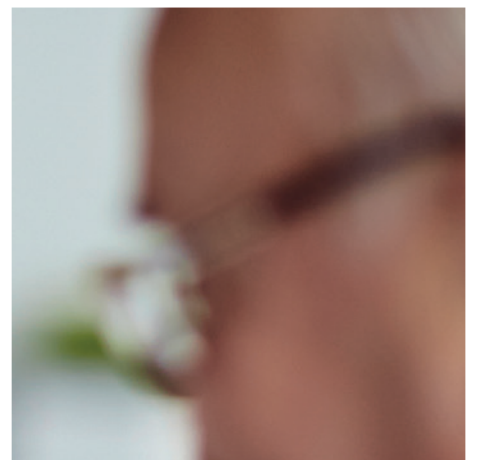


CARLESS + ADAMS



**The future of care and how design
can influence its evolution**

White Paper
Written by Carless+Adams

May 2021



“We are dedicated to reimagining supported living and care accommodation communities, changing perceptions and enabling the move into supported living or care to be a proactive and positive one.”

Melissa Magee, Managing Director, Carless + Adams

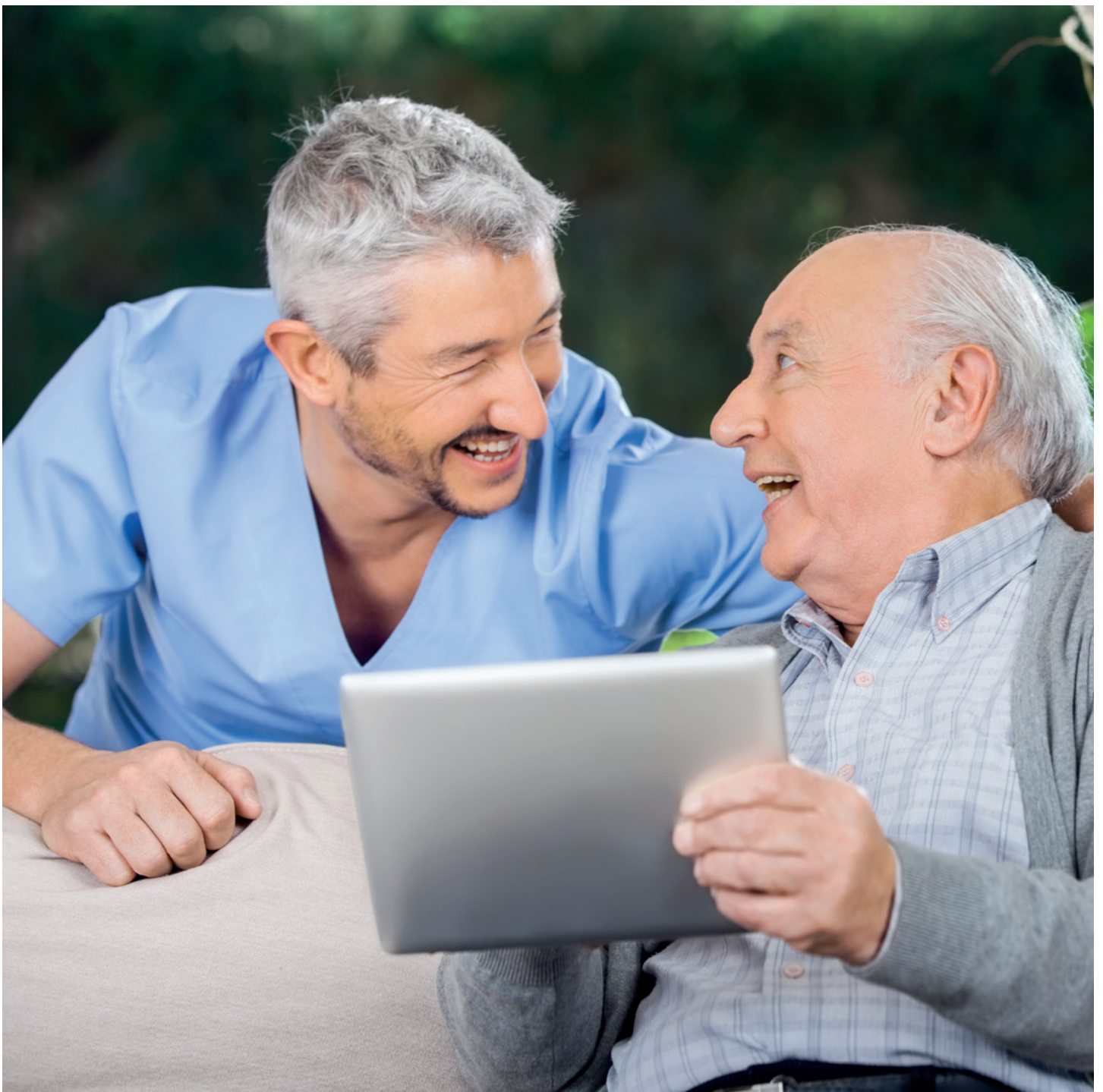


Past + Future

Historically care homes in the UK have been a last resort choice for many. Our growing, ageing population, changing demands of retirement living and provision around suitable accommodation all highlight that the existing care home stock is not fit for purpose, that's without taking into consideration another pandemic. As architects specialising in supported living and care home accommodation, we firmly believe that design should marry with aspirational, yet functional requirements to help change the perception and mindset around transitioning into the next phase of life by moving into supported living and retirement villages.

“The supported living and care accommodation provision in the UK is due a revolution. We are proud to be designing this with our partners to ensure that desirable and functional care accommodation is created. ”

Melissa Magee, Managing Director, Carless + Adams



Foreword

The UK care home sector is in its relative infancy. Care provision for the elderly still has a stigma attached to it. In part, some of this can be attributed to the workhouses that were established in 1834 under the 'Poor Law'. This Law provided medical care and education for those suffering from the effects of industrialisation that was sweeping across Great Britain at that time. The workhouses for their time, filled a need, albeit a very basic offering.

The Local Government Act of 1930 gave local authorities the power to take over workhouse infirmaries as municipal hospitals and elderly care homes. These workhouses were renamed Public Assistance Institutions and it wasn't until 1948, when the National Assistance Act was introduced, that the last elements of the Poor Law, including workhouses, disappeared. **Throughout the 1960's, over 50% of the workhouse buildings were converted into elderly care run by local authorities.**¹

This evolution, still so recent, helps explain why the elderly care offering in the UK has the reputation it has and why it is due a revolution. Elderly care homes of the 1960's have been adapted and updated stretching the joists and rafters as much as they can be. The growing ageing population, their demands for their lifestyle,

combined with increasing technological advancement mean that these facilities no longer meet the needs of individuals both now and in the future.

Contrasting with this, the established US and Australian care communities have a product offering that many aspire to live within. Community care models where communal and personal facilities replicate those found within individual homes and communities have been present in these countries since the 1990's. In addition, Germany reviewed the provision of care in the 1990's and developed a long-term strategy to consider the impact and supply needed for the growing ageing population. These countries' Governments support for such development and the subsequent success of these concepts can explain how perception around care is very different in these countries, compared to the UK's view.

Realigning the UK public's view of care provision as a positive choice should shift when planners welcome design which moves away from simple upgrades of existing properties to purpose built homes with community at their very heart. Those of the relevant age have lived through a rapid growth in opportunities and technology which

is now integral to their lives. Remaining part of a community rather than becoming isolated has so many publicised benefits to individuals. The benefits can range from removing the stress of looking after your own home, safety, health and wellbeing, combating loneliness to assist in the avoidance of such illnesses as dementia.

The recent Covid 19 pandemic has highlighted the impact of elderly living in their own homes reliant on family and friends who, during this time, were unable to visit through fear of infection.

For many the decision to downsize can be highly emotional, so it's easy to argue against it; there needs to be a desired alternative to motivate this move. Downsizing and moving into a care community should be an exciting time, another stage of life and a positive choice. Provision of care is slowly breaking new ground but the pandemic has illustrated the need for more focus and for the community to be at the heart of new initiatives. Reviewing an act that was put in place just after World War II would be a good place to start.

Melissa Magee
Managing Director

“Living near family and friends, and connecting across generations, is seen in surveys as a great influencer on location choices for selecting retirement properties.”

Knight Frank ⁵



Introduction

Longer life expectancy means that at every stage of life there are delays to the age at which things are achieved. From purchasing first homes, getting married and starting a family, the average age of completing these milestones has increased over the decades. The knock-on effect can be seen throughout our lives, delaying decisions and with them the focus on lifestyle needs and requirements when elderly. Those aged 65+ living in their own homes who are reliant on their family and community were highlighted during the emergence of the Coronavirus pandemic. The enforced lack of community support was visible to the whole nation with most individuals unable to do anything to rectify the situation.

Changes in the State Pension Age have had a significant impact on retirement decisions. 63% of those aged 50+ who are still in work report that they plan to retire later than they thought they would 10 years ago.² The decision to retire is often based on a variety of factors ranging from social factors, work requirements, finances, personal relationships and retirement preferences. The shift from work to retirement does not happen overnight and it is important for retirees to maintain structure, mental stimulation, social interaction not to mention their identity and sense of purpose. These connections need to be identified and re-established in differing formats as they are invaluable to the next phase of life to maintain health, wellbeing and enjoyment.

Making the decision to move into a senior living facility will depend entirely on the individual. Some will embrace the move and others will resist. Some will make the move driven by situational circumstance or for medical care needs and others will be healthy and disability free.

A third of older adults' report that they would like to move from their present home but barriers stand in their way.³

Understanding why, is not an exact science, however the evolution of the sector, lack of supply, finances, complex emotional issues and the public's perception have had an important role to play. We also need to consider that whilst life expectancy has increased, it does not always equate to a healthier and disability free life expectancy. We should make the most of these precious retired years unhindered by work or maybe the need to care for children!

The provision of care homes and retirement villages is evolving with councils, developers and suppliers recognising the need for buildings that reflect individuals' requirements, utilising modern design methodology to maximise space and resident benefits and employ technology for seamless and efficient working. Understanding the shifts in our society's dynamics should also be addressed through the provision of tailored accommodation. Young people are struggling to afford suitable housing, families often need community support to help grow their families whilst demands of work are high and people are working later in life. Perhaps a solution lies in a holistic approach to these needs providing an improved sense of community and enhancement to all stakeholders' lives.

The provision of desirable supported living and care accommodation will ease the emotional issues involved in making such a move and also challenge the perceptions that currently exist. Making a conscious move would shift the emphasis onto making it an enjoyable and fulfilling time.

It is forecast that within 50 years there will be an additional 8.6m people aged 65+ which is the population roughly equivalent to the size of London.⁷

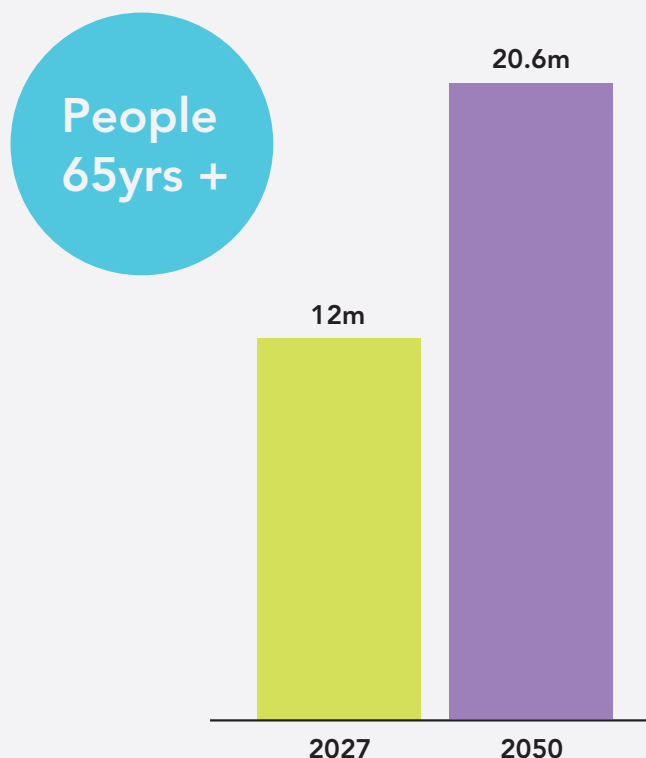


Age + Retirement

Elderly generally refers to those over 65 years old. This is a non-proven historical reasoning aligning with the retirement age of males, which has been around since 1880 and has only recently been increased. The changes in the State Pension Age have had significant impacts on the labour market. **63% of those aged 50+ who are still in work report that they plan to retire later than they thought they would 10 years ago.**⁴

Significantly, the number of people aged 65+ living in the UK is forecast to increase by 20% to 12 million by 2027.⁵

There are nearly 12 million people aged 65 and above in the UK, of which 5.4m are aged 75+, 1.6m are 85+, over 500,000 are 90+ and 14,430 are centenarians.⁶ Supply and access to enhanced nutrition and improved medical knowledge has made our bodies biologically stronger than previous generations of 65+.





The care home sector: financial year ending April 2020



Demand for modern purpose-built and future-proof care facilities will only continue to increase, owing to our ageing population and the national care bed crisis we face with many care homes in the market currently falling short of market standards. Although the rate of care home closures may accelerate in the aftermath of COVID-19, construction activity has returned and the long-term demand story is unchanged.

In the next 18 months, we expect to see the repositioning of existing care homes as they look to adapt to a post COVID-19 environment. As part of a broader high street revitalisation, we also expect to see the re-purposing of well-located alternative use property classes into healthcare or retirement living residences. Developers, investors and operators active in the care home market will require a greater level of due diligence to understand the risks and benefits at play.

Market Trends

In the financial year ending April 2020, the care home sector witnessed a net loss of 111 care homes but a net gain of 269 beds. The average size of the homes that de-registered were 30 beds and a large proportion of these facilities were under independent, "mom and pop" ownership. We have been seeing this trend in the market for some time now, where economies of scale are not being achieved in conjunction with the increase in operational costs and lack of social care funding.

When analysing the Care Quality Commission ratings, at the time of de-registration, almost 60% of this stock was rated "inadequate" or "requires improvement".

Financial stress is, to an extent, having a knock-on-effect leading to failing care standards. Going forward, post COVID-19, we think that a further burden would be put on such facilities with an increase in costs to improve infection control and an acceleration on capital expenditure to ensure that the homes are suitable to manage such pandemics going forward.

On the contrary, the net gain in beds in the same period was testament to the demand for larger, modern purpose-built and future-proof care facilities as the average size of newly registered care home facilities was 60 beds.

Design + Covid 19

Up until COVID-19, design in care homes had evolved to incorporate integration between residents. However, post pandemic, a higher degree of focus is on the ability to self-isolate, enhance infection control and reduce touch points where necessary.

We envisage an increase in retrospective fits and extensions to older purpose-built assets to include wet-rooms and to reduce the use of shared assisted living bathrooms. Such retrospective fits will present challenges for older converted care home assets, due to their compromised layouts.

Other design ideas that are being discussed in the market or that have already been incorporated include:

- + Dual entry into the homes so that visitors have their own separate access
- + Pods/outbuildings for residents to meet their loved ones in a socially distant way
- + Compartmentalisation of the bedrooms allowing flexibility to adapt to form social bubbles
- + Adequate outdoor space and garden design.

We think technology will continue to play its part to reduce touch points where necessary, whether that is via acoustic monitoring, motion sensors or other forms of technology.

Key considerations and challenges for care home developers, operators and investors when acquiring care home sites.

As part of the land sourcing process, we follow a stringent process for our clients in identifying suitable care home development opportunities.

An ideal care home development site would typically comprise 1-2 acres on a regular shaped site with suitable topography, in a location that is accessible for staff and visitors. The micro-location, affluence profile and setting is also imperative. There also needs to be demand for a care facility from an asset quality perspective within the catchment area.

A higher degree of due diligence is now being carried out to support financial modelling and investment proposals.

Obtaining satisfactory planning consent continues to present its challenges and we are being asked by the relevant planning authorities, now more than ever, to provide needs assessments to support such planning applications along with sequential testing to identify alternative, suitable sites.

Over the next 18 months, we can expect to see an acceleration in care home site acquisitions due to the sector's robust fundamentals, a substantial focus on design to enhance infection control and repositioning of existing care home facilities.

“Most residents I speak with instantly recognise the benefits of living in a care facility and wish they had done it 5 years previously.”

Sam Tabiner, Head of Development, Abbeyfield



Perception + Reality

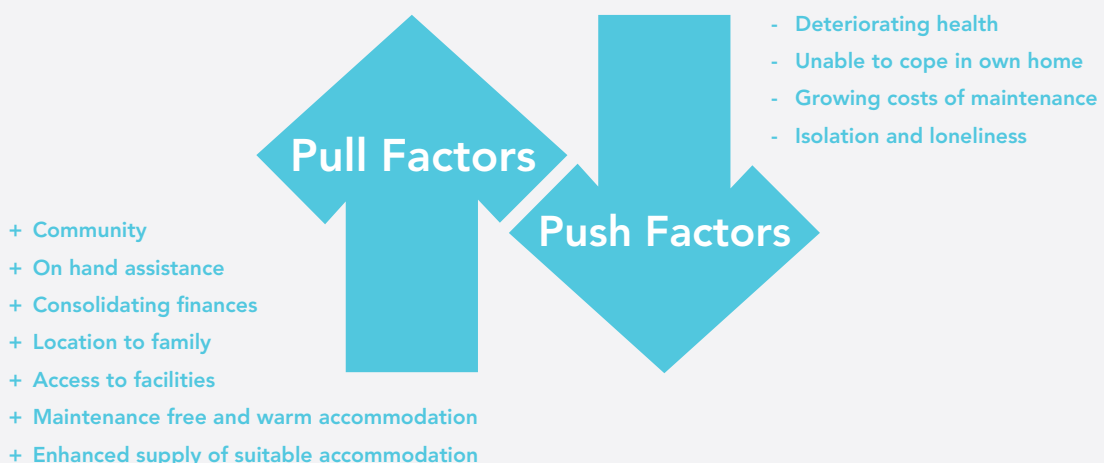
Unless you have had a first-hand positive experience of care, then perceptions of the care sector as a whole can be tainted by press coverage often focusing on the negatives. Currently the move into care is often a forced decision, following the unexpected arrival of a debilitating illness or hospital stay rendering peoples' own homes incompatible with their requirements. Torn from their homes without a chance for an emotional farewell to the bricks and mortar that has been their lives, has been experienced time and time again, and can lead to negativity around their new home.

A survey conducted by Demos confirms this by stating that those surveyed in their 80's wished they had thought about moving home 5-10 years previously than they actually did.⁸

Leaving the move until it becomes a last resort will likely conjure negative emotions which invariably gets passed on to the visiting younger generations and so the negative perception continues. This however, needn't be the case. Understanding the current provision of supported living options and supply, proposed developments embracing alternative care routes, addressing emotional issues towards moving, clarity around funding and

how independence can be retained will all help to change perceptions.

The choice of care home facility is often made by the future resident's family, with the resident often only visiting their new home on the day they move in. Removing anxiety on arrival is one of the primary concerns for Adrian Pancott, CEO at Kyn. In our interview with him, Adrian felt that design was the biggest factor in making a new resident feel at ease upon their arrival; "If the environment is calm, relaxing and interesting rather than industrial or the traditional care home, then people will feel less anxious and calmer about moving."



Remember there are almost 12 million people in the UK aged 65+¹⁰ and only 5% of these actually live in specialist housing for the elderly.¹¹

Current provision and supply

The supply of care home beds needs to increase to keep pace with our ever growing elderly population. There has recently been a high level of care home closures (de-registered) of which many are classed by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as inadequate. This terminology refers to the lack of provision of en suite facilities, room size, staff to resident ratio and the building not fit for purpose (beyond extension or repair).⁹

Development of new care homes is growing mainly across the south east where there is the highest demand and affluence. The process of identifying land through to securing planning - to build - to occupancy is too lengthy to meet the growing demand.

The key issue in addressing the imbalance of supported elderly living and care home provision is the Government social policy and funding routes. These can be seen as complex, confusing and unfair. This further adds negativity around care. The Government has had many calls to reform social care but to date this is not high enough on the agenda. Perhaps one of the COVID silver linings will be that the Government focusses on this area of social reform. Our population is aging and the need for supported living and care homes is growing at the same pace. Generations are now more informed than ever about what they need to make their lives healthier and safer. The Government needs to address this imbalance of suitable supply versus growing demand.

By providing care that enables an individual to live their life the best they can, enabling carers to provide care with the utmost attention to detail and enabling residents family and friends to visit in a personal and private setting can all be afforded through design of the building and landscape. Sam Tabiner, Head of Development at Abbeyfield, agrees that design is paramount to residents and carers wellbeing as:

“Care homes are made by the staff, so if the building works for them and makes their job easier then it ensures that everything runs smoothly and residents have a positive experience.”

Proposed developments

Trickles of local council planning approvals of applications of designs that push the current boundaries in this sector, illustrates that the tide is hopefully about to turn. **No longer should the purpose built facilities with 17m2 rooms and wet room facilities be the reserve of the wealthy.**¹² Those that have been developed illustrate the health and wellbeing improvements of the residents and should be an inspiration across the broader care sector. New proposals are designed to encourage the move to retirement villages earlier with future proof buildings on the same complex. Independent living may be required now, but once you have established your community and network of contacts, how much easier would the transition to cared for accommodation be if it were in the same location? For a couple who move into independent living accommodation, in the event one becomes ill and requires care, they can still remain close by being part of the same village, which can only have a positive effect on health and emotional wellbeing.

Emotional issues to moving

Of course we must consider the emotional influence of decisions around care. A survey conducted by Just Group PLC stated that 83% of over 75's surveyed had not thought about, discussed with family or planned for care.¹³ The main reason for this lack of discussion was cited that the thought of care was just too depressing. Suggesting that someone leave their family home, where they have raised their children and potentially welcomed their grandchildren, is a huge tug of the heart strings. Our homes are made by the people in them and how the environment makes us feel, not the actual bricks and mortar. Throughout life we live in a home that is relative to our needs, so why does that stop being the case when we hit retirement? We need to recognise that the elderly would have more fulfilling and productive lives if the worry, stress and physical maintenance of such properties were no longer their concern. Perhaps we should consider if downsizing is even the correct terminology? **Maybe we need to think of it as 'right-sizing'.**

Practicality also restricts such moves. There are often physical limits stopping the process. How does an 80 year old climb into the loft and sift through the Christmas decorations? Slowly the recognition by companies that are able to provide such a service is growing. As with the added value service that removal companies provide, offering to pack everything securely, transport and then unpack at your new home, so can a decluttering service be utilised. McCarthy & Stone offer a service called 'Smooth Move' which covers specialist removals, decluttering, DIY in the new home, contributions to estate agent fees and legal fees¹⁴ purely for people moving into one of their retirement properties.

Ernie Graham, Owner of Graham Care stated in our interview:

"...most people want to be free of the maintenance of their big homes and gardens, want more security which these types of properties can give. Care needs to be in the background and it needs to build community around extra services".

The switch of emotions by releasing old feelings towards bricks and mortar, and then recognising the benefits that can be achieved simply by moving home, are huge.

Funding and finances

Supply of supported living and care homes is far outweighed by the demand and this has a bearing on price. In addition, estate agent fees, surveyor and legal fees, stamp duty and removal costs can be a huge financial barrier for the elderly moving. Many in this age bracket may not have moved home for many years so the complexities around the legalities and paperwork can be off-putting.

Sam Tabiner, Head of Development at Abbeyfield, feels that care homes are designed to be efficient and operationally effective so the numbers of people that live in care homes has to be generally on a scale to make it financially viable, especially to cover staffing costs. This often impacts individual finances and funding available and therefore their ultimate choice of care home.

Mainstream press coverage generally focuses on the negative. This has only been exacerbated in light of the Coronavirus pandemic. Huge praise should be given to the staff at supported living accommodation and care homes who acted swiftly to protect their residents and employees. Statistics of cases seem to inundate the news with the abundance of positive stories often overlooked. Remember Sydmar Lodge Care Home, in Edgware who was closed to visitors from 12th March 2020 but the activities coordinator went into overdrive recreating iconic album covers with the residents? Or Amberwood Lodge in Ferndown who has regular visits from the Eurovision Song Contest winners, The Brotherhood of Man (Save all your kisses for me), to sing to residents?¹⁵

This was a huge example of how supported living accommodation is NOT a last resort but somewhere to demonstrate your personality, create joy with others and enjoy life!¹⁶

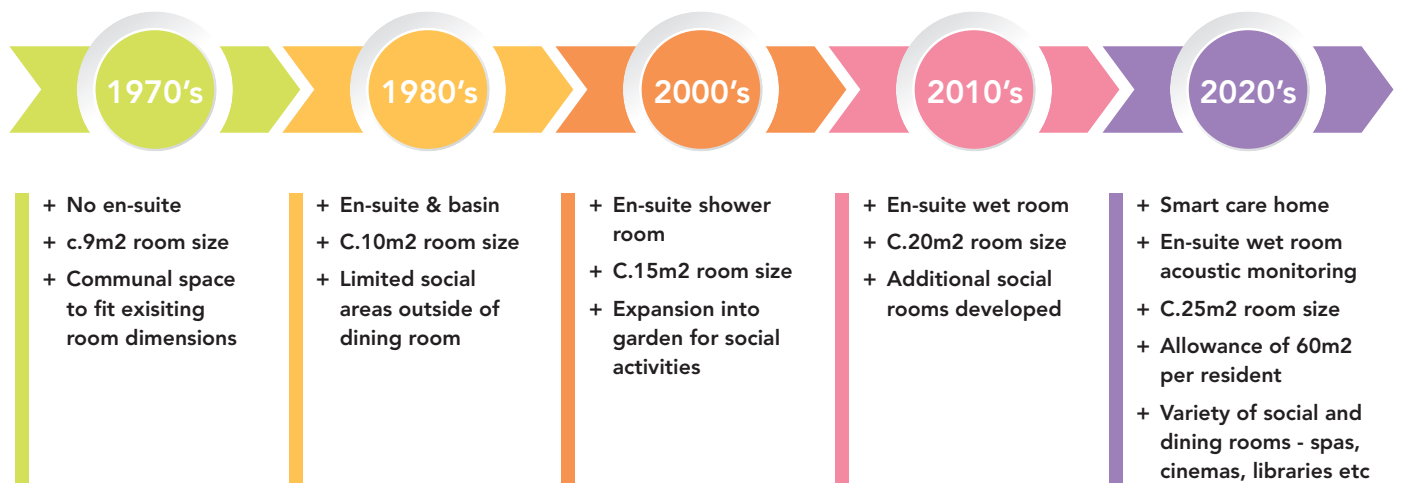
“Buildings can influence the decision to come into care. If the environment is calm, relaxing and interesting rather than industrial or the traditional care home, then people will feel less anxious about the move.”

Adrian Pancott, CEO, KYN



Care + Choice

Evolution of care home design



Building design has a huge role to play in the evolution of the care sector. Having an emotional connection with your home is of paramount importance in order to build a lasting relationship with it.

The decision to move to supported living or a care home is never going to be taken lightly, so the design of the building and the overall environment can create that emotional pull, and help to make the move a lasting and successful one.

“Providing access to high quality, green external spaces can provide huge benefits to care home and assisted living residents. Being able to connect with your external environment produces positive emotional feelings that can remove anxiety and instill calm and peace.”

Andy Pringle, Associate Landscape Architect, LUC



Identifying how the care home will be used is key to successful design. As needs of different generations change so will their demands of a care home. There have been fundamental shifts in what people feel are the main requirements from their homes and these are being embraced by architects designs:

Environment

A welcoming atmosphere at the entrance of the building will set the correct tone throughout, remove anxiety and ease residents, workers and visitors alike. Utilising regionally appropriate trees with an abundance of planting will give the care home the access to nature that is proven to calm and alleviate visual noise pollution. Continuing the greenery inside will provide access to nature and help to improve indoor air quality. The types of plants and flowers used should complement the interior decor to distinguish between areas of the building and lead residents and visitors to the outside space.

- + By prioritising this access to nature, the design will require natural light. Reducing the reliance on electrical lighting helps to welcome nature into the building further. Dull days can be supplemented by lighting fixtures that are subtle in their presence.
- + Access to outside space provides a positive boost to health and wellbeing, as does physical interaction with greenery. Designing the landscape to incorporate more opportunities for garden gyms, provide private areas outside individual bedrooms and designate areas to grow food and flowers to eat and display around the home, all have an important role to play in providing residents with a healthier lifestyle and to provide activities they enjoy. A drive towards self-sufficiency through allotment ownership has increased during the recent pandemic and whilst this is not completely feasible in care homes, it can be encouraged as people demand healthier, seasonal food with minimal air miles.¹⁷
- + Providing a safe and secure space for residents that designates private areas connected to their own rooms will encourage visitors, and make the place feel like their home. Entertainment for younger visitors such as a climbing frame for the grandchildren or guest WIFI for teenagers will encourage lengthier visits and improved quality time with loved ones. Being able to welcome, provide refreshments and entertain visitors makes residents feel comfortable and relaxed. Connecting socially to personal space and the communal areas gives a feeling of more positive emotions and connectivity to your environment.
- + Exterior design will also influence interior design through room layout, wall alignment, service provision, window choice and door selection. Providing a contemporary design will encourage the use of relevant materials and textiles to give a tactile and colourful home by bringing the outside in. Design not only directly encourages positive emotions it can also indirectly affect these. Utilising materials that are tactile encourage integration with the building, maximising space and facilities to reduce noise and light pollution creates clear and calm environments, encouraging flow inside and out connecting the community and encouraging activity.

Lifestyle

Recognising how individuals function and accommodating everyday activities are considered when designing supported living and care homes. Encouraging independent lives to maintain a healthy lifestyle will make the transition from family home to supported living or care home seamless. This can be achieved by:

- + The provision of more space appropriate, individual bedrooms to give both an area for private use to welcome guests and in light of the recent Covid-19 pandemic, considerations for self isolation to avoid cross contamination.
- + Bedrooms offering private wet rooms and living space within. Storage is an important factor in encouraging people to feel at home. Concealing personal and household items that want to be retained but not on display can be made through clever storage design. The importance of organisation and ownership in private space is huge in promoting productivity.

“The design of buildings can help to de-institutionalise care, even for those making distress purchases.”

Ernie Graham, Owner, Graham Care

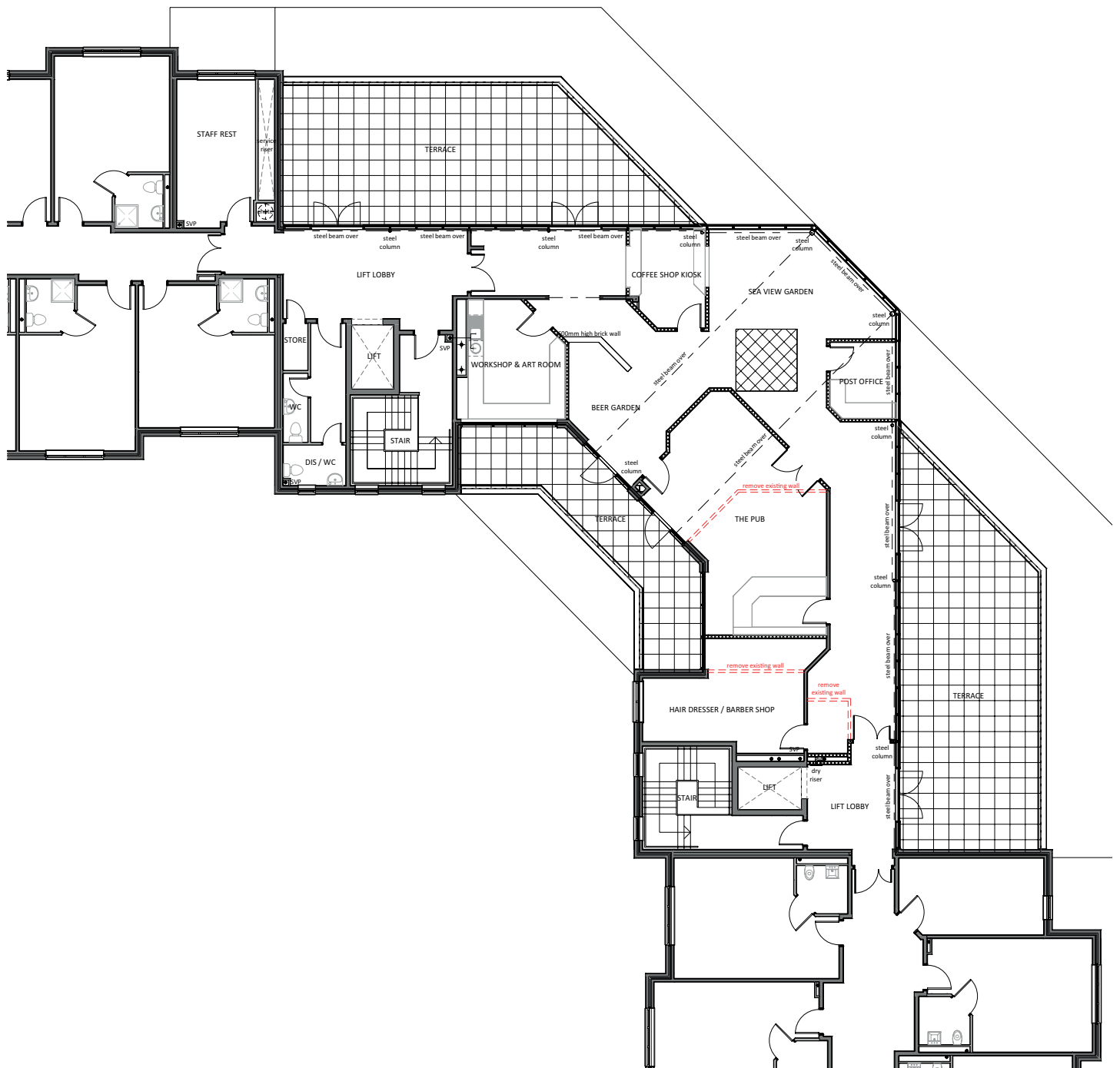


- + Hub type kitchens where residents can prepare their own snacks or meals to maintain independence.
- + Separate dining rooms, solely retained for this use and not for cross entertainment purposes. This encourages dining and focus on eating to help build health and interest in food being consumed.
- + Private areas within a communal space allow visitors to see the care home in operation but provide that bit of privacy that is often required.
- + Availability of social communal space with dedicated areas of interest such as allotment style gardens, bowling lawns, cinema rooms, art and craft, gyms, swimming pool, saunas and dance floors. Being able to connect with other residents daily helps keep fitness, maintains mental stimulation, encourages discussion, promotes companionship and alleviates isolation.
- + Multipurpose spaces design to maximise floor space. Consider furniture choices to ensure that rooms can be used for more than one purpose. A purpose-built cinema that is only used for 20% of the week is not efficient design, however if its chairs could easily be moved then it could be used for other sessions such as book clubs or knitting groups.
- + Connecting through technology which is now part of everyone's life. Letter writing and phone calls are dwindling as email and social media continue to take over as the main form of communication. Embracing IT for residents through the provision of WIFI and tablets will help keep this connection. To say this is not yet appropriate would be a mistake. Whilst workers are utilising IT to help with work flow, residents are already demonstrating that IT is not just for the under 65's.¹⁸ This need to become a priority as people's use, knowledge and awareness of technology will be second nature.
- + Aside from the day to day tasks that the internet is used for, it can also make a huge difference to residents' lifestyles. Finding their University alumni, watching YouTube clips of their football team in action, completing an online quiz or researching places they visited on holiday can all enhance conversations with their peers, family and workers and provide immense happiness.
- + The provision of learning labs or mini auditoriums with guest speakers presenting. Every day's a school day, whatever your age and engaging with inspiring information alongside peers will help mental stimulation and develop a community feel through the conversations it generates.
- + Intergenerational living through the provision of onsite nurseries, student accommodation or hot desk working facilities will create positive interaction between generations. We are at the very beginning of a shift in mindset around intergenerational care and we expect this to have a huge influence on care facilities in the coming years.
- + Connection to local community through provision of a local convenience shop, neighbourhood library and bakery where people of all generations can mix, a removal of a 'them and us' feel, providing community support for one another.
- + Onsite therapy pets accommodation. Research proves that access to pets can reduce anxiety isolation and stress whilst improving socialisation.¹⁹

Adrian Pancott of Kyn and Sam Tabiner of Abbeyfield both conveyed strongly in our interviews that the design and layout of a care home has a huge impact on not only the residents' experience but the ease in which staff can complete their roles. The staff in care homes do not just administer medical and physical aid when needed, but their love and attention is what truly makes a building feel like a home.

“The layout of care homes and supported living accommodation must consider both the residents and staff requirements and how they will use their environment. It needs the combination of flow and functionality to provide a safe space for all in terms of lifestyle alongside health and safety. The layout is integral to the success of the building.”

Neil Rutland, Architectural Associate, Carless + Adams



Layout

The flow and ease of navigation around the communal areas of a care home can ensure that residents feel comfortable in their surroundings and not daunted by the space. Lack of mobility should not restrict access to any area of the care home whether inside or out, so consistent level flooring is used to encourage movement and interactions with other residents and staff.

- + The flow of the building will be complemented by the interior design which will utilise colour to identify certain areas such as coffee lounge, fitness suite, garden access etc to help residents navigate their way until they are familiar with the building. There will not be long corridors or wide-open central spaces as these do not reflect a homely feel and can instigate feelings of confusion and produce distracting noise pollution. Set back doorways from corridors, wall acoustics and lighting choices can all play a part in enhancing the experience for residents.
- + Staff areas are located appropriately to make effective use of monitoring systems, reduce time spent walking between different rooms so as to maximise time spent with residents when required and, in the event of another pandemic or lock down, minimising cross room contamination. Incorporating dressing and cleaning areas for staff's PPE will soon become mandatory. The services will be located away from residents' private bedrooms providing ease of access for external providers and minimising disruption and noise. Visual access to large parts of the building is also vital for carers to complete their roles efficiently by being able to assess residents in a communal area from one position.
- + Access to experts such as health advisors, gym instructors, swimming teachers, opticians, dentists and educational guests will be enhanced as the provision of appropriate areas are required to maximise the services offered. These will be located in a specific area, again ensuring that navigation and flow works. Everyone should be able to see and access outside space from wherever they are in the building. Providing visual stimulation through the landscape is proven to help create calm environments.
- + Analysing how residents use the floor space provides valuable learning on how to maximise the space to the best sustainable advantage, keeping both residents and care workers safe. Improving floor plan layout can help with efficiencies by reducing heating and lighting costs, carbon emissions and valuable time taken by staff moving between different rooms. It can also help by improving ventilation and visual comfort. These contribute to environmental sustainability and therefore indirectly to social and economic sustainability. Focusing on these areas will have a lasting and positive effect on the cost of development.

Overall the environment, lifestyle provision and layout are all designed to benefit health and safety and are integral to the success of the care home.

Design + Influence

Buildings have the ability to affect and influence our emotions and in turn, perception simply by its design, including its layout, positioning, materials used and construction.

This is scientifically proven: driven by the hippocampus, which is part of our brains' structure embedded deep in the temporal lobe of each cerebral cortex. It regulates motivation, emotion, learning, and memory. Essentially, everything that is of great importance in older age. Overriding emotions is not feasible and why should it be necessary? Feeling positive about your surroundings instils calm, encourages happiness and reduces stress and anxiety.

Supported living and care homes should not be designed with function solely in mind. As architects design aims to generate a positive emotional response. We have discussed how environment, lifestyle and layout can positively influence care as a choice, and we need to consider that the exterior can also have a psychological impact and challenge perception. If the building is interesting and demands attention, then it will be appreciated and be something to be proud of. The development of intergenerational and community focussed buildings will encourage these designs. Extending access to outside space and bringing the outside in with level doorways, sensory gyms and private gardens or balconies will all add to the design aesthetics and promote positive feelings.

Available space for development positively influences design. Many care homes are being redeveloped or come with land but there are often tricky considerations due to restrictions on existing structures or green belt regulations.

“Senior living design has significantly transformed in recent years through a better understanding of changing needs in later life and rapidly evolving technologies.”

Knight Frank.⁵

The perception of care homes in the UK needs positive stimulation. We can appreciate the historical drivers as to why the current perception exists and why it needs to change. Do we need to assess the supply of mainstream housing? There is often a natural path from a parent's house to a flat, to a two bedroom terraced house, a 3 bedroom semi detached, to 4 bedroom detached family home and so on. There is no natural progression to 'right size' after this move - the larger provision of bungalows would encourage the discussion about what accommodation is relevant for older age. Supported living and care home terminology can be confusing and this may explain why people are reluctant to discuss their needs - they simply do not understand the options. Terminology needs to be simplified and refreshed, to coincide with building design, to use positive and aspirational words:

Positive

- + Hospitality
- + Village
- + Healthy
- + Service
- + Independence
- + Community
- + Intergenerational

Negative

- Care
- Healthcare
- Support
- Sheltered

Aside from the push and pull factors that can influence the move to supported living or care homes, the design on form and function can influence the positive feelings and override the negative. Moving home is one of the biggest decisions to make at any stage of your life. 'Kerb appeal' will undoubtedly have an influence on all of our home purchases throughout our lives and is unlikely to change for what may well be our final move.

Conclusion

The most recent changes to Government involvement in care in an official capacity was with the National Assistance Act of 1948. In order to allocate land and design and construct buildings to fit with the growing demands, the Government needs to embrace a new national strategy to meet the needs and make provision accessible, to all. Consultations should be made with over 65s, alongside younger generations to ensure that appropriate provision in terms of geographical location, volume and financial options are offered. Integrating health and social care services will ensure there is joint action and all ages of the population and their needs are considered and catered for.

Within the Government's national strategy should be the recognition that many existing care homes have limited space and are already beyond capabilities of redevelopment or extension. Being able to build whilst embracing the local environment and community culture through innovative design and technology will challenge perceptions. Care should not be a last resort decision. Make a positive choice to move earlier to assisted living and enjoy the time!

About Carless + Adams

Carless + Adams is an award-winning, independent Architectural Practice, providing professional advice and services in architecture. Our exclusive focus on the design of supported living and care accommodation ensures every one of our clients benefits from highly specialist knowledge, experience and expertise and an engaged and enthusiastic project team.

We understand that the provision of high-quality care has never mattered more and we are passionate about the services we provide. We are dedicated to reimagining supported living and care accommodation communities, changing perceptions and enabling a move into these environments to be a positive and proactive one.

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Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to the stakeholders who have advised and helped with the development of this report. We are also grateful to Knight Frank, Abbeyfield, Kyn, Graham Care and Land Use Consultants for their time and contributions.

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