



Design for dementia care

Elmhurst: looking back on the refurbishment process.

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During the refurbishment it was very difficult, particularly for some individuals. Because we couldn't empty the unit, people were coming off the unit in the morning when the contractors arrived, they were eating their meals throughout the building, spending the day throughout the building in areas that they weren't particularly comfortable in, or didn't want to be in, and when they saw things had been taken up, like their flooring, do you know what I mean, obviously that caused some level of discomfort. However, as they saw things progressing, I think that sort of, it made up for the disruption really, so as they saw the new kitchen going in, and we tried to involve people, so as things were happening we'd take them back to the unit that night and look, look what the workmen have done, we've managed to achieve this today and it's going to look so much better, and so we tried to obviously give as much reassurance as we could.

I think the biggest thing was when the furniture was being delivered, the furniture was delayed in the delivery, and so we'd emptied everybody's cupboards and wardrobes onto the beds and that, you know, people then, what are you doing, are you packing my goods, are you, you know, are you throwing me out, what's happening? You know, until the actual new furniture came and we said look, we've got new furniture, we're going to put everything back, and it's all going to be alright so, yeah, we did have some difficulties there.

I've noticed that the staff now use their time differently in that, because of the signage and everything else, people are more independent so they'll now maybe use the toilet independently, they way-find a lot easier, they'll undertake tasks independently, setting the tables, various things, so obviously that's impacted on the staff time that's available to spend with people, either on a one-to-one or in a group setting, to undertake activities.

If I look at the confidence levels of people, and the reduction in aggressive incidents, I think it's phenomenal really, and I think to walk onto the unit you do get the feeling that people are very happy to be here, and I think that they have a very fulfilling life, and it's very rare that people will be down or upset, or we can soon get round it. Yeah, I mean I just think you only just need to spend some time on there to get that feeling of, you know, we're happy and we're confident, and we love life, and we're going to do this and we're going to do that.