Designing the Environment for Connection to Nature

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Chalfont Design

• **Research** quality of life in dementia - What is enjoyable, important and meaningful?
• **Investigate** care environments - How does the design of architecture, landscape and care practice impact residents, staff and visitors?
• **Design** places to **Enjoy**, that **Enable** and **Empower**.
• **Teach** care practice how to engage with nature.
• **Promote** and **Publish** places of good practice.

Evidence-based design since 1989
Greenbelt, USA and Sheffield, UK

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One

Benefits

Scientific evidence for the benefits of plants, exercise, fresh air and sunshine

Benefits of exercise and movement include improved sleep patterns, mood, memory, behaviour, appetite, strength, agility, balance and delayed onset of dementia.

Nature and being outdoors provides or improves sensory stimulation, orientation, circadian rhythms, blood pressure, attentiveness, verbal expression, contemplation, restoration, sleep, mood, agitation, aggression & behaviour.

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Companionship: A visiting crow

‘Should see him fly while... dear me, (shouts) Come on! Come on little’en! Here be! Here be! Come on... fly now... oh, there’s... waiting for you on the wall yonder. It’s a shame though the way they get nowt in’t it? I give ‘em some. Pretty! Come on Ducky!’

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Self-Identity and Social role

In this dementia care home in Norway, conversation occurred between the woman in the drawing and the man living next door who came out to tend his garden.

Blakes at the bowling green
Poet reading in the arbor
Sometimes care environments separate people from the natural world

- Locked doors prevent free movement
- Limited natural daylight and ventilation
- No indoor plants or animals
- People are not routinely taken outside
- Outdoor areas not visible from inside, not safe, lack of appropriate furnishings
- People are encouraged to stay seated

Social, cultural and political challenges to designing a quality life for people with dementia

- Staffing issues
- Social stigma
- Types of services and care provision
- Policy agendas
- Regulatory environment and the inspectorate
- Funding priorities and the economic climate and so on...

Environment is not just a place... but a process of interaction between people and place

![CARE](image)

...into which care is embedded

Enact your design by engaging with people:

- Staff awareness training
- Family involvement
- Keep current about needs and wants
- Interpret design guidance relevant to your setting - practitioner insight, knowledge and care philosophy
- Enable people with dementia
How Dementia Affects Quality of Life

**Challenges for a Person with Dementia**

- Loss of initiative
- Changes in personality
- Disorientation
- Poor or decreased judgement
- Memory loss and losing things
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks
- Problems with language
- Changes in mood or behaviour
- Changes in personality

**Design Principles**

- Why is nature interesting and enjoyable?
- Dialogues with people with dementia in the areas indoors and outdoors along the building edge
- A place is a space made meaningful through relationship...
- ...for which nature can be a therapeutic tool.

Investigation

Design concerns: Seating, Acoustics, Sun trap, Shelter, Wind break, Proximity to indoors, a nearby loo!
European examples today showing good relationship between architecture and landscape - building and nature

“I’m 87, I don’t want to do any activities!”

The difference between doing an activity and being active is the integration of usefulness, purpose and place.

Meaningful activity and occupation promote social interaction and help maintain lifelong skills.

Design normal, familiar & domestic space to enable housekeeping - ‘washing smalls’...

...and ‘pegging out’
Enable people to maintain relationships

Allow personal freedom and solitude through safe and easy access to outdoors

Places that are recognizable remind people what to do.

Many people find satisfaction in purposeful endeavor and meaningful occupation. Sometimes finding a daily task, something that needs doing, can make life worth living.

Enabling design is about making places....

...to carry on living

Nature can be a tool to promote communication and mental health
Nature stimulates creativity, discovery and active pursuit of the living world.

Nature supports the holistic healthcare of the individual - their physical, mental... and spiritual wellbeing.

Four

Chalfont Design Projects

Tall Trees Care Centre
Shipton-Under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire

Planning intentions for quality of life

Activity
Movement
Sports
Orientation
Stimulation
Support & conversation
Fresh air
Social interaction
Connection to nature
Connection to the community

Landscape
Master Plan
By Chalfont Design

Tall Trees Landscape Master Plan
For Caring Homes Group

The outdoor environment of Tall Trees is inspired by the historic architecture as well as the countryside with its fish ponds and alleys, and the gardens and materials of the local area.

Landscape
Garden

Tall Trees Care Centre
Shipton-Under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire

Caring Homes Group Ltd

Garden Concepts by Chalfont Design

Early concept drawings of the gardens

- Plants for sensory stimulation and year-round interest, for cooking and arts & crafts
- Plants and habitat to encourage birds and wildlife
- Views of the ancient trees and countryside
- Sheds, raised beds, bird tables, plant pots, and clothes line for meaningful occupation and activity
- Comfortable seats and easy walking paths
The central Courtyard Garden welcomes people to the front entrance of the home with trees, green space, colourful plantings and traditional Cotswold materials. Adjacent the Dementia Care unit the garden offers raised beds, seating, sensory plants and social spaces.

The sunny West Terrace Terrace invites sitting and strolling amid raised planting beds, small flowering trees and a central archway with cascading blossoms - all with a view towards the orchard and the ancient woodlands.

The Dementia Care Activity Garden is a stimulating place for residents to engage in domestic and therapeutic activities, to enjoy nature as independently as possible out in the fresh air and sunshine.

The Nursing Care Activity Garden provides for tending plants and enjoying peace and quiet while watching the birdlife in the tranquility of the ancient woodlands.

Before: a 40 bed residential home. Dark, oppressive interior spaces with few doors and limited views out.

Charnley Fold, Lancashire, England. Charnley Fold provides enhanced dementia day care for people with complex mental health needs.
Spatial Archetypes: Seven Meaningful Spaces

The Pocket Park

The Back Garden

The Yard

Enhancing daily life

Charnley Fold
Lancashire

Designing the environment for connection to nature can help you design a Therapeutic Architecture that improves the quality of life for people with dementia.

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