

A Guide to Care Home Signage



dementiacareproducts

The benefits of clear signage

Good clear signage in residential care homes, nursing homes and every other kind of healthcare building is a benefit to all. It helps residents, especially those with dementia, learning disabilities or sight problems, to function more effectively. This in turn means they have a better quality of life and make fewer demands on staff.

Well designed signage can also help to reassure residents and relatives about the quality of care in the home. And most importantly, in the case of an emergency it can even save lives.

This brochure looks at different types of signage which care providers responsible for residential and other healthcare premises need to consider:

- Corporate signage
- Dementia signage
- Wayfinding signage
- Health and Safety signs

Investment in the right signage can help your home to run more efficiently, save money and attract more residents.

Corporate signage

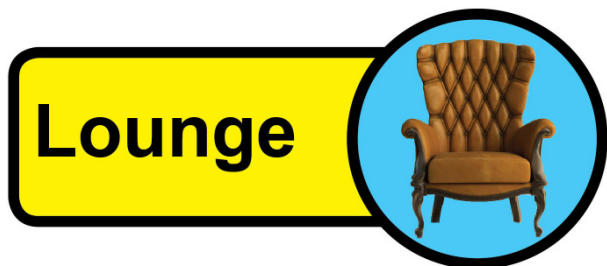
It's important for corporate signage in care homes to present a well-designed and consistent appearance. Below are some of the main reasons why it should receive the same careful attention as all the other signage types.

- External signage identifies the home, lets the local community and passers-by know its location and flags up the services on offer.
- Initial impressions count and the way a building looks says a lot about the organisation that runs it. Smart, well designed signage can attract business by prompting enquiries and visits, either from potential residents or from relatives looking for a suitable home for an elderly parent.
- It also helps to reinforce awareness-building activities such as advertising and news stories in the local press.
- There's an important safety aspect too. Police, ambulance and fire services require good signage to find a home quickly, otherwise lives could be at risk in the event of emergency.
- Internal direction and identification systems should also look smart and, where appropriate, combine with the external signage to deliver a well run, organised feel.



Dementia signage

The installation of purpose-designed, high visibility dementia signage in a residential home improves the quality of life for residents with dementia. It also brings benefits for the care provider.



A symptom of dementia is the gradual loss of ability to discriminate between colours, first at the violet end of the spectrum but only later at the red to yellow end. That is why the colour yellow features so strongly in the background of our signs, because its use in high contrast combinations is shown to offer maximum visibility for longer in every location.

People with dementia may also mix up words and letters, so the signs feature universally recognised images, reinforced by simple wording in a clear, concise typeface. Tests have also shown photographs to be more effective than illustrations.

Experience demonstrates that these signs prove their value in many ways.

“People with dementia need reassurance and clear direction. The use of purpose designed signage is a common sense measure to help them retain their dignity.”

Martin Green, Chief Executive of the English Community Care Association



For example, when a person with dementia needs the toilet, they may find it hard to locate, even if it's just a short distance away and they have used it many times before. A dementia sign on the door will help them to find the toilet and may even prompt a visit in the first place. This is important for reducing anxiety and preserving their dignity. It also means a care worker is not

diverted from another task to change their clothing or bedding and there's a saving in hot water and energy costs for bathing and laundry.



Directional dementia signage should also be used throughout the care home to provide reassurance and help residents to find their own way around. However, only put signs on those rooms that you want the residents to use, such as bedrooms, toilets, bathrooms, the dining room and lounge.

Dementia signage should not be used for staff offices, the kitchen or other areas such as the lifts that it could be dangerous for residents to visit without assistance. Signage for these areas should blend into the background.

By minimising anxiety and confusion, specialist dementia signs make the residents more self sufficient. They also help to create a warmer, friendlier environment that's more like a home than a hotel.



Wayfinding signage

Well planned direction signage is important for people who are unfamiliar with a building, or who may be confused or have a visual impairment. A successful wayfinding sign system will be clear, concise, consistent and easy for all to understand.



These signs use arrows to direct residents and visitors, but care must be taken to ensure clarity when the sign includes more than one destination. In a large home, if the route to a destination is long, additional signs may be needed along the way to reassure visitors they are on the right route.

Information is easier to understand when it is grouped logically either in alphabetical order or by floor. The name used to identify a location should also be concise (e.g. Manager, rather than Manager's Office) and consistent throughout the building. As a final point it's important, where feasible, to position signs at the same height and in the same position, whether on a door or in a corridor.

Remember, handwritten signs always look untidy, fall off easily and create an unprofessional image!



Second floor
Bedrooms 17-25
Manager
First floor
Reception
Bedrooms 1-16
Ground floor
Gardens
Way out

Health & Safety

Health and Safety signage of one kind or another is covered by legislation and mandatory in all premises where people are employed. These signs include all prohibition, warning, safety and fire safety signs.



Care providers should walk round the home regularly to assess the current status and effectiveness of the signage installed and confirm its compliance with current Health & Safety legislation. Details of what is required are available on request. Advice on the use of fire safety signs should also be obtained from your local fire authority.

Employers are required to provide specific safety signs whenever there is a risk that cannot be avoided or controlled by safe working practices. Employers are also expected to explain unfamiliar signs to their employees and tell them what they need to do when they see a safety sign.

Particular attention should be paid to the following:

- **Fire safety signs:** These must comply with the Safety Signs and Signals Regulations 1996 which require fire appliances, fire alarms or fire points to be marked with permanent sign boards in red.
- **Escape route signage:** These should be positioned clearly to indicate the exit routes and at least one sign should be visible from any place within the building.
- **Fire Exits:** It is also advisable to have a Fire Exit sign at every way out of the building.

Under the No Smoking Legislation (July 2007) no smoking signs must be displayed in a prominent position at every entrance. However, exemptions have been provided for care homes and hospices where employers may designate either individual bedrooms or rooms to be used for smoking, but only by those over 18 years old. All other parts of the building must be smoke free.



Installation

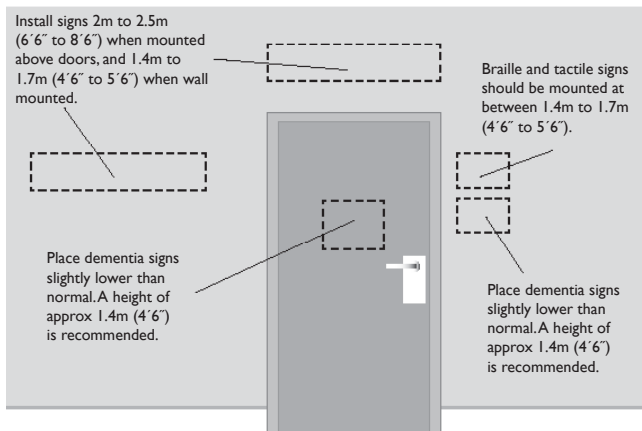
Positioning of the signs is also important. In general we recommend that the optimum height for installing normal signs is 2m to 2.5m (6'6" to 8'6") from floor level to bottom of sign when mounted above doors, and 1.4m to 1.7m (4'6" to 5'6") when wall mounted. This will help to ensure the best visibility.

Directional signs should be placed at each entry point and signs should clearly show the toilet locations.

Our dementia signs are made from durable, top quality plastic with strong acrylic adhesive on the reverse for simple and effective fitting. Just peel off the backing and position on the wall or door.



People with dementia tend to look downwards, so it is advisable to put the signs slightly lower than normal. A height of approx 1.4m (4'6") is recommended. Also where the sign is intended to direct somebody through a door, it is best practice to put the sign on the same side as the door handle.



Existing signage check list

As a residential care or nursing home owner, you should check your existing signs to ensure that:

- You have the correct signs where appropriate
- They are readily visible and located where everyone can see them
- Adequate lighting is available, especially for older people who generally require brighter illumination to read text
- They are clean, durable and weatherproof if situated outside
- Illuminated signs must be regularly checked
- Temporary safety signs (e.g. Caution wet floor) are used when necessary
- Road traffic signs are used where necessary to regulate traffic, especially when the home has a drive or car park.

Planning a signage schedule

Set out below is a simple guide to designing a new care home signage schedule:

- Get a floor plan of the building, then walk round and evaluate where signs may be needed
- Mark the location of each sign and note the dimensions of the space to ensure there is enough room for the sign
- Make a note of the required wording and give it a unique number
- Decide where symbols or Braille & tactile signs would be helpful
- Take photographs if necessary to identify the location
- Look at decision points (Where do I go now?) or long distances as they may need extra signs
- Do not forget floor numbers in stairwells and near lifts
- Do not forget the return route to the way out
- Keep the heights and positioning consistent
- Ensure good visibility and avoid glare

Contact Details

Dementiacareproducts.co.uk is operated by Makerfield Ltd.
For more information, please contact us at:

Makerfield Ltd
Tippings Farm
Lyndale Avenue,
Wilpshire
Lancashire
BBI 9LP

Telephone number 0800 999 6659

Enquiry email address: info@makerfield-ltd.co.uk

www.dementiacareproducts.co.uk

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