



youngcare : **Designing Homes**

What do people with high care needs want from the places they live?

Short Report

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*A product of the Youngcare & Griffith University
Knowledge Partnership*



Designing homes

What do young people with high care needs want from the places they live?

So often, housing designed for people with high care needs misses the mark. Designers, policy makers and builders work with the best intentions but many decisions are informed by what they believe is required, or what is seen to be affordable. Rarely are the people for whom the housing is designed asked what they look for in safe, accessible and homely surroundings. Nor are their family or non-family paid carers included or consulted in the design, planning and building process.

At Youngcare, we put young people with high care needs and those who support them at the centre of all we do. Our mission is to create real choice in housing and to promote appropriate living environments that allow young people to live young lives among the community.

Youngcare's knowledge partner, Griffith University, has conducted first of its kind research to understand assisted housing from the point

of view of the people for whom it is home, and from the perspective of those who care for them.

We hope these findings will assist those involved in creating housing for people with high care needs on a commercial scale, as well as anyone modifying their own homes. They will certainly inform all future Youngcare developments.

Youngcare has built
3 ACCOMMODATION
SOLUTIONS and given
38 YOUNG PEOPLE the chance
to live a new life

Fast Facts



7,000

young people with high care needs live in aged care facilities.



700,000

people are being cared for at home by loved ones, often with limited support.

Can we get in, and move around comfortably?

Accessibility tops the list of requirements when young people with high care needs are asked to list their preferred characteristics and features in custom designed housing. Physical accessibility includes into the home, to all amenities within the home and the space and amenities that surround the dwelling.

Single storey housing, level throughout the living and sleeping areas, wide hallways, doors and doorways and an open plan and spacious environment are design features that facilitate ease of

access and movement within the home.

Residents look for homes built on a flat block of land with ramps at the front and back and a level driveway.

Bathroom and kitchen areas are especially important to people with complex disabilities who are seeking to live a life that affords a sense of independence, privacy and dignity. This means being able to manage their environment, and to cook and care for themselves to the greatest extent possible.

Residents prefer benches and work tops in the kitchen and bathroom, that leave space for wheelchair access, power points positioned one metre from the floor and storage designed to be reached easily from a seated position. Spacious showers that are hob or step-free are an important feature of bathrooms.

How does the home make us feel?

Residents tell us that they also highly value a number of features that don't directly relate to physical access.

Personal privacy and a homely environment matter as much to someone with high care needs as they do to the rest of the community. In addition, features that promote access to nature and that ease social contact rank highly among their preferences.

Residents also consider the health and safety needs of carers as a priority. Table 1 lists features - other than physical access, prioritised by residents.



Julia Agostinelli (Resident of Youngcare Wesley Mission Brisbane Apartments at Sinnamon Park) greets a friend in her apartment.

“I love it here. I enjoy spending time in my apartment - it's homely and comfortable. I don't feel like I have to escape like I did in the nursing home. Someone left the cage open and I have flown free.” Julia Youngcare resident

Table 1

Example 'other' features prioritised by residents

	'Other' features	Example features
1	Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuite bathroom • Second bathroom and toilet for visitors and carers
2	Homeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bright colours • Art in the home • Plants • Freedom and space to personalise the home
3	Carer workplace health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An adjustable bed • Ceiling / tracking hoist
4	Access to nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor access, such as veranda, patio, deck, or balcony • Contact with animals
5	Resident comfort and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air-conditioning in the bedroom and lounge room • Ceiling fans in the bedroom
6	Social connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spare bedroom for visitors
7	Protection from the elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undercover carport • Garage



Housemate's room at Youngcare Woolloowin Share House.

Assistive technologies

Technology is a great enabler for people living with complex disabilities. Nonetheless, when it comes to housing features, young people are divided as to the importance of technology. Automatic front doors, automatic lights and electric blinds are important in easing access, safety and

independence. However, some of the residents who contributed to our research consider that technological features can become a burden, due to the expense, maintenance involved and inconvenience caused when something goes wrong with the equipment.

Some residents also suggest that when a person has a degenerative condition there is a risk of a more rapid decline if small challenges are removed and the path of life is too smooth.

Can I make it mine?

The intangibles — those aspects that make a dwelling a real home — rank highly for people with high care needs. They look for housing that is individualised and suited to a person's needs, that leaves scope for self-expression and personalisation, and also includes a flexible design allowing for later modifications or adaptations. Security of tenure — knowledge that the home is theirs as long as they need it — is also an important feature that allows residents feel safe and secure at home.

“

“My place is great and it has been renovated to suit me and my wheel chair. I really enjoy vacuuming and I made my own sandwich for the first time last week. Amazing!”

Karina

Home Soon Grant recipient



Belinda Gregory (Youngcare) and Tim Martin (Resident at Youngcare Wesley Mission Brisbane Apartments at Sinnamon Park).

What does the family think? And non-family paid carers?

When those who care for people with high care needs, their family members and non-family paid carers prioritise their preferred features, safety tops the list. As a group, they put resident safety and workplace health and safety for carers as their most important preferences. They also prioritise physical security.

After safety and security, they express preference for features that promote homeliness, comfort and access to nature. Table 2 contains a full list of features in order of priority.



Brian Ross (Resident of the Youngcare Sharehouse at Woolloowin) and family at the house.

Tenancy and care packages

The research project also explored preferences regarding how and where people with high care needs are accommodated in terms of appropriate tenancy packages and the associated care arrangements. The three groups: residents, family members, and non-family paid carers hold different views on the options, with the appropriate arrangement for an individual with complex needs depending considerably on their specific circumstances. The options considered are listed at right, but on one option all were in agreement: 'forced tenancy with a stranger' was viewed negatively.

- (a) living alone with carer support
- (b) living with one other person
- (c) living with three to five other people
- (d) living with other people with a disability
- (e) not living with other people with disability
- (f) the family knowing who the other residents are
- (g) individualised care packages
- (h) shared care packages
- (i) forced tenancy with a stranger

Table 2

Example 'other' features prioritised by family members and non-family paid carers

	'Other' features	Example features
1	Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-contained living quarters
2	Homeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-clinical appearance
3	Residents' comfort and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North-south orientation • Temperature control
4	Access to nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live near bushland • Access to animals
5	Residents' rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a gym • Access to a swimming pool / hydrotherapy pool

Everybody loves a good neighbour(hood)

Ease of access to public places and spaces around the neighbourhood are as important as proximity to its amenities.

The atmosphere of the neighbourhood also matters. Residents, their families and non-paid carers value a homely atmosphere, a relatively peaceful street and a social environment that welcomes people with a disability. Access to appropriate transport is important, but opinions

differ on what is most suitable: walking or wheeling, public transport, or private transport. Again it is a feature that depends considerably on the individual resident's capabilities and circumstances.



The Youngcare Share House at Wooloowin opening day festivities.

Location, location, location

Residents, family members and their paid carers all prefer accommodation for people with high care needs to be in a central location, within walking or wheeling distance to places of interest. Examples of places of interest are shown in Table 3.

Places of interest tend to be associated with an enjoyable activity, a club or a group that

interests the resident; is restorative and aligned with a person's capabilities; or holds value or meaning. These all influence perception of the appeal of the neighbourhood, with places and amenities that support everyday living, like shops, schools and parks, also seen as important to have situated in the local area.

Table 3

Positive and conflicting places of interest identified by residents, family members, and non-family paid carers

Places of interest	Positive	Conflicting
A movie cinema	Positive	Conflicting
Sporting fields and stadiums	Positive	Conflicting
Local horse riding clubs	Positive	Conflicting
Community gardens / botanical gardens	Positive	Conflicting
The river waterfront	Positive	Conflicting
Spiritual or religious havens	Positive	Conflicting
A major shopping centre	Positive	Conflicting
A newsagents	Positive	Conflicting
A post office	Positive	Conflicting
A butcher	Positive	Conflicting
Bowling	Positive	Conflicting
Restaurants	Positive	Conflicting
Local parks	Positive	Conflicting
Clothing retail shops	Positive	Conflicting

Where we live affects our health and quality of life, and young people dealing with complex disabilities have the same need to feel safe, comfortable and connected in their homes and community. Youngcare's vision is a world where all young people with high care needs can live in appropriate accommodation, allowing them to live a young life with choice, dignity and independence. The Youngcare and Griffith University Knowledge Partnership research is one of the first steps in ensuring the needs of these young people are met.

For further information, contact: info@youngcare.com.au or phone 1300 968 642.