

## Contact us

For further information or advice,  
please contact a member of staff or contact:

Alzheimer's Society  
South West Area Office International House  
Bank Road  
Kingswood  
Bristol  
BS15 8LX  
**0117 967 2975**

[alzheimers.org.uk/factsheets](http://alzheimers.org.uk/factsheets)

For information on Trust Services, visit  
[www.awp.nhs.uk](http://www.awp.nhs.uk)

## PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint,  
please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service  
(PALS).

Tel: 01225 362900  
Freephone: 0800 073 1778  
Email: [awp.pals@nhs.net](mailto:awp.pals@nhs.net)

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Avon and Wiltshire Mental  
Health Partnership  
NHS Trust

# Behaviour that challenges in dementia

When the world is a constantly bewildering place and  
we are surrounded by apparent strangers is it little  
wonder that we aren't our usual selves?

**A brief description of the difficulties the  
person living with dementia experiences and  
how this may affect the way they behave.**



This leaflet can be provided in other languages or formats, such as large print, audio or easy read on request. Contact 01249 468261

## Dementia and behaviour

Dementia can develop from a number of different processes, and so the symptoms may also be different.

In some cases, the loss of the person's normal thinking ability can mean that in certain circumstances they will interact negatively with the world around them.

In these situations the person with dementia may shout out, ask repetitive questions, behave aggressively, behave in a sexual manner or may be destructive of property. Sometimes these behaviours are more noticeable to those closest to them or worse in unfamiliar environments.

## What are the causes?

Many professionals would say that the behaviour is an indicator of an 'unmet' need. For example, the person who is afraid and aggressive when helped to undress for bed may be 'saying' that they don't understand why a stranger is fiddling with their clothes.

There are many other potential causes of challenging behaviour; loneliness, under-activity, pain, fear, over-stimulation, constipation, infection, depression or a need for contact.

## Understanding done to reduce such behaviours?

The first step to reducing such behaviours is to try to understand the 'meaning' that lies behind the behaviour.

To do this, we need to view the person as an individual with their own particular needs. Only by knowing the person, is it possible to try to understand what is causing them to behave this way.

## What we can do

If we can understand that the way the person is behaving is telling us something about themselves, then we can look at actions to reduce or stop the behaviour.

- Medications have a role to play, although there are potential side effects. Antidepressants lift mood; medications to reduce anxiety are calming; antipsychotics can control distressing thoughts or visions and memory medications can improve capacity.
- If a physical illness is causing pain, breathlessness or increased confusion, then it needs to be managed.
- Distraction can divert the person from their concerns into a more positive mind-set.
- There are many psycho-social interventions which are helpful. Validation therapy attempts to address the reality of distant memories; life-story work attempts to capture the events and people who make us who we are; interacting calmly and with respect can have a real impact.

If you are caring for someone whose behaviour is causing concern, please discuss this with a member of staff. They will either help the person you care for or they will be able to put you in contact with someone who can.