



Design for dementia care

Elmhurst: refurbishing an existing home

Elmhurst Residential Care Home Ulverston, Cumbria

Elmhurst was purpose built in 1983, to accommodate forty physically frail people.

Now demand has shifted. Thirty of today's residents have some degree of dementia.

But the original building wasn't designed to be dementia-friendly.

Beckside was the first wing to incorporate dementia-friendly design features.

Jayne Allonby, Registered Manager, Elmhurst

One of our problems here was keeping the home odour-free and so we looked at the flooring initially. We looked at something that was homely, that was serviceable, that was practical, that was easy for people with mobility issues to move around on, and so we came up with the laminate flooring. From choosing that, then that really sort of impacted on how everything else went, because once you started to choose one flooring, then you can't have a great difference between any other flooring, so what went through the corridors had to mingle in with the bedrooms, the bathrooms and the lounge areas, so that was where we started really. From there we sort of worked up. We looked at contrasting paintwork, plain papers, contrasting doorframes, skirting boards and things like that. Throughout the unit what's stood out to me is the lighting. The lighting's just been phenomenal and what a difference, 'cos they were really dark corridors before, you know people couldn't find their way very well. It just seemed such a dull place, and the lighting has just absolutely lifted it.

Residents' front doors now have contrasting designs and colours, which aid recognition.

Doors to utility rooms are painted to blend in with the walls.

Bathroom and toilet doors are painted yellow, so they really stand out.

Jayne Allonby, Registered Manager, Elmhurst

We did have a long debate about the colours of the toilet seats because they should be a big contrast to your white seats, so we went through blacks, blues. We found that the last colour people retain is red so the County Council made a decision that we would have red, and I had this vision of red and white just looking absolutely horrendous really, and then they said we had to edge it with black tiles, and you just got this vision of your red, white and black and oh, it's going to look really awful. But when we accessorised them with the different towels and the pictures, and things, it all seemed to come together and they do look absolutely, I mean I don't think that they'd look, apart from you've got to have obviously the rails and everything else, which were co-ordinated with the seats. I think they look really nice and sort of personal now.

Residents had some choice over the colours of wallpaper and furnishings.

Jayne Allonby, Registered Manager, Elmhurst

We had a selection of papers and we chose what contrasted with those. So we said if you would like this paper, then you'll need to either have this chair or this chair, this curtain or that commode to contrast. We could say yes, you can have a choice of this, this and this, but that is a restricted choice really.

Susan Garnett, Support Worker, Elmhurst

It's very important that the residents did get involved with the choosing of the colour schemes and the door fronts and things because this is their home, and they've got to feel as if they really belong here.

The refurbished rooms incorporate dementia-friendly furniture and fittings.

Relative

What are we going to put on today? Do you think we need a coat?

I think the refitting has had a very positive impact on Mum. She seems a lot calmer and happier than she was. She likes the effect of being able to see into her wardrobes and the lights coming on as she goes towards them. With the old wardrobes it was a bit difficult for her to see her clothes. Now she can have more of a choice herself, and she likes her drawers, being able to see into the drawers as well.

The mirror over the sink can be hidden behind dementia-friendly wooden doors.

And each of the rooms is fitted with a range of assistive technologies.

Relative

The alarm on the door is good, it's good for me as well to know that in the night when she is up that somebody's aware that she's up and about, because when there's limited staff on in the evenings it's quite worrying that knowing she wanders, if she was to get up and fall or something, at least people know that she's out and about, and walking round the unit.

When residents are out and about, there's plenty for them to look at.

Resident

It's nice looking in here. There's a record, look. James Oliver.

Resident

29 King Street, Ulverston.

Resident

Reminds me of when I was younger.

Carer

Who recognises this cup? Margaret? Oxo cube. Wouldn't like to think how old that is. I think it lifts up at the front, Margaret. That's it.

Communal spaces now feel much more homely and welcoming.

Resident

Oxo cubes.

Carer

Yeah. Use them in your cooking. Advertising postcards.

Jayne Allonby, Registered Manager, Elmhurst

The key changes in the lounge area were, again, the chairs contrasting with the curtains, and the other big thing was the fireplace, so to create that sort of more homely lounge-type setting was to put a fireplace in.

The refurb to the kitchen, that was a really big thing, to have the glass-fronted cabinets, everybody could find things a lot easier, the fridge so you could see what was in the fridge.

A lot of consideration was given to the colour of the crockery.

Eventually we came up with blue because we had yet to find a food that was blue really, and that really did, people were eating better, they could see the food a lot clearer. People's weight was increasing as well. We realised that the waste of food had dramatically reduced really since this and, not only that, people were a lot more independent at eating as well.

Susan Garnett, Support Worker, Elmhurst

I think with the enhancement of the crockery, and the whole setting and surrounds, mealtimes now really are a lovely time of the day, and there's a lot of conversation and, you know, you learn so much about them and their lives.

Even the garden has been transformed, making it much more dementia-friendly.

Carer

You'll get me into trouble, you will. I've got you.

Resident

She knows what I'm doing.

Jayne Allonby, Registered Manager, Elmhurst

We've got now an area outside where we can all spend time together, whether it be having afternoon tea or games, or whatever, but it's something other than being in the same lounge. It's an outside area that we do really use and people really enjoy.

It has to be obviously accessible for all, so we had to look at removing all the raised kerbs that were in there, creating a wheelchair-accessible pathway through. We needed to look at raised beds, so even people that weren't able to walk could actually still participate in picking the herbs. It looks at all the senses really, so when you're out there, you know, you can smell the herbs, you can hear the birds, hear the wind chimes. And you'll often find in the summer the door's always propped open, and people'll go out and they'll come back in, and say oh, the bird seed needs topping up, and so people have really sort of embraced the garden.

Susan Garnett, Support Worker, Elmhurst

Joe, tea or coffee, love? Tea or coffee?

The renovation and the improvements on the unit have made a much more relaxed environment. The residents are much more relaxed as well, and you seem to get a better relationship with them.

Carer

You did your netball as well, didn't you?

Susan Garnett, Support Worker, Elmhurst

You just feel like it's one big family really.

Jayne Allonby, Registered Manager, Elmhurst

I think the residents are really happy and the key thing for them is they get up in a morning and they'll say what they want to do now. People are really telling us what they want from life now which is very good.