



Innovations  
in Dementia



# Mystery Shop Rochester Huguenot Museum Report on local DEEP group visit

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## Introduction

Rica, experts in age and ability research, have been funded by the John Ellerman Foundation to develop and carry out consumer research with people with dementia. This project is in partnership with Innovations in Dementia (iD) and local groups developed through The Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project (DEEP).

iD is a social enterprise that works with people with dementia, as partners and volunteers, to develop and test ideas that will enhance the lives of people with dementia. iD facilitates DEEP which brings together over 50 local groups of people with dementia across the UK. These local groups all share a desire to change their communities to make them better for people with dementia. Many have expressed a desire to get involved in providing consumer feedback, but do not know how to achieve this aim. This partnership project between Rica, iD and local DEEP groups offers an opportunity to share expertise both locally and nationally to deliver real change for consumers with mild to moderate dementia.

## Background

The Huguenot Museum in Rochester is actively committed to ensure their galleries and events are accessible to as many people as possible. As part of this commitment they approached the local Kent DEEP group to help them make the museum more dementia friendly.

The mystery shopping of the Huguenot Museum in Rochester was one of the measures as part of their Medway Dementia Action Alliance action plan. This is

part of a broader aim to make provision of information, services and facilities accessible to people with dementia (whilst in public places of interest).

It is important to note that this mystery shop was undertaken in a spirit of collaboration with the Huguenot Museum and was not intended to take the role of an inspection.

## **About the Huguenot Museum**

The Huguenot Museum in Rochester Kent is dedicated to telling the story of Huguenot history in Britain. The Huguenots were French Protestants living in 17<sup>th</sup> century Catholic France who were being increasingly persecuted for following their religion. Many Huguenots escaped to England where they were well received and brought with them skills in finance, industry, medicine, arts and crafts.

The museum occupies the top two floors of a building situated in the High Street and can be reached by both stairs and lift. It was officially opened in July 2015. There are two large rooms and a connecting hallway with exhibits following a rough timeline from the late 1500s through to present day.

## **The Mystery Shoppers**

All of our shoppers belong to the local Kent DEEP group called 'Memorybilia' and live within 15 miles of the Huguenot Museum. Two came with their partners, one with his assistant and one (Jane) came on her own. Three were men (Peter, Geoff and Andrew). They all had Alzheimer's disease or another type of dementia with their ages ranging from the mid-50s to late 60s. All the names used in this report are pseudonyms.

## **Method**

We arranged for four separate visits by our mystery shoppers to the museum spaced at regular time slots throughout the day at approximately one hour and fifteen minute intervals. These visits started at 10:15 am and finished at 4:45 pm on Thursday 8th October 2015.

Although the museum knew that there was to be mystery shopping on that day, they were not told the times of the shopper's visits. It is noted that the

staff would in all likelihood be able to uncover who the visitors were, however they would not know for sure. This uncertainty was thought to be important to add an air of authenticity to the visits, for both the staff and shoppers.

At a Memorybilia meeting prior to the day of the mystery shop the shoppers discussed the proposed shopping scenario and were asked to give their thoughts.

The visit was arranged in three parts: an initial exploration, a break for discussion and finally a revisit accompanied by the researcher. The following instructions were given to the shoppers.

“When you arrive at the museum you should make your way to the entrance, purchase your ticket and begin your initial exploration of the exhibits as if visiting the museum of your own volition. Feel free to ask for as much or little information or assistance from museum staff as needed. During this time we encourage that you take notes (written, audio or photo) about your likes, dislikes and anything interesting or confusing. Once complete there will be a break for refreshments, to meet the team and to talk in general terms about your experience of the visit. Finally you’ll be asked to discuss and revisit the points of interest noted in your initial exploration with a researcher.”

The shoppers were given an arrival time to visit the museum and complete the mystery shop. They were met downstairs away from the museum entrance by a researcher who introduced themselves and let them know they would be following them from a distance.

The mystery shoppers were paid £50 (which included their travel costs) as a thank you for their participation. See Annex A for a more complete description of the method.

## Initial experiences and thoughts

**Peter & Tina** – Peter took his time during the visit and lingered at the exhibits, he later said that he was very interested in history and wanted to read each of the information cards. He also said that because of the way his mind works it takes him longer to read and absorb information and consequently he can feel under pressure from other visitors who are following him. Peter found it difficult to connect the exhibits in the large cabinet in the first room to the associated information card. He cited the Bayeux Tapestry as a good example of how headphones might be used to deliver information as you walked along the exhibits.

Peter remarked that he became a little overloaded as he got near the room with the talking monologues. He found the audio streams along with the many other points of information added to this sense of being overwhelmed.

Peter suggested the use of headphones to present the information about the exhibits as the visitors passed through the museum might help, especially if you could somehow rewind each clip. Peter also found the voting box, asking the visitor if they thought they had Huguenot ancestry, a little confusing.

**Geoff & Carol + guide dog under training** – Unlike Peter, Geoff found the numbering of the exhibits to their cards quite a useful device which worked well for him. However he noted that some exhibits had no number or card which could cause frustration. Geoff was also a little confused by the voting question. He also missed the invitation to try out the hat and cane exhibit.

Geoff spent some time at the video monologue and thought this was interesting but found the mouse on the screen misleading as he thought he would be able to control and rewind the video.

Geoff thought the font size was generally good, although he did find it an issue when he couldn't get up close to the placards with smaller font.

**Andrew & Diane** – Andrew was particularly affected by the environment and things like carpet texture and pattern had a huge impact on his sense of stability. Andrew relied on his carer to read to him what was on the information cards and boards which made the visit quite public. This was not

seen as an issue by Andrew. However the role of the carer or partner is brought in to focus here.

Andrew remarked that the visit gave him a strong sense of 'Deja vu' with this visit to the museum reigniting memories. He was brought up in Rochester which probably added to these feelings.

Andrew found the echo in the monologue room difficult to contend with when trying to listen to the video pictures. He also had difficulty standing up after sitting down on the very low chairs.

**Jane** – Jane wanted to understand how to use the interactive exhibits. For example whilst at the video monologues she was looking for a play and rewind feature. She also supported the idea of headphones and talked about her visiting Stonehenge as a good example of headphone use. Jane also mentioned the need to use a larger font size (14 point) and said there was nobody inside the exhibition space to ask about the exhibits.

Jane suggested maybe the use of a kiosk with headphones or local sound. She also commented on the busyness of the museum with so much to take in. She felt the navigation and lighting were good.

## **Overall Findings**

Finding from the mystery shopping have been arranged into four headings; environment, exhibits, information and combination effects. Some of the findings could be dependent on multiple factors such as font size and or contrast and the lighting, or the room acoustics and talking exhibits. These combination effects are discussed a little at the end of this section.

### **1. Environment**

#### **Layout**

The physical layout of the museum was found to be easy to follow by our shoppers with all going through the exhibition the correct way. There is one point of uncertainty at the very start, where a turn to the left could easily lead the visitor through the museum exhibits in reverse chronology. Although explained by staff when purchasing a ticket, the lack of explicit direction at the entry point was mentioned by some of our shoppers. One highlighted the

potential confusion of the word 'Escape' (figure 1) written in big letters as part of the first exhibit, being visible in the first room.

### Layout, rooms and lighting



Figure 1



Figure 2

### Rooms and lighting

Andrew drew our attention to the height of the ceilings in the museum and the effect that these can have on creating echoes. This had an impact in the room with the talking picture frame. Andrew found it difficult to concentrate on listening to the picture frame audio stream whilst other visitors were talking in the same room. This was further compounded by the room's acoustics (figure 2).

Our shoppers all considered the lighting to be good, noting the lack of shadows which can cause difficulties for people with dementia.

Geoff

**"It was not too bright, it was easier to focus on the exhibits, sometimes you go in to a place with a bright light and it tends to occupy your vision rather than looking at what's on the table"**

### Entrance and stairs

The entrance to the building on ground level does not offer much indication to the presence of the museum on the second and third floors. This was highlighted by our last visitor, Jane, who the researcher failed to meet in the lobby downstairs. She talks about not being aware of the museum and having to ask someone where it was. She offers some advice to entice the casual passer-by to find out more.

Jane

**“Are you a descendant of the Huguenots? ... Advertise it more”**

On reaching the museum on the second floor our shoppers found the payment desk without trouble.

For some forms of dementia the design and arrangement of flooring can create a challenge as some patterns, textures and high contrasts between connecting floors can cause difficulty with spatial perception. Andrew said the carpet used throughout the museum was good for him, and appreciated the support of the rails on the stairs.

### **Seating**

One of our shoppers who sat down on the chairs provided to listen to the talking picture frame had difficulty getting up afterwards. The talking frame was positioned quite low with the corresponding chairs short. Some forms of dementia will affect muscular control.

### **Staff and ambiance**

The welcome from the staff at the entrance to the museum was friendly and informative. Jane was particularly at pains to say how helpful the cashier was in answering her questions and putting her at ease. The friendliness and demeanour of staff is of particular importance to our shoppers who appreciated the staff being approachable.

When asked about how the museum felt to our shoppers they all responded positively.

Andrew

**“I like the whole thing really, it’s modern and comfortable, and it’s quiet it gives you ... you know, able to think quietly”**

Jane

**“It’s very relaxed”**

## 2. Exhibits

### Story

The arrangement of the exhibits made sense to our shoppers who quickly picked up on the timeline organised from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century through to the present day.

Geoff

**“It seemed to flow naturally; it built up a picture of how it happened”**

### Interactive

Where an exhibit encourages some form of interaction with the visitor, either passively as when sitting down to listen to the talking picture frame (figure 3), or actively with placing of a token into the voting box (figure 4), clear explanations are needed. Our shoppers disliked ambiguity or not understanding the purpose behind an interaction, they needed to ‘get it’.

#### Interactive Exhibits



Figure 3



Figure 4

## 3. Information

### Audio

All of our shoppers made comments about the use of audio which was generally considered to be a desirable way of receiving information. Three of our shoppers suggested the use of headphones which, if designed carefully, could address a number of concerns at once. This is talked about in the next section.

## Written

The fonts used on the wall were large enough to read (Figure 5), however those used on the large cabinet (Figure 6) were too small for one of our visitors. In both cases the contrast with an uncluttered white background was good.

### Font size and contrast



Figure 5



Figure 6

Jane

**“I would like to have known more about the artefacts in the glass cabinet, but unfortunately the writing was too small”**

## Association

Peter remarked on the difficulty he had with knowing which card in front of the large cabinet was associated with which exhibit inside. The cards were numbered and a corresponding number could be found positioned next to the exhibits.

Although this was not seen as a problem to the other shoppers, it does highlight the need to maximise the strength of the ties between exhibits and information.

## 4. Combination Effects

Our visitors positively remarked on the interesting content in the museum which they found engaging. It was apparent by the time spent at many of the exhibits that their concentration was focused towards understanding the information associated to the points of interest. One of the characteristics of dementia is in how easy it is to be distracted by multiple demands on (a

person's) attention. The effect of such distractions can leave the person feeling frustrated and disorientated. Peter had to miss the last few cards on the cabinet because of the competing information streams.

This is explained by Peter and illustrated in figures 7 & 8 below.

Peter

**“Something that I did find difficult ... as you got to the end of that [exhibit cabinet with information cards on front] ... there was a television video going on, and I found I couldn't concentrate on [reading the cards], I can only concentrate on one thing at a time”**

Cabinet with information cards

Talking picture frame in adjacent room

Multi-modal information overload

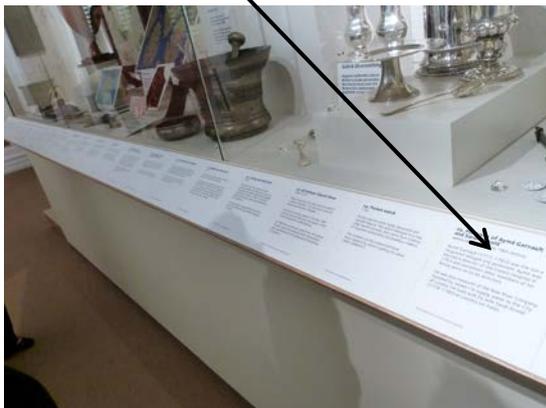


Figure 7



Figure 8

## Recommendations

Without exception all of our shoppers had a very positive experience at the Huguenot Museum and said they would like to visit again. Their insights and suggestions were given in the light of improving an experience which they already got a lot out of and should not in any way be viewed as negative criticism.

### Headphones

The use of headphones could help remove some of the other distractions present and provide a more immersive experience. The ability to playback an audio clip could further help to clarify something if a point was missed. The use

of headphones in museums can no doubt come in a variety of designs; from static to mobile, proximity triggered to user self-selecting. Whatever the design, if configured sensitively headphones have the potential to help improve the museum visit for people with dementia.

### **Association**

Where information is connected to an exhibit or collection of exhibits the use of devices and design to make strong associations can be of great help. Undoubtedly, this is where the skill of the curator can have a significant impact.

### **Clear direction**

All instructions should be, where possible, explicit and unambiguous. This is of particular importance when asking for some kind of interaction with an exhibit.

### **Fonts (sizes and contrast)**

Wherever possible text size should be at least 12pt without serifs, the ideal being 14pt. Text should have clear contrast with the background with text on image backgrounds to be avoided where possible.

### **Further information**

University of Stirling

<http://dementia.stir.ac.uk/>

DEEP guides to support the involvement of people with dementia.

<http://dementivoices.org.uk/resources/deep-guides/>

Innovations in Dementia

<http://www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/resources.htm>

The Housing Learning and Improvement Network

<http://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingandDementia/Design/>

Gov.uk

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/416780/HBN\\_08-02.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416780/HBN_08-02.pdf)

## Thanks

Central to this work is the willing collaboration of our shoppers to express their thoughts and feelings freely and be open to further exploration of their opinions. We would like to thank all of our shoppers and the other members of the local Memorybilia group who entered into this spirit of open discourse and who were a pleasure to work with.

We would also like to thank the staff at the Huguenot Museum for making their facilities available to us and for facilitating the smooth running of the day. And finally our thanks go to the Maidstone and Medway Alzheimer's Society whose support was instrumental in making this work happen.

## Partners

**The Huguenot Museum** in Rochester tells the story of Britain's first refugees. The Huguenots were French Protestants who fled France in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century to escape persecution. The Huguenot Museum details their persecution, their escape to England and the trades, crafts and skills they brought with them. They have an archive room for visitors to conduct their own family history research using the museum resources. Huguenot Museum, 95 High Street, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1LX Tel: 01634 789347 [www.huguenotmuseum.org](http://www.huguenotmuseum.org)

**Rica** is a consumer research charity that works with older and disabled people and aims to improve products and services to ensure inclusion and access. [www.rica.org.uk](http://www.rica.org.uk)

**Innovations in Dementia** - is a community interest company that works nationally with people with dementia, partner organisations and professionals with the aim of developing and testing projects that will enhance the lives of people with dementia. Innovations in Dementia facilitates the Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project (DEEP), a UK network of groups of people with dementia who want to influence policy and practice. [www.innovationsindementia.org.uk](http://www.innovationsindementia.org.uk)

**Memorybilia** – is a service user involvement group facilitated by Alzheimer's Society and Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT). The group is made of people with dementia from Kent and Medway and their

expertise helps to inform the health and social care services that they use, as well as the services and amenities that are in their local community, among many others.

**Alzheimer's Society** works to combat stigma about dementia and calls for other organisations to help people with dementia make everyday choices.

[www.alzheimers.org.uk/localinfo](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/localinfo) Tel 01622 747181

**Medway Dementia Action Alliance** – The Medway Dementia Action Alliance brings together local organisations to create a local community response to dementia.

[www.dementiaaction.org.uk/south\\_east/11444\\_medway\\_dementia\\_action\\_alliance](http://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/south_east/11444_medway_dementia_action_alliance)

## Annex A.

Method - Mystery shopping at Huguenot museum in Rochester

Person with dementia = Shopper, Carer or family member = Friend

Overview

The mystery shopping of the Huguenot museum in Rochester by the local DEEP group is arranged in three parts: an initial visit and discovery of the exhibits, a break for refreshments and opportunity to meet the team and the final part is to revisit points of interest accompanied by the researcher. This sequence might take between an hour and an hour and a half.

Shopper and Friend (if present)

Pre-visit (motivation)

It would be really useful for our shoppers to have some prior thought of a reason for their visit. This might just be 'out of general curiosity' or 'interested in historical events and people' or .... If they have none except for 'to encourage local places to be more dementia friendly', then that is ok as well.

There are a couple of forms that would need to be completed by the Shopper.

- **Consent form** – explains the task and how we would handle the data collected which needs to be signed by the Shopper. We need to have this signed and returned to us before the visit.
- **Payment form** – the Shopper to enter their bank details for BACS transfer of participant fees OR Shopper's home address for Rica to send a cheque to. This can be either sent with the consent form or handed over on the day during the visit.

These can be presented to the Shopper to fill in and sign before the visit and brought with them. The researcher would have extra copies which can be completed during the visit.

Day of visit

**Part 1** - Exploration (approx. 30 mins)

The Shopper and Friend (if present) should arrive at the museum on one of the pre-arranged time slots and make their way to the museum entrance. Once there they should purchase a ticket and start their exploration of the museum. During this phase the shopper is left to discover the exhibits and will act as much as possible as if they were visiting any other museum of their own volition. In effect this will mean:

- If the Shopper would normally ask a staff member for more information or assistance and they feel the need to do so, they should.
- Although the museum staff will be aware that some mystery shoppers will be visiting they will not know who they are at this stage. If they do become aware they will make no special provision for the Shoppers other than they would for any other visitor.

One way where this visit may differ a little from a normal visit to the museum by the Shopper is that we encourage the Shopper to take note of things they like, dislike or find interesting or confusing. This can be done by jotting down a note with a pen and paper or by taking a photo with a camera phone.

Once the mystery shopper has completed their visit they should make their way to the museum entrance where they will be met by the researcher and member of the museum who will guide them to the side room for refreshments.

## **Part 2 – Reflection (approx. 20mins)**

The Shopper and Friend (if present) will use the time in the side room to relax and get to know the other people. This is an informal part of the visit where there is no need to strictly follow the agenda. After a little while (approx. 10 mins) we will ask for any participant payment forms and the permission of everyone to record the following conversation.

- We will ask the Shopper in general terms how they felt during the visit.
- We will ask the Shopper which exhibits they liked or disliked.
- We will enquire about the environment such as lighting, rooms, stairs etc.

- There is space here for the museum to provide the researcher with two or three questions if they have not been already covered. E.g. about toilets, seating or lighting.

Once the museum's questions are answered we will ask the Shopper about how many notes and/or photos they have. This will lead to the researcher and shopper visiting the place which the note or photo references.

Note: The questions asked of the Shoppers will be semi structured and informed through active listening.

### **Part 3 – Revisit (approx. 20mins)**

This is an opportunity to be in-situ where the points of interest exist which should help explain the why, what and how. Once all the points of interest have been revisited and discussed the Shopper and Friend (if present) will be thanked and make their exit.

#### Researcher

Our researcher will need to be able to identify the Shopper and will meet them at the building's entrance. Our researcher will be in the museum taking notes but will be very much in the background.

#### Times of visits

The day of the visits is 8<sup>th</sup> October at intervals of:

10:15 – 11:45, 12:00 – 1:30, 1:45 – 3:15, 3:30 – 4:45.

## **Rica**

[Rica](http://www.rica.org.uk) is a national research charity, expert in age and ability research and dedicated to providing independent information. It researches and publishes consumer reports, based on rigorous research and providing practical information for disabled and older consumers. It also works with manufacturers, service providers, regulators and policy makers to improve products and services. Rica's aim is to increase their awareness of the needs of disabled and older consumers through specialist research.