

# Design evaluation of older people's extra care housing:

## Development and testing of assessment tool

*Outline of a research project funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council*

**evolve**

*evaluation of older people's living environments*

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### BACKGROUND

New models of housing for older people are emerging that enable them to live independently with care provision tailored to meet individual need. Variously described as 'extra care housing' or, 'very sheltered housing', these models are being developed in the public and private sectors, and are seen by providers, users and policy makers to offer independence within secure, socially supportive, non-institutional settings that may reduce, or in some cases, eliminate the need for communal residential care. Extra care housing is an evolving building type and there is considerable variation in provision. Buildings vary in size, layout, form, space standards and facilities available. Currently attempts are being made, e.g. by the Elderly Accommodation Counsel, to categorise and define extra care housing typologies.

Evaluations of recent schemes indicate that the design of the physical environment is a major concern of building residents, but as yet there is very little research evidence to underpin the design of extra care housing. Hence, there is a need to identify aspects of buildings that promote the well-being of users. In order to achieve this, researchers from the School of Architecture, the Sheffield Institute for Studies in Ageing and the School of Health and Related Research, University of Sheffield, in partnership with PSSRU, University of Kent, aim to produce a new and valid tool (EVOLVE) that can be used for the evaluation and assessment of extra care housing design. It will build on an existing evaluation tool, the Sheffield Care Environment Assessment Matrix (SCEAM) which was developed in the Design in Caring Environments (DICE) project funded by the EPSRC EQUAL programme, to assess the extent to which residential care buildings meet the needs of building users.

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### RESEARCH AIMS

To develop and validate an evidence-based tool (EVOLVE) that can:

- Be used at all stages in the life-cycle of a building from inception, through design and design evaluation, to post-occupancy evaluation.
- Identify design and environmental features associated with well-being and higher quality of life in older people.
- Describe the range of extra care housing available.
- Be used across the range of purpose-built housing and care settings for older people.

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### METHOD

The study design incorporates five elements:

1. Tool development – A combination of evidence obtained from design guidelines, literature and building reviews, together with data generated from focus groups and interviews involving extra care scheme residents, family members, care providers, employees, commissioners and architects will be used to synthesise items for the evaluation tool.
2. Pilot study – To determine initial usability and face validity, the tool will be administered in a sample of six extra care schemes. Results from the pilot studies will be reviewed in a cross-sectional workshop and refinements made to the tool following consultation with the project advisory group.

3. Assessment of social well-being and quality of life –Two hundred and fifty residents will be identified and recruited from 25 extra care schemes. An assessment of their quality of life will be obtained using a survey format.
4. Reliability and Validity –An independent validation team will score EVOLVE and selected environmental assessment tools across the range of extra care schemes.
5. Modelling the relationship between building design and quality of life – Multivariate analyses will examine the co-variation of EVOLVE scored building design criteria and environmental variables with quality of life outcomes. The analysis will identify the contribution of design factors to social well-being and quality of life and the inter-relationship between these factors and individual level characteristics.

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#### TIMETABLE AND OUTPUTS

The project will run from October 2007 to September 2010

The results of the study, including a building typology database, will be fed back to participants and disseminated widely in a variety of ways, including peer review publications, conferences and via the CSIP network website.

The final version of EVOLVE will be produced in electronic and paper versions. It will be available for free download via the CSIP network website.

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#### RESEARCH TEAM

The full team working on project to develop and test an assessment tool to evaluate the design of extra care housing for older people includes:

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