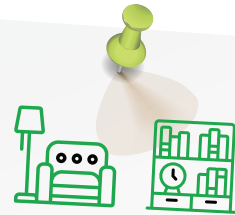


FURNITURE

How can furniture selection provide familiarity and enable independence for a person living with dementia in a residential care home?

Furniture plays a vital part in creating a comfortable, homely environment in a residential care home – even while it meets clinical needs and has to be safe and well maintained. Furniture can help residents to recognise different areas within a home. Residents may have their favourite places, where they and their visitors feel especially at home such as a sofa in front of a fireplace.

Thoughtfully arranging the furniture can act as a prompt for a person to take up a particular activity, for example placing a chair beside a window, with a reading lamp and magazines to hand. Sometimes it may be necessary to take away excess furniture for the space to feel homely, and not like a storeroom.



While it may be difficult providing familiar furniture to meet everyone's wishes in a shared living environment, the purpose of the furniture should be intuitive – that is, a chair should still look and function as a chair.



What you can do now

- Select furniture that supports the organisation's model of care (e.g. does a homelike model support stainless steel framed lounge chairs?).
- Create a checklist with residents and staff for selecting furniture that meets requirements for both groups (e.g. can it be moved easily for cleaning and for conversation?).
- Use available furniture to create opportunities for engagement (e.g. a kitchen dresser with crockery for use).
- Re-arrange furniture to promote opportunities for conversations, gazing at a view or eating a meal quietly.
- Avoid strong patterns in materials such as stripes or motifs – to a person with dementia these can appear to be moving or to be a real object to reach out and touch.



What you can plan for the future

- Before building or renovating, consult a design professional with knowledge and experience in implementing the principles of dementia-friendly design and furniture fit for purpose, and who will avoid the selection of commercial, institutional and repetitive furniture.
- Ensure rooms are large enough to accommodate mobility aids and some personal pieces of furniture.
- Provide a variety of furniture types (i.e. several styles of chairs with different heights, widths, furniture coverings and finishes).
- Create opportunities for flexible furniture arrangements that can support a variety of smaller or larger groups.

Key Design Principles: Principle 1 Unobtrusively reduce risk, Principle 5 Optimise helpful stimulation, Principle 7 Create a familiar place, Principle 8 Provide a variety of places to be alone or with others. <https://dta.com.au/resources/environmental-design-resources-introduction>

Aged Care Quality Standards: Standard 1 Requirement (a) Each consumer is treated with dignity and respect, with their identity, culture and diversity valued. Standard 5 Requirement (c) Furniture, fittings and equipment in the service environment to be safe, clean, well maintained and suitable for the consumer.

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Consult the DTA Environments team for advice and support in making your environment dementia friendly

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