

### **Activity: Behaviour as a form of communication**

For one week, observe people around you who don't have dementia. This could include family members or friends or others you may see in your community. Try to focus on how they are behaving rather than what they are saying. Look at their body language, facial expressions, gestures and behaviour and think about what they are communicating. Notice the reactions they get from people around them.

Take notes to help you record the range of behaviours you observe and see how people express themselves in different ways.

A person who is angry may become red faced and shout. Others may walk away without saying a word or become quiet, stare and keep completely still. Writing that someone is angry is not enough. Describe how they are showing their anger.

Repeat the activity for people with dementia. You may be surprised to see that their behaviour is not that different to how you would react if you were experiencing the same difficulties.

It is important to remember that dementia may affect a person's memory, language, reasoning and thinking skills. So you may have to be creative and flexible in understanding the meaning behind the behaviour.

#### **Trainer's notes**

This exercise is suited to individuals – but participants could report back at a group session after their week of observation and discuss together as a group.

As a one-off group exercise, you could ask participants to list a range of emotions (for example anger, frustration, sadness, confusion, happiness) and ask the group to discuss and explain how they would express these emotions through behaviour.

Examples could include: If you are angry how do you behave? What would your facial expression be? What would your body language indicate? What gestures would you use? How would you react to others trying to help?

Ask the group to consider individual people with dementia (no names) who they are caring for or supporting.

Discuss the various types of behaviour they have experienced and ask them to make a note of what they have seen. Now compare the information about themselves and the people with dementia. This will help them to understand that people with dementia use behaviour to communicate their feelings in a similar way.