

Dementia – finding your way out of public toilets

Angela Clayton-Turner is the honorary president of AGILE. She tells us how she is becoming known as the ‘toilet lady’

I am beginning to be known as the toilet lady. When my husband (who had Alzheimer’s disease) was still able to independently use a public toilet I frequently had to rescue him as he couldn’t find his way out. All that was needed was a “Way Out” sign on the door. Whenever I talk about this people say “I need that too” and describe how they have ended up in broom cupboards. Easy enough for us to sort out but for someone with dementia that may be impossible and they may panic and become agitated.

One time I was recounting this in a meeting about dementia friendly retail, jointly led by Sainsbury’s. Hurrah! It has taken some time but Sainsbury’s are now installing “Way Out” signs in all their supermarket toilets. This hit the headlines in November and culminated in a spot on BBC Breakfast News on November 11th.



But, please don’t let this be a one day wonder. Be aware of potential problems for people with cognitive difficulties when you use a public toilet and feed this back to the organisation. Toilets are even more complicated now with numerous ways of flushing and acquiring the water when hand washing. Mirrors are now frequently used as design features rather than for function and this can be very disorientating. Also is there good signage to point the way to the toilets and, just as importantly, to point the way back to where you came from? Please add your voice to mine.