

March 2009

Newsletter No. 13

Brain Waves



A monthly newsletter from Innovations in Dementia CIC

The aim of these newsletters is to keep people with dementia and their allies informed about the work of Innovations in Dementia Community Interest Company.

Start making sense

Experiences of using maps and symbols
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Start making sense - experiences of using maps and symbols

Our start making sense project is funded by a Big Lottery development grant. The project is about information that might be confusing for people with dementia.

In March 2009, three people with dementia agreed to help us look at different services that use maps and symbols:

- Mick investigated using the London Underground,
- Manuela investigated visiting an art gallery, and
- Graham investigated travel agents and the brochures they provide.

These investigations covered many things as well as the use of maps and symbols. We will cover some of the other topics in future issues of the Brain Waves newsletter.

Symbols and maps are not a new invention. For example, the first tube map was devised in 1931. However, symbols are used a lot in modern culture and most young people have no problem understanding them.

Mick, Manuela and Graham had different experiences of using maps and symbols.

Mick's experience of using the map of the Underground

Mick has Alzheimer's disease and used to use the London Underground frequently to get to work. More recently, Mick has avoided using the London Underground because he has found it complicated and sometimes frightening.



Mick agreed to go with Nada on a journey on the Underground to investigate what he found difficult about using the system.

The journey Mick chose was from Charing Cross station to Putney Bridge station.

The first thing Mick did was to try to find Charing Cross station on the large map of the Underground network. Mick found it very difficult to locate the station on the map. He found all the different symbols confusing. Once on the Underground train, the map of the district line alone was no easier to use.

Manuela's experience of using the map at the Tate Britain gallery

Manuela agreed to visit the Tate Britain art gallery in London with Nada.

Manuela has Alzheimer's disease and is the sort of person who has always asked people for directions. But on this occasion, she kindly attempted to use the map provided by the gallery.

Manuela had problems using the map to establish where she was and where she could go. The map gave each room in the gallery a number - but Manuela couldn't find the numbers on the walls.

The signs on the walls to different parts of the gallery were small, high up and difficult to read.

The map used various symbols to indicate things like 'no smoking' and 'no eating'. Manuela found these difficult to understand and wonders if this is because of her age or because of her dementia.

Manuela thinks it would better to use words to get across messages such as 'no smoking'.



Graham's experience of travel agents' brochures

Graham has Pick's disease. Nada and he visited different travel agent shops in Brighton one day in March. Graham asked the travel advisors various questions about how they would help someone with dementia with their holiday plans.

He also had a look at some of the holiday brochures in the shop. Graham picked out the brochures featuring symbols as being particularly useful. The symbols were used to indicate temperature, activities available and type of holiday. He also liked brochures that showed maps of the country or the resort.

What is your experience of using maps and symbols?

We would like to know more about how people with dementia use maps and symbols. If you have any experiences, please get in touch.

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**Innovations
in Dementia**

Innovations in Dementia is run by three directors - Rachael, Steve and Nada. We are a Community Interest Company. This means that any profit we make is put back into the organisation.

We do not offer services for people with dementia. Instead we work with other organisations to make sure that people with dementia can continue to take part in their communities and have active lives.

Please share your ideas, experiences and positive stories with us.

Contact us

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