



# Dementia & Sensory Challenges

## Dementia can be more than memory



*This is grassroots' work that drew first-hand information from people with dementia's lived experiences of coping with dementia and sensory challenges.*

*The programme was instigated by Agnes Houston MBE to raise awareness and give hope to people with dementia, so that they know they are not alone facing sensory challenges connected to dementia.*

*Funded by the Life Changes Trust, Deal with Dementia collaborated with Dementia Friendly Communities CIC Sutherland, to interview and film eleven men and thirteen women with dementia. The outcome is a booklet with a dvd - specifically for people with dementia, their carers and professionals – using people with dementia's own words to describe their lived experiences around dementia and sensory challenges.*

### seeing

We found that although many people with dementia can have 20:20 vision they still sometimes experience visual challenges. This is Brain Blindness which means your eyes see, but your brain doesn't interpret the information immediately

'In shops they always have a big black mat and that looks like a hole, so it is perception and a leap of faith to actually step on it...'

"I went to use my computer and I could not see the letters on the keys ... they kept jumping ..."

### hearing

This is not about hearing loss but rather Hyperacusis which is hypersensitivity to noise and certain tones and can result in people avoiding certain situations which can lead to social isolation. This was experienced by most of those interviewed

"Can't stand music in shops.... Find myself getting very angry ... it was torture... had to leave ..."

"Difficulty dealing with loud noise..... this has a huge impact in my life.... social and family..."

### hallucinations

Visual hallucinations involves perceiving/seeing something that is not in the real world. Olfactory hallucinations involve experiences/smells that are not there. Auditory hallucinations involve voices/sounds that are not real

"I was looking at photos on the wall... I was frightened because the people in the photos were waving at me..."

"I think I heard a noise in the house and I am up looking for it and there is nothing there..."

### touch, taste & smell

During our interviews with people with dementia we found that they had noticed changes around touch, taste and smell

"I feel the cold more..."

"Everything is quite bland now so you don't want to eat..."

"My sense of smell is less so I can't tell if food is bad..."

### The 4 A's

A common thread running through all the interviews is that many people with dementia use a variety of coping strategies which can be defined as the 4 A's:

Awareness    Acceptance  
Adaptation    Avoidance

*This is merely a snap shot of the people with dementia's lived experiences.*

*To read more please contact Donna at Deal with Dementia*



**Deal With Dementia**  
272 Bath Street  
Glasgow  
Scotland, G2 4JR

Tel: 0141 353 9477  
email: [donna@dealwithdementia.com](mailto:donna@dealwithdementia.com)  
twitter: Donna Houston @dealwdementia  
Agnes Houston @agnes\_houston