

## **Activity: Sight loss and dementia**

If you wear spectacles, don't put them on when you get up tomorrow.

How easy is it to do the usual things? And some new things?

How does it feel?

If you don't wear spectacles, wear sunglasses indoors. How does it feel?

You are likely to be able to do routine things quite easily, but new things will call on your concentration and you may feel disabled, lost and disoriented. You may find you are trying to see, straining and getting irritated. Your instinct will be to take them off to see more clearly. Take a moment to consider how this may feel if you couldn't take them off and you had additional difficulties such as cognitive impairment, where recognising places and people is already difficult.

This puts into perspective how valuable your sight is, if only slightly impaired. Supporting someone with dementia to have the right glasses and regular sight tests should be a key aspect of a person's care planning.

### **Trainer's notes**

If running a group session on this topic, allow participants time to read this section on dementia and sight loss. Look at some of the additional resources in this section to feel more confident running this session.

Before the session try to find out the number of people in the care home or other environment that (i) have sight loss (ii) need to wear glasses and (iii) had a sight test in the last year. Are there gaps in your organisation's knowledge in this area? This fact-finding may help identify actions for all to take, such as noting sight loss specifically in an assessment process.

The exercise is about trying to empathise with someone with sight loss and the additional difficulties someone with dementia may experience.

To run the above activity with a group, ask for a volunteer or volunteers to wear a pair of prescription spectacles not prescribed for them to demonstrate the effects of wearing the wrong spectacles.

Discuss best practice and demonstrate how applying a coded label to residents' spectacles will help solve problems with residents wearing wrong spectacles – such as falls and not engaging with their environment.

Discuss whether there are things in the care setting/environment that could be changed to support sight loss. Are there dark areas in the building? Could someone benefit from a talking clock or a talking books service?

Then, ask participants to create an action plan for ways they may change their practice or change the environment to support those with sight loss.

Try to establish what resources or support might be needed to do this, and whether this is realistic. It may be that you want to contact a specialist organisation for some extra advice or to run some specialist training.