



Designing Housing for The Elderly



Lincoln House, Crewe

In the UK today it is expected that one in three people over the age of 65 is likely to develop some form of dementia in their lifetime. Of course, within this alarming statistic there is a wide spectrum of disability ranging from mild forgetfulness to significant memory loss, disorientation and distress for the more severely affected. For those with significant impairment, the careful arrangement of spaces, colour, finishes and furnishings and all the details of the home environment become very important to ensure familiarity, comfort and safety. There is a variety of specific ways in which good environmental design can help those with dementia to optimise their brain function and compensate for impaired senses as well as simply making the home environment more pleasant and reassuring. Good design is also vital to ensure that the home is practical to manage for their carers.

TNW has a long history of designing housing for high dependency needs in the social and elderly care sectors. We offer a knowledgeable, friendly and flexible service working closely with our clients to help realise aspirations through inspirational, sustainable and cost-effective solutions. Our work extends across the public, private and voluntary sectors and we can operate equally effectively for private providers, within public sector frameworks or as part of a contractor-led Design and Build project team. Described below are some of our recent projects that illustrate various aspects of design we believe are critical for successful outcomes in this increasingly important sector.



Lincoln House, Crewe

Following a feasibility study reviewing the scope of elderly care in Cheshire East, we were commissioned to create a secure ten bedroom fully DDA compliant dementia care unit with en-suite shower rooms and a new dementia day care facility, through new extensions and remodelling of existing internal spaces.

The ability to access the external environment can improve wellbeing, provide vitamin D through daily exposure to sunlight for bone regeneration, which in turn reduces the risks associated with falling (for the elderly 700-1000 IU of Vitamin D will reduce the risk of falling by 19-26%). It can also improve cognitive performance and reduce cardiovascular events. Therefore the provision of a secure dementia garden and all weather access via a canopied walkway through it was a key design feature for this project.



Generally interior design principles for the elderly should be: clean lines, uncomplicated spaces; transparency; easily identifiable rooms; excellent lighting; simple layout; domesticity; familiarity and meaningful way-finding strategies. At Lincoln House the only location to site the extension was at the northern corner. Therefore the access corridor to the respite dementia care bedrooms was relieved by the inclusion of natural roof lighting, three projecting seating bays along its length with side views to the outside and a change in wall colour at each end to facilitate transition and turning points.

Lincoln House, Crewe



Curzon House Community Support Centre, Chester

The brief from Cheshire West and Chester Council was to expand the existing dementia day care centre, within their existing short stay respite facility, to allow for additional service users. A limited amount of reordering of accommodation was also undertaken to improve the unit. For example the original location and design of the Dementia Day care Supervisor's office not only obscured direct views of and access to the dementia garden but inhibited the ability to observe the unit, by relocating the office to the opposite wall the unit was immediately opened up to internal and external views.



Loss of function is often incorrectly blamed on the dementia, when a significant aggravating cause is inappropriate design. An understanding of colour design using correctly balanced tonal contrast, hue and level of colour saturation can greatly improve outcomes. For example doors to be used by service users have been clearly identified, colour framed and incorporate low level pictorial signage, areas and doorways for staff-only access are colour camouflaged.

Leftwich Green, Respite Care, Northwich

Owned by Cheshire West and Chester Council and generally catering for older people and people with physical difficulties on a short stay and respite basis the building did not have either a wing with en-suite toilets or one suitable for dementia sufferers. Three small extensions together with some internal remodeling helped to create a seven bedroom dementia respite care unit.

Curzon House, Chester

An essential part of the refurbishment was the replacement and renewal of electrics. Much higher than average lighting levels are known to be required for older people and particularly those with dementia. Correctly designed lighting can, reduce the number and severity of falls, improve user orientation and participation, reduce challenging behaviour, reduce stress, improve sleep and health and also last but not least, support staff morale and well-being.



Trepassey Care Home, Wirral

Cheshire Residential Care Homes Trust Ltd. has provided at Trepassey a warm, secure and friendly environment where residents privacy dignity and independence has been nurtured since 1957.



The scheme will enable substantial expansion and refurbishment of the existing accommodation, upgrading and improving the home. It is primarily the nature of the sloping site that has allowed the majority of the new accommodation and specialist dementia care wings to be tucked into the site below the existing main house and also allowed access to be extended together with improved DDA compliant gardens.

Trepassey Care Home, Wirral