



Design for dementia care

The Lodge: public space

Buckshaw Retirement Village Chorley, Lancs

The Lodge is a purpose-built residential and nursing home, designed for dementia care.

Lorraine Haining, Head of Dementia Services, The Lodge

The main feature really is the shape of the building. It's been built in a triangular shape so that it offers people the opportunity to walk right through the building. In the centre of our triangle we have a fantastic open plan garden space which is very secure, but it also offers people the opportunity to go out into the garden and use it independently. We have two communities on our ground floor and two communities on our upper floor, and in the centre of that we have a place where everybody comes together, called the Market Square, and that's really about people joining together to enjoy life and, you know, to occupy themselves.

Wide, well-lit corridors are central to the dementia-friendly design.

We try to use natural light where we can. All round the outside of the building the windows are down to the floor so that, you know, anything that comes through the daylight is the best that we can get it, but the corridors down the middle of the communities don't have any natural light, but we have them very well lit so that people can see, you know, where they're going and they can see what's around them, if you like. The space in the corridors as well, there's sometimes they're eight feet wide so it allows people to pass without any interactions. People often have spatial awareness issues that are in our nursing communities so they might not move out of the way when somebody comes, or they might walk into people so, because of the space there, we avoid most of those conflicts.

Lucy Ewbank, Care Assistant

When a resident gets agitated we often take them down the corridors because it's a quiet place usually, you know just to have a walk down, and they have a sit down where like the birds are, and just sit in a different room. And it's more quiet, and you can talk to them more easily if you just take them out of the noise and just sit down them somewhere quiet. It's so much better to just get through to them and calm them down, and then take them back and they're so much more relaxed.

Lorraine Haining, Head of Dementia Services, The Lodge

We've tried to go for plain coloured carpets, we've not got anything that's got a pattern on it, and we've tried to run that through the building, you know, particularly in the communal areas. We have gone for some wooden flooring in the dining area, really for cleanliness reasons, and we've tried to minimise the connection between those two. We had silver gripper bars originally separating the two areas. However they were actually, people were finding them quite a hazard really. People were stepping over them, thinking it was a step up, so we actually did a little bit of research and we found that the gold-coloured gripper bars were less reflective, so we've actually replaced them, and people are having less problems with that. We very rarely find people trying to step up over it now. Although we have open plan areas each space is very distinct so you still know it's a dining room, you still know it's a lounge, you still know it's an activity area. There are open plan book spaces between each area to make it distinct, but that then offers cues to people who are maybe sitting in the lounge, they see something happening in the activity area, and then they can actually, that draws them into the activities. So people actually can see all around them what's happening.

Lucy Ewbank, Care Assistant

It's brilliant to see what's going on around you, and to make sure that, you know, the residents are safe. We can look after one resident but while we're looking after one we can keep an eye on the rest of them, so that's brilliant.

Lorraine Haining, Head of Dementia Services, The Lodge

There is some evidence to show that people with dementia don't do well in an enclosed space with closed doors 'cos they don't always get up and look out, whereas if you actually have an open plan space people will actually get up and move into areas. It's like visual cues so that they actually engage and interact with what's happening in the environment.

Good design is not only about continuity, it's also about contrast.

Lorraine Haining, Head of Dementia Services, The Lodge

Any toilet area in the whole of The Lodge has a bright yellow door. It's just a colour cue that we find actually helps quite a lot of people with dementia. It doesn't work for everybody but it does work for quite a few people, and we find it maintains independence and it also preserves dignity 'cos people can then find a toilet quite easy. In relation to doors that we don't want people to use, like the sluice, we colour them the same as the natural walls that so it doesn't draw people towards that. Everybody has their own front door, just like in an apartment block really. What we've done is we've sourced a different colour for every single apartment door in the building, and that was no mean feat. They also have a number plate on it that's easy to see, it stands out, and some people have also, they've got little way-finders so they have little pots or things outside their front door, like you would have at home. When they see the little pot or the umbrella stand they remember that that's where they live.

Lucy Ewbank, Care Assistant

For the residents to find their own way to their apartment is really good because their independence is boosted again, you know. They found their own room with their own furniture, with their own toiletries and stuff, their own clothes.