

# DEMENTIA FRIENDLY MURALS



## What is a mural?

A mural is artwork applied directly to a wall (or ceiling), usually in public spaces. However, not all murals are dementia-friendly, and care is required when considering the benefits of the artwork versus the potential negative impact they could cause to a person living with dementia or even with sight impairment.

Principles and a general approach to dementia-friendly artwork – if something does not add value, do not put it on a wall. Inappropriate artwork is clutter and can cause too many distractions, as well as taking the focus away from items that should be adding value. A typical example of poor design would be corridors full of framed pictures that are too high on the walls, are behind reflective glass, show abstract visuals or pictures of one flower or a tree. These will not work as an orientation aid, nor will they work for reminiscence reasons or to offer an opportunity for conversation. They quite simply fill a space, so our advice would be to take them down!

Care is needed when using scenic murals, particularly to cover full walls as these can be very distressing. There is a section on scenic murals that will give you more information, particularly important in hospital environments, so please read it before making what could be a costly mistake not only financially but regarding the health and wellbeing of people living with dementia.

Avoiding false realities that can cause distress is important and a feature of our murals is that we do not include images of doors. We would also never include a 3D step as this would be a trip hazard and we always include a low wall or railings to function as a barrier on scenic murals.

Murals printed on light enabling vinyl work well on lower-level windows and exit doors. The designs are created to encourage people to walk down all corridors and wherever possible not hide the view. However, the print of shrubbery changes the door to look like a window and can significantly reduce agitation and escape attempts

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# DEMENTIA FRIENDLY MURALS



## Why would you use a mural (or artwork)?

- Orientation purposes/feature walls
- To create choices of defined areas where a person can spend time and enjoy activities

Without orientation aids, corridors all look the same and can be very confusing. If there are no focal points or independence support strategies in place, people will lose their confidence and can either become agitated and distressed or simply stop moving around for fear of getting lost. Either response is likely to increase the risk of falls, through lack of concentration or reduced muscle strength and have a detrimental effect on wellbeing and quality of life.

Most dementia care environments are secure and therefore movement is restricted. By creating pathways of interest around the building, we aim to replicate community life as much as possible, without creating false realities. Going for a meaningful walk, collecting a newspaper from the shop, or having a drink are all daily activities we take for granted. Choice is our human right and something we take for granted. However, sadly in care setting, choice as a human right is often denied. The care setting is often managed with a focus on reducing risk, but there is a level of risk that is acceptable and creating a dementia-friendly environment can significantly reduce those risks as well enhancing quality of life – the two can work in unison.

Creating choice of defined areas helps people to identify the purpose of the space. Obvious examples would include:

- When going into a café, you would expect to get a drink and the choice of a snack
- When going to the pub, you would expect your favourite tippie, likeminded company and even a pub game and music
- When going to a shop, you would expect goods to be available

But the murals are about so much more than just the design. Each individual mural section includes content explaining why it works, the furnishings required for optimum benefit and very importantly, we give you a range of great activity ideas.

Our murals are usually bespoke and designed to fit spaces exactly, in colour schemes to suit the environment. We are happy to arrange an environmental visit if you are looking to make best use of your environment and we will help you to create meaningful journeys to be enjoyed by everyone. Alternatively for small areas, send us photographs and measurements and we will design something for you.

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# POST OFFICE MURAL

## Creating a dementia friendly environment

Everybody recognises the Post Office, with its traditional red colour, the post box on the wall or the pillar box on the pavement and of course the sign. Every city, town and village had its own Post Office until quite recently. Times have of course changed and we rely on them far less these days, but before computers, email and social media, people sent letters and cards, paid bills by cheque and therefore the Post Office was used by everyone.

I remember seeing queues waiting for the doors to open on pension day and know my grandma and her friends went down together to collect their money.

So many memories for so many people make this mural a perfect addition to any communal area and can be accessorised by so many small items and be the base for so many different activities.

For some, just going to the Post Office every morning can be a comforting experience and bring with it contentment for the day.

Some people may take pleasure from being the shopkeeper and look after the shelves. Small daily tasks give routine to a person's day and a sense of worth and pride in their work.

### Benefits

- Find's murals are a powerful and effective way to enhance the environment when used to set a scene and have a real interactive element to them

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# POST OFFICE FURNITURE

## Creating a dementia friendly environment

The pillar or post box are essential to complete the vision and can be used by residents to post letters, birthday and Christmas cards and postcards. If residents mail is posted, someone can empty the box and deliver.

A traditional telephone and typewriter on a desk, along with pens and paper offer an individual activity - manning the office, writing a letter or a card.

Group activities based on letters or artwork fit well with the Post Office theme and it is a wonderful place to reminisce about places they used to visit – use postcards and photographs to remind people. Post cards taken out of the post box from holiday destinations makes for great reminiscence experiences and lots of happy family memories.

Most Post Offices also have shelves stocked with a range of items and the items can vary. Sweets and drinks of course were often available and in a care setting can help increase nutrition and hydration, arts and crafts items and of course a wide range of forms. The shelves can be filled with activity items that people can take and use.

As with all the shop areas, people can also make items to fill the shelves, and these can be orientated towards time of year.

## Benefits

- Reliable way-finding landmark
- Adds authenticity to a themed environment
- An interactive point of interest

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# BUS STOP MURAL

## Creating a dementia friendly environment

What destination could be more recognisable than a bus stop? But I hear some of you cry, isn't this creating a false reality – the exact outcome Find aim to avoid?

To understand why the bus stop in a care setting can be so useful and used by so many, you first must ask yourself why a person would want to get on a bus at this time. When you realise that you do not know the answer to that important question, you should also realise the benefits of sitting on that bench with someone, having a conversation with them to understand their unmet need. Case studies have shown that it is easier to have a conversation with someone sitting at the bus stop than in a lounge surrounded by others. This is in part due to the culture of care where a member of staff will stand, kneel, or crouch in front of a person, usually in a uniform, and can be seen as a figure in authority rather than someone simply wanting a chat. At a bus stop, side by side, you become two people waiting for a bus and instinct is to chat.

For some people who like to walk, the bus stop is an ideal stopping place for a rest and can help reduce falls. Others may be pacing and unable to communicate they are in pain, hungry or thirsty.

Others who are agitated and distressed may be looking for someone, something or somewhere. Depending on the level of dementia and their memory loss, their physical search will not be successful, i.e., looking for a parent or going home to cook tea. However, their emotional needs can be met, often by making the person feel safe, loved and reassuring them or using the art of distraction.

Of one thing I am certain, simply telling the person to return to their chair will not reassure or address their concerns and is more likely to cause further distress, not only for them but for others around them.

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# BUS STOP MURAL

## Creating a dementia friendly environment

As with Find's other murals, furniture and accessories are required to ensure the space is fully recognisable and safe to use. A bus stop canopy and a sign are visible along corridors and of course, although Find do not supply them, there needs to be seating.

We would also recommend a mural on the opposite wall to the bus stop and usually suggest a picture of the town centre or somewhere local that is recognisable and a great conversational topic. The visual creates appropriate levels of stimulation. Photographs or a book about the town or area's history can also be placed on a small table next to the bench to create interest and a person-centred activity. In early-stage dementia, a person may be able to share personal stories of day trips out, favourite places to visit or why they used the bus in younger years. Even if a person cannot communicate verbally, they may still have fabulous memories that spending time at the bus stop may bring forward.

It is worth remembering that five minutes of positive interaction can help a person remain calm and content for several hours.

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# FLOWER SHOP MURAL

## Creating a dementia friendly environment

As with all Find's murals, the visuals must be recognisable to create a clear destination point. However, Find aim to go so much further than making a wall look great. We aim to create spaces that are socially engaging and interactive and therefore the right furniture and accessories are also essential to designing dementia-friendly areas.

To compliment the Flower Shop mural, Find can supply a display unit that includes three flower buckets with a range of several types and colours of floral arrangements – hopefully, something for everyone. This is a great start; however, the shop is not a picture, but should be as true to life an experience of shopping for flowers as possible. So, it must be kept stocked and ideally there should be a focus on seasonal flowers to help with orientation. Depending on space available, a counter can be added. Other items can be available too such as birthday cards, balloons, and decorations.

We display flowers in our own homes, often seasonal – daffodils in Spring are a perfect example. Flowers are always present at weddings – the bouquet, posies, buttonholes, and table centrepieces. They are always carefully chosen to suit our tastes and colour preferences.

You can learn a lot about a person by their choice of flowers and can open up conversations and link very well to reminiscence.

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# FLOWER SHOP MURAL

Creating a dementia friendly environment

**Activities:**

- Conversation starters on a daily basis. Every person is different, some will go directly to the shop and their favourites blooms, others can be directed there. Do not forget to include any valuable information in the person's care plan
- If a person is agitated or distressed, a carer can take them to the shop and suggest choosing flowers for their bedroom, arrange a centrepiece for a dining table or coffee table, or arrange in a vase the reception. For many, this would be a meaningful task and something they could take pride in.
- Flower arranging activity sessions – great for social interaction as well as engagement with the environment. These sessions can be seasonal – Valentine's Day for example. Everyone could be taken to the shop to collect a red rose, a chocolate heart, and a home-made card. Making door wreaths for Christmas is an excellent activity in the build up to the big day and helps with orientation
- Making Easter bonnets (ideal for flower or hat shops) is fun
- Make items to sell in the shop – cards and lavender bags are easy
- Planting bulbs – daffodils, tulips, and hyacinths. These can all stay inside and also be transferred to a patio when the weather is warmer.
- If you plant flowers in the garden, these could be picked and added to the flower shop display.

These are just a few suggestions but encourage your staff to be creative and they will have other ideas too. Consider ideas for group interaction and others on a very person-centred basis.

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# NEWSAGENTS MURAL

## Creating a dementia friendly environment

This design fits well into most care settings. When designing corridors in a care home, Find try to incorporate shops of interest for all residents. Whichever shop is selected, it needs to be interactive, and the magazine rack is a perfect accessory for the Newsagents.

Of course, to really attract residents to the Newsagents, there needs to be newspapers, magazines and books of personal interest so ensuring the reading material is relevant is essential. The beauty of the Newsagents is that you can include information on so many subjects – transport, sport, gardening, and fashion – all of which are highly visible with great photography. Crossword and activity style books also work well.

Ensure there is seating and a small table where someone could sit and bring them a drink to help them really enjoy the experience. Where space is available, incorporating a newsagents/bookshop with a café works really well. Use the reading information chosen to engage in conversation with the person. If you understand their interests and they can share their memories, it is great knowledge that can be used for person-centred activities as well as group interactive sessions.

Where space permits, this is a good place for group activities such as discussing the news, group reading, poetry, and even letter writing.

Do not forget that Newsagents stock more than reading materials. Often there are sweets and drinks available, a selection of cards and stationery items.

It would usually be a quiet space so keep noise to a minimum unless engaging in group activities. There are other places more suitable for the television or to have music playing.

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# PUB MURAL

## Creating a dementia friendly environment

There will be people in your care facility who went to the pub or a social club regularly as part of their weekly routine and there is no reason this should stop. Clearly alcohol cannot be available all day, but as part of a routine, a pre-dinner drink or Saturday night entertainment, it can help create great opportunities for social interaction.

I do not want to appear sexist in any way, but ladies traditionally would have met more regularly in the café for a catch up. Men however were more likely to meet in the pub. It would have given them the opportunity to talk with likeminded people about sport for example. A traditional pub, with its tap room would have had a pool table and dart board. Dominoes and cards would no doubt have been available too, even chess and draughts. These are all games that people may still enjoy playing and the pub is the perfect setting. Fun competitions can create social interaction and do not forget there could be fabulous reminiscence memories because of this.

There is always a television in the lounge, but rarely used correctly and it is difficult for anyone to watch something properly as there are so many interruptions and distractions. A large TV in the pub can be used for sporting events and films. Organise each week to ensure the fixtures are advertised and adhere to the plan. Make sure everyone is settled with a drink in time for kick off. Use the events for reminiscence opportunities. When a person is engaged, they will be more settled and need less support, making these events more enjoyable for staff too.

The pub is also a fabulous setting for parties and celebrations. Try to plan at least one festivity per month to ensure using the room becomes an integral part of life in the home.

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# SHOP MURAL

Creating a dementia friendly environment

The mural design is versatile and can be adapted to suit any type of shop. The design can be determined by the location of the home, although some are suitable for anywhere. The Sweet Shop and The Corner Shop are reminiscent for everyone and both extremely popular. The Gift Shop is great for coastal areas. The Hardware Store is great for male interaction. When designing corridors in a care home, Find try to incorporate shops of interest for all residents. Whichever shop is selected, it needs to be interactive. The market barrow or baskets can be used to display items that residents can take away.

Residents can also make items to be sold in the shops and this is a great activity. Lavender bags are a splendid example of something that could be made and then put on display in a corner shop, a chemist, or a flower shop. Cards can be made and then displayed in the post office, corner shop, flower shop or even on display in the café.

Fill the shelves with activity items such as arts and crafts, jigsaws, and books that residents can take away.

Plan the year to include important dates and organise activities to support them. Valentine's Day could include making cards and red hearts that can be displayed in the shops. Easter is another opportunity for cards, bonnets (ideal for the hat shop), and easter bunnies. There are many more dates in the diary that could be used as the foundation for activities.

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# DINING ROOM MURAL

## Creating a dementia friendly environment

This is one of our most popular murals and can be used either in the existing dining room or to create a new café for use during the day. The mural creates a space all about food and drink that is recognisable.

People living with dementia often struggle to maintain focus and are easily distracted. Everything in the dining room should be about food and drink. If you have pictures or artwork on the walls that relate to anything else, these should be removed.

### The Dining Room

Often, the door to the dining room is open and therefore, it is important that the room is easily identifiable from the corridor.

The mural as a backdrop is perfect for this. Colour coordinated with the dining chairs and table clothes.



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# CAFE/ TEAROOM MURAL

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A Tearoom or café is a wonderful place that has benefits for residents and patients. We all have different eating habits and not everyone wants three meals a day. Having drinks and snacks available throughout the day gives people a choice. Again, this is not about creating a false reality so there must be at least drinks available or people could become agitated.

Visiting a café is not only about the food and drink. For many of us, it is a social occasion, meeting with friends for a chat and watching the world go by. If someone else is having a drink, they appear to be just another person enjoying the experience. Case studies have proven that assessments are more successful in a café environment than in a bedroom. Cafes are also wonderful places for activities. Knit and Natter groups are a perfect example. Bringing together likeminded people to chat about hobbies and passions over a cup of tea work really well.

Leave reminiscence items out in visible places to encourage people to engage with them. This can lead to great conversations and appropriate stimuli.

People who are socially interactive and engaged in activities are less stressed and more content. A visit to the café adds daily routine to their lives and when a person is more independent, it also takes pressure away from staff.

It is also worth considering whether people can find the toilet on their journey to and from the cafe. A good sign at eye level can function as a prompt to use the facilities and help maintain continence. Again, this is something people would do when going out for a coffee when living at home, so it is only supporting normal and independent living for as long as possible.

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