

# DESIGNING FOR DEMENTIA CARE

MARKET LEADING CARE HOME AND RETIREMENT VILLAGE DEVELOPERS KNOW THAT INVESTMENT IN HIGH QUALITY DESIGN FOR DEMENTIA CARE CAN HELP PEOPLE CONTINUE TO ENJOY THEIR LIVES IN HOMELY, COMFORTABLE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS. JEN BERNARD, FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF INTERIOR DESIGN PRACTICE, BERNARD INTERIORS, SHARES SOME INSIGHTS.

**W**hen a person makes their first visit to look around a potential new home they, and their family, should feel totally at ease, warm and relaxed, confident that their expectations will be met. As part of the development team for a care home or retirement village we consider how residents will dine, socialise, move around, rest and enjoy activities, as well as influences from their past experiences and the location. We talk to staff about their needs and how routine tasks can be streamlined so they can concentrate on providing great care.

Dementia research is providing new insights into effective care and design all the time. For care operators it is a process of continual investment and improvement. We are now revisiting projects completed several years ago to redesign for different needs and new approaches. A residents' lounge may become a hub area which allows for more varied activities, for example.

Effective space planning is key, inside and out. Coordinating external landscaping with the internal space can create points of interest outside, such as a water feature centred on a patio to make it visible from a lounge, providing a calming and relaxing ambience inside the development. In terms of aesthetics, we consider high end residential and hotel design, alongside healthcare specific regulations, requirements such as creating visual contrast and research. We look at lighting, light reflective values, finishes, texture, colour, familiarity and scale.

Changes in daylight help to signify the passing of time, helping maintain normal sleep cycles. For a light-filled interior, such as the bistro at Audley Stanbridge Earls, we have used light coloured painted panelling, complemented by uplifting vibrant fabrics - the perfect spot to sit and read the paper in the morning or meet friends for lunch.

Using contrasting colours and tones to identify key features can assist independent living,



creating lines of sight that help people navigate more easily. And artwork or feature furniture pieces, such as a grandfather clock placed on a corridor, can be used to create focal points.

Neutral carpet, with a subtle pattern throughout the interior, provides a calming finish and helps to create clear definition between walls and floors. Dark and small patterns can be confusing for people living with dementia so it is best to use soft, understated and tonal patterns.

Depending on the requirements of the residents, differently themed areas - from a nursery to a village square with shops, or a garden and potting shed area with access to outside space - can be incorporated into the design to stimulate memories, interaction and activities.

On each project, our aim is to facilitate first class care in beautiful surroundings. We keep in mind that the development will be home to many people at the end of their lives. That's a very special motivation.

## About Bernard Interiors

Bernard Interiors ([www.bernardinteriors.co.uk](http://www.bernardinteriors.co.uk)) is an interior design practice with specialist knowledge in the interior design of five-star new build care homes, extra care apartment complexes and retirement villages.

The practice offers turnkey solutions, consultancy and procurement services for sectors, including care and retirement, hospitality, leisure and residential. 