

Blog

The Housing Management Network

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Shore Green – life enhancing homes for people with memory loss and dementia

Located in South Manchester, Shore Green improves the lives of people with dementia and other forms of memory loss. Owned and managed by Irwell Valley Housing Association, it provides tailored care and support to residents in a peaceful yet stimulating environment.

Irwell Valley opened Shore Green in 2003, when the provision of specific dementia care services had not yet been established in the social housing sector in the North West. Developed in response to the predicted increase in the number of older people developing dementia and other forms of memory loss, it continues to meet the growing demand locally for these specialist services today. Challenging misconceptions about what people can and cannot do when they have a dementia diagnosis.

Through purpose designed accommodation, sensitive yet stimulating support, care and activities, coupled with our ongoing commitment to service development and innovation, we have a model that helps people living with dementia to live enjoyable and fulfilling lives.

Distinctive yet discreet design



The purpose-designed environment brings together both the physical design and the service provided in a unique way, to allow residents to maintain and even develop skills that may otherwise be lost.

We worked closely with Triangle Architects in Manchester. We knew we had an opportunity to develop something new and innovative, something that wasn't another nursing home, but something altogether different. From the outset we ensured that it was designed with dementia in mind, not in a sterile and restrictive way, but with a design and setting that was open, bright, easy to navigate and welcoming.

Both the exterior and interior spaces at Shore Green are designed so there are no 'blockages'. Curves are used throughout to allow residents to move freely around the building and the grounds without meeting any disorientating dead-ends.

The self-contained apartments are situated in a gently curved arc, with the front doors facing onto the spacious enclosed gardens. This, together with 'memory shelves' outside each front door, ensures that each resident's view of and from their front door is different and easily identifiable.

Subtle door monitoring systems and other forms of assistive technology are used throughout the building. These are tailored to each resident's needs and therefore only used when identified as a risk. This helps staff discretely manage residents' wellbeing throughout the day and night. The exterior of the building, whilst sensitive to the local architectural style, is also distinctive and this helps residents to find their way home when coming and going from their homes.



We wanted to overcome the issues so often faced by couples, who after many years together, are sadly separated when one develops dementia and moves into nursing care. Shore Green has been designed to provide homes for couples; keeping them together and providing the care and support they both needed to maintain their wellbeing and independence for as long as possible – often, in many cases, until the end of life. IN one case a couple lived at Shore Green, together, for ten years.

We believe that this significantly improves the quality of life for both people and can be particularly important in helping with memories.

Supporting independence, enhancing lives

Irwell Valley works in partnership with Manchester City Council, who commission the on-site care team, provided by Creative Support. The model is collaborative yet distinct. Irwell Valley provides the housing management and person-centred housing related support services, whereas Creative Support provides tailored and flexible care. The contract between Manchester City Council and the care provider allows for flexibility around all residents' needs, and assistance is provided when needed and when a resident chooses.

Shore Green's ethos is to enable residents to maintain their independence as far as possible. The Irwell Valley team work closely with residents to understand their interests and needs, inviting the input of family members and friends, to provide a service that stimulates and inspires residents.

The model used helps to maintain routines and skills, that supports residents to maintain levels of independence. Integral to the housing related support service, the team provide a wide range of stimulating activities, both individually and in social groups.

For example, residents enjoy regular movie afternoons in the lounge, with a pop-up retro cinema. The home screenings reduce the isolation of being unable or unwilling to visit the local cinema.



Clinical research also shows that caring for animals can improve wellbeing and memory, so we introduced a brood of hens, which are cared for by the residents. Numerous other activities take place throughout the week, informed by residents' choice and therefore appealing to their tastes and abilities.

Events regularly take place outside the scheme too, both through connections with the local community and by participating in cultural events in and around Manchester. Residents will shortly be taking part in a project with the Manchester Camerata co-creating music, an activity that is creative, enjoyable and therapeutic.

This truly makes a difference. Dr Sean Lennon, Lead Consultant for Later Life Psychiatry, Manchester Mental Health & Social Care Trust says: "I'm impressed that there has been fidelity to the original model of providing care for people with dementia that maintains as far as possible their independence. Often the concerns leading to an admission to Shore Green are regarding a person's safety in the community and failing self-care which might otherwise lead to an admission in to 24-hour care, either a residential or a nursing home. Access to Shore Green has prevented that admission and the environment and care are such that the people are able to live there with supported autonomy for some years despite a worsening of their disabilities and whilst maintaining as far as possible a feeling of independence." When residents are admitted into hospital the average length of stay is six days, compared to a national average of ten days.

Our resident Jenny says, "I much prefer it here. There's more activity. You see people every day and we're all really friendly. Something as simple as seeing other people come and go can make you feel so much better. The best thing about living here are the staff. You've only got to ask and they'll always go out of their way to help you."

Like any supported housing service, Shore Green needs to develop and evolve. We are currently working with Professor Anthea Innes at Salford University's Institute for Dementia to review and further improve the design of Shore Green, to ensure that it benefits from the latest thinking in dementia design to enhance the residents' experience further.

A key message of the government's National Dementia Challenge is 'to make life better for those who have dementia and their families'. Shore Green, certainly meets that challenge and has earned the respect of commissioners, health service providers, and most importantly, our residents, their families and their friends.

The scheme has demonstrated through independent evaluations and resident feedback that it is an excellent, pioneering model of dementia care and support that continues to meet its key objective of supporting people with dementia to live independently and well for longer.

About the author

Andrew White is the Head of Supported Services at Irwell Valley Housing Association. He is responsible for the Association's supported and sheltered housing services and has over twenty years experience working in social housing management.