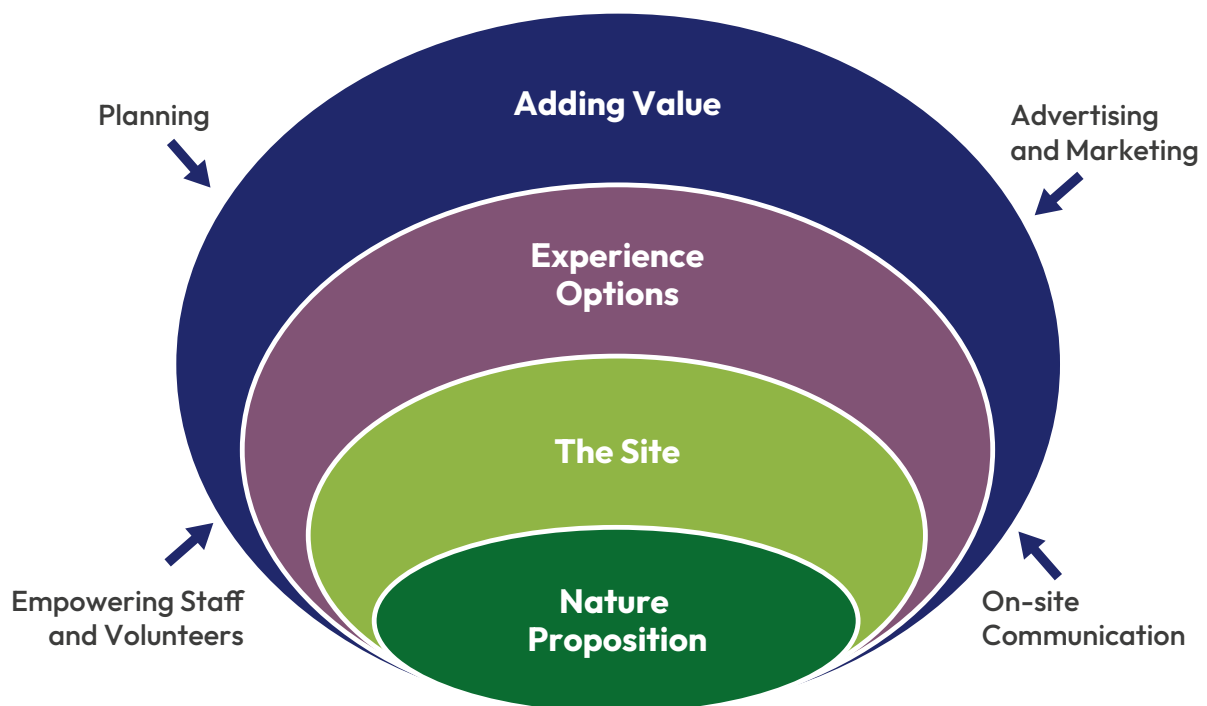


Figure 4: Top practical tips for creating a dementia-inclusive nature experience

Marketing and advertising Top Tips

1. Reaching the target audience as a business requires refinement of existing thinking where visitors (either as paid or free admissions) already exist and as the organisational marketing is focused on non-dementia audiences.
2. Reaching out to other stakeholders (e.g. DEEP Groups) and organisations specialising in dementia care may be necessary to attract people who feel excluded from the current offer or lack of provision. This can be done via pre-visit information (e.g. the website) which may need a refresh.
3. Develop an Access Guide with simple and printable instructions on the visit and consider providing short films visualising the visitor experience (e.g. Strawberry Hill House, strawberryhillhouse.org.uk/accessibility; Hendon Aircraft Museum rafmuseum.org.uk/london/plan-your-day/accessibility). This will add reassurance for people with dementia and also help to attract other new markets (e.g. people with autism).
4. Ensure that once a market has been engaged, follow up and ongoing development work occurs that keeps people connected via email, telephone and other forms of media (e.g. social media) so they remain interested, especially where a programme of events is developed or it is likely that wastage/dropout rates will be high.
5. Make the initial interactions with the audience interesting and animated so that the experience being offered is not static and simply what is offered as a walk-in visitor, ensuring that it is better tailored to their needs.

On-site communication Top Tips

1. Use large font interpretation materials to create an accessible and legible introduction to the site.
2. Involve people living with dementia and their carers to help trial the new experience and refine the proposition so it is accessible and welcoming, with barriers identified and where possible addressed.
3. Be creative in how nature is harnessed and used in event programmes or specific new experiences designed for engaging people living with dementia. Archives and memorabilia may sometimes help stimulate memories and interest, building on the well-established techniques used in the heritage and museums sector. There are lots of excellent best practice examples that have not yet been adapted to a nature-focused proposition.
4. Be adventurous in how you ask people to engage with nature, refine the proposition with regular evaluation and feedback, and use that to enrich the website and appeal to other people to visit.
5. Ensure that customer facing staff are aware of the needs of people with dementia so that a greater degree of compassion enters into their interactions with visitors as opposed to more regimented and long-standing practices on visitor management to process queues.

There are also a number of important tips for businesses when they choose to host a dementia-inclusive event.

Top Tips for hosting a nature-based dementia-inclusive event

There is a growing interest in beginning to broaden out existing practices used for people living in care to now target those living at home seeking to try and maintain independent lives. Our top tips for hosting events reflect this evolving range of practices that have several core features:

- Facilitate creative expression among those with a dementia diagnosis.
- Find ways to compensate for the effects of changes in mental abilities on what people are able to do.
- Empower people living with dementia to express their view of the world to try to achieve as normal a lived experience as possible so that they do not feel marginalised or socially-isolated.

- Enable people living with dementia to have fun, to live in the moment and to participate as much as they can in society.

Among the top tips that we have compiled from our research are the need to think about different stages of the event (pre-event, staging the event and post-event) each of which has special conditions to be met in developing a fulfilling and rewarding visitor experience. The list (Table 1) is not exhaustive but it summarises some of the key things to think about based on recent experiences from organisations and the co-created events they engaged with.

Table 1: Top Tips for organising a nature-based event for people living with dementia

PRE EVENT: Actions	Operational Issues
Planning	Flexibility and adaptability in plans is essential in case for example the visit is affected by inclement weather
	Location and access issues
	Ensuring that internal stakeholders are aware of the event and briefed on the audience and their needs
	Ideally a pre-event trial of the site or event to gather feedback for any modifications required so it is viewed through the eyes of the participants rather than just the organiser (see the DEEP Guide on Inviting people with Dementia to Conferences for background ⁱ)
	Ensure the timings and duration are suitable with shorter rather than long sessions preferable
	Ensure there are ample breaks
	Think about the spaces being used so that obvious distractions (e.g. noise) are minimised and have alternative strategies if the attention of the group starts to wander

Communication	Provision of information in an accessible format on access and transport issues
	If the event involves mobility – what is involved and timings and challenge level
	Provision of map or weblink
	Contact details of organiser for pre-visit queries or questions
STAGING THE EVENT: Actions	
The welcome	This can be the factor determining success or failure so ensure the staff welcome is hospitable and authentic and basic issues (e.g. availability of toilets and other facilities) are highlighted and built into the event programming
	Issues of toilet provision and their accessibility will feature highly if they are inadequate
	Ensure the connection with the group is built so a rapport is established, building upon the pre-event communication to engage the audience
	Listen to any concerns and make any adjustments required (e.g. wheelchair requests)
The event design	Depending on the type of event design devised, think carefully about what will help achieve a stimulating cognitive experience (e.g. its sensory elements) and the theory behind what you are designing and why, as well as how you plan to measure its success (or failure)
	Do not be afraid of trialling new ideas and techniques to build the relationship between the person living with dementia and the caregiver and look at advice on each technique ⁱⁱ
	Make the event fun, enjoyable and engaging (Image 18)
Hospitality needs	Ensure that all participants have adequate access to refreshments when outdoors and indoors and that these are suitable for the climatic conditions to avoid dehydration
Signage	Appropriate signage needs to be provided that is legible and accessible to help participants navigate around the venue or site/planned events/experience
Climatic factors	Given the challenge of climate for people living with dementia (e.g. avoiding extremes of hot and cold), event design needs to be cognisant of these issues. For example, several ENLIVEN events had gazebos erected on hot days to offer shade and shelter.
Seating	Adequate seating is essential that is suitable for the audience and appropriately sited to ensure breaks are possible allowing a chance to rest and to savour the moment
Volunteers/ Staffing	Adequate volunteers and/or staffing may be needed to be in terms of the ratio of visitors to staff to ensure that there is adequate support throughout the event and someone available in case first aid is required
	A delicate balance in volunteer input is needed to ensure the right mix of support and independence for the person with dementia (e.g. the volunteer is not there to complete an activity but to sensitively assist where a person needs assistance)

POST-EVENT: Actions	
Evaluation	<p>Agreeing an evaluation strategy or tool to use to capture feedback as you go along (e.g. a focus group style of conversation) or post-event discussion is important to demonstrate the case for the event and its benefits and impact on the organisation in terms of its mission</p> <p>Many tools exist to help with this activity (see Alzheimer’s Society methods of conducting research with people living with dementia) alzheimers.org.uk/dementia-professionals/dementia-experience-toolkit/research-methods</p>
Follow-up	<p>Once a group of people have been engaged, keeping a connection with them and building upon that relationship is critical. This is standard marketing procedure as it costs more to recruit a client or customer than it does to nurture them once you have built a relationship with them</p>
Word of Mouth	<p>Word of mouth is very important in communicating with people with dementia as their support networks, advocacy groups and connection with other people will help ‘snowball’ (i.e. spread the message through word of mouth) and reach a wider audience</p>

ⁱ See the DEEP Guide: Inviting People with Dementia to Conferences, dementiavoices.org.uk

ⁱⁱ Recent studies of reminiscence therapy (for a general introduction see Nodorff, M. and Dozier, M. (2023) Asking people with memory loss about past holidays can help them recall happy times, [The Conversation, theconversation.com/asking-people-with-memory-loss-about-past-holidays-can-help-them-recall-happy-times-125520](https://theconversation.com/asking-people-with-memory-loss-about-past-holidays-can-help-them-recall-happy-times-125520). and for a more scientific approach, see Woods, B., O’Philbin, L., Farrell, E. M., Spector, A. E., & Orrell, M. (2018). Reminiscence therapy for dementia. *The Cochrane Database Systematic Reviews*, 3(3), Cd001120.) suggest that by developing techniques to ask people living with dementia to recall their holidays and experiences, perhaps through events, the connection and bonds with their carers may be strengthened. The use of this themed prompt assisted with other forms of cultural collateral such as photographs may help when using reminiscence as the basis of a nature-based or outdoor event such as photography.

In addition to the top tips, it is evident that many of the events hosted during this project have developed from a wider schema of approaches to designing experiences for people living with dementia as Table 2 shows. This demonstrates the creativity now being harnessed from different areas of society to create stimulating experiences. These range from experiences aimed at people with a recent diagnosis whose condition is less constraining through to those who have mobility issues and those for whom language is difficult. Visual media, for example, provides a meeting point for

sharing experiences that are suitable for many because they offer a degree of immediacy and sensory stimulation not necessarily dependent upon cognitive abilities (except where visual perception is affected by dementia). The range of possibilities which Table 2 opens up is endless and when nature is combined with them, this offers many opportunities for organisations to innovate and capture the human imagination.

Table 2: Creative ideas for hosting nature-based events for people living with dementia

Creative area of activity	Event ideas
Drama	Active involvement, fun and laughter
Dance	Active involvement and exercise
Music	A relaxing experience when used in an outdoor setting that can be combined with exercise or reflection or other exercise routines
Art-based programmes	Using nature to connect nature and people with creative activities using art
Reminiscence	Creating memory boxes from a nature experience, sharing stories of key events in one's life like holidays and travel
Photography and visual media	Using nature as the backdrop to the event and to help stimulate future recall and memories
Sensory events	Use of pre-planted garden areas to stimulate interest and different responses
Story telling	To create a stimulating social environment where people with dementia can contribute in different ways about their lived experiences

Further reading: Lee, H. and Adams, T. (eds) (2011) *Creative Approaches in Dementia Care*, Basingstoke; Palgrave Macmillan.

Areas for future action in the visitor economy sector

These comprise 12 main points:

- Being treated as an individual.
- Practising inclusivity and keeping experiences as normal as possible.
- Providing adequate access information.
- Recognising that nature experiences are integral to living well with dementia.
- Recognising transport barriers to accessing nature sites.
- Visit timing.
- Animating staged events to bring nature to life.
- Viewing experience design through a dementia lens.
- The importance of basic hygiene factors to the visitor experience.
- The role of nature in fostering social connectedness.
- Professionalism of staff and volunteers in adding value to experiences.
- Fun and enjoyment are paramount to meaningful experiences in the moment.

These are outlined in further detail in Table 3.

Table 3: A Call to Action – Top 12 Actions for creating dementia-inclusive nature-based visitor experiences

1.	Being treated as an individual as one size does not fit all and businesses need to apply the same principles as they do to other customer segments through more sophisticated marketing
2.	Practising inclusivity by not segregating people living with dementia from the wider visitor population, and avoiding offering somewhat sterile and lifeless visitor experiences or allocating a separate early opening time for people living with dementia. Some adaptations may be necessary for individuals but normalised experiences were widely requested. On the other hand, avoiding days when large groups might be at the site (e.g. several school groups) is the type of information people with dementia might value knowing before they visit
3.	Providing adequate access information for the visitor journey on the organisation's website, as Strawberry Hill have done with an access guide, a downloadable and printable simplified guide that can be developed through auditing the site (See Appendix 1)
4.	Nature-based experiences remain integral to the leisure lives of people living with dementia and with some small adaptations, enhanced access can be achieved (e.g. ensuring pathways are suitable as gravelled areas can prove problematic for walking and wheelchairs as well as the existence of puddles which can be perceived as holes in the ground)
5.	Accessing urban and rural nature-based sites for some urban populations with dementia may appear easy given the availability of public transport but in reality this is a barrier, especially at iconic sites, so some forms of tailored transport solutions may be required, often on a group basis
6.	The timing of the visit is critical in terms of peak times for energy levels for a visit along with temperature. There is evidence to suggest that extremes of heat and cold ⁵² impact people with dementia disproportionately, with the heat scenario being recognised in recent research. This needs to be recognised to understand when people living with dementia will be prepared to engage in visiting the outdoors for events or visitor experiences staged for them. Working out the optimum visit length was also widely discussed at around 1.5-3 hours on site as a maximum
7.	Staged events for people living with dementia appear to animate the visit, bring nature to life and help with engagement making it appealing. This also encourages re-visitation, as shown in the feedback from groups in most of the projects, as the organisations created safe spaces for the participants
8.	The need to look at the experience design through the lens of someone living with dementia was widely endorsed and enthusiastically supported, especially the pacing of outdoor experiences and different ability levels. There is no replacement for the detailed advice that people with dementia can share with businesses on what works well or what simple additions would make a big difference at a specific site
9.	Basic hygiene factors assume a major role in the visit , especially the access to toilets, which need clear signage on site as well as entry and exit signs, a good supply of places to sit, rest points during outdoor activity and quiet spaces allowing people to engage at their own pace
10.	Nature-based experiences achieved social connectedness in two ways. First, where pre-existing groups visited they supported each other and were able to manage the visit as a group through their mutual support. Second, where events recruited participants unknown previously, it expanded existing social networks and there was evidence of the activity strengthening bonds between the person with dementia and their carer as a shared experience
11.	The professionalism of staff and volunteers was a significant value-added element frequently cited because it helped with the nuancing of experiences for different ability levels and offered reassurance, perceived safety and confidence in the venue's ability to design and deliver sector leading experiences for people living with dementia
12.	Fun, enjoyment, and an opportunity to achieve meaningful experiences in the moment were visible at the point of consumption but also continued to be a point of discussion after the visit finished

Making your organisational case for becoming dementia-inclusive

How businesses respond to the challenge of dementia-inclusivity often depended upon having a champion in the organisation, and organisations frequently reiterated how important relevant expertise and knowledge was in advancing this agenda. The champion was a strong advocate for the issue, having to sometimes deal with internal challenges, resistance and push back. Effective arguments can be made showing that while dementia is one of many inclusivity agendas it is a good starting point for inclusion because of the unintended effects (i.e. improving access for people living with dementia will often create benefits for many other groups). Using case studies of best practice, and recognising that there are

many pathways and motivations within organisations to become dementia-inclusive, is important when creating the rationale for innovation. Whilst many sceptics will cite high costs of adaptations and investment, often very small steps starting with training do not require major resources to develop. Many of the projects presented as case studies in this Guide were created with modest budgets, with the benefits outweighing the investment in time. Talk to other organisations who have pursued this pathway, see what is involved, and understand how incremental steps can help in embarking on a new, or strengthening your existing, visitor offer to expand inclusivity in your organisation.



Key Sources of Advice on Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Visitor Economy:

ENLIVEN	enlivenproject.co.uk
Visit England	visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive
Alzheimer's Society	alzheimers.org.uk/categories/support/travel-holidays

Notes

1. A demonstration project is a mechanism to develop and implement an innovation. The demonstrative effects of this intervention are then evaluated to disseminate elements of best practice for other managers and practitioners to learn from. A key strand of our work was to engage with a range of target groups, including under-represented groups in urban areas with no access to nature-based sites and for whom access to nature was limited by mobility restrictions, financial barriers or other barriers.
2. 'Extending active life for older people with cognitive impairment and their families through innovation in the visitor economy of the natural environment' (ENLIVEN) was funded by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Healthy Ageing Challenge and UKRI/Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) through Grant ES/V016172/1. The research investigators involved in the project were: L. Clare, R. Collins, J. Connell, M. Gillard, S. Milton, C. Opdebeeck, S. J. Page, C. Quinn, J. Stoneham, S. Tamblin, C. Victor. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the ESRC, UKRI, NIHR, the Department of Health and Social Care, or the National Health Service or the wider project team. The support of ESRC and NIHR is gratefully acknowledged. The contributions of the project team and the ENLIVEN Advisory Group are acknowledged.
3. Klug, K., Page, S. J., Connell, J., Robson, D. and Bould, E. (2017). *Rethinking Heritage: A guide to help make your site more Dementia-Friendly*. London: Historic Royal Palaces, hrp.org.uk/about-us/communities/#gs.41ce7j; Visit England (2019). *Dementia-Friendly Tourism: A Practical Guide for Businesses*, www.visitbritain.org/sites/ind/files/2023-07/dementia_friendly_guide_for_tourism_businesses.pdf.
4. Page, S., Connell, J. and Clare, L. (2024). *Using Nature to Make Your Visit Economy Business Dementia-Inclusive*, ENLIVEN: Exeter, enlivenproject.co.uk.
5. The concept of touch points is widely used in marketing and it pertains to those elements of the experience, which for a specific site will be within the control of the organisation, that will shape the individual perception of the experience. For example, the most obvious is the Welcome a visitor receives when arriving at a site. The visitor will normally go through the process of becoming aware of the issue, then consider the issue and make a decision on its effect on their experience. For people living with dementia and their supports, this may be more complex, but first impressions during a visit can shape the overall experience and satisfaction level significantly.

6. Mitchell, L., Burton, E., Raman, S., Blackman, T., Jenks, M. and Williams, K. (2003). Making the outside world dementia-friendly: Design issues and considerations. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 30(4), 605-632.
7. Wayfinding describes how people navigate and orientate their way around the environment (e.g. at home or outdoors). As dementia affects one's cognitive functions, wayfinding skills that rely in spatial awareness and reasoning may be impaired which impacts their mobility within unfamiliar environments. Clear and appropriate signage can assist with wayfinding in visitor environments, including the use of landmarks.
8. Mitchell, L. and Burton, E. (2006). Neighbourhoods for life: Designing dementia-friendly outdoor environments. *Quality in Ageing and Older Adults*. 7(1), 26-33.
9. Page, S., Connell, J. and Clare, L. (2024). *Using Nature to Make Your Visit Economy Business Dementia-Inclusive*, ENLIVEN: Exeter, enlivenproject.co.uk.
10. Klug, K., Page, S. J., Connell, J., Robson, D. and Bould, E. (2017). *Rethinking Heritage: A guide to help make your site more Dementia-Friendly*. London: Historic Royal Palaces, hrp.org.uk/about-us/communities/#gs.4lce7j.
11. The concept of the moment has been recognised in dementia and visitor studies research so that the immediate pleasure and benefits of the visit are appreciated whilst still recognising the importance of subjective factors that shape the feelings and attitudes of the person with dementia towards his or her visit.
12. DEEP is an acronym for the UK Network of Dementia Voices (dementiavoices.org.uk) which comprises local groups of people living with dementia to enable them to have a voice about things that matter to them. Young onset dementia is often shortened to the acronym YODA and Alzheimer's Society estimate that over 70,000 people are living with the condition in the UK. Memory Cafés are a concept that aims to offer a safe space in which people with dementia can meet, have fun and socialise over a beverage as well as an opportunity meet and make new friends. The idea originated in The Netherlands in the 1990s as a first step in addressing some of the stigma associated with dementia. The idea diffused internationally, to the USA in the 2000s, with the first café set up in Santa Fe, and to Europe in 2008. It offers a self-support model and cafés are often run by volunteers. In the UK, Age UK have produced a toolkit to help with establishing a Memory Café (ageuk.org.uk/wp-assets/globalassets/norfolk/age-uk-norfolk-dementia-cafe-toolkit.pdf) offering many useful cues to what type of environment and ambience to create for people living with dementia.



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