

How should care facilities respond to help recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic?

THE 3-STEP ROADMAP TO SUCCESS FOR CARE HOME OPERATORS & MANAGERS.

Survival - Sustainability - Strengthening

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"Unprecedented times. Now more than ever. The new normal."

These are phrases we've all heard a lot over the last few months. Some might say they've become a bit of a cliché. But that doesn't make the sentiment behind them any less true.

Since the UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak began in early 2020, there have been huge changes for every industry, sector, and individual across the country.

Coronavirus & Care Homes

The COVID-19 outbreak has been especially challenging for the care home sector.

Sadly, there have been thousands of deaths. Stress and anxieties are high among both staff and residents. Plus, many families are avoiding putting their relatives into care homes due to concerns about safety.

This is putting care home operators and managers under increasing pressure. Not just to protect their staff and residents, but to bring in enough money to keep their services running long-term.

Survival, Sustainability & Strengthening

We've gathered the latest research, statistics, and advice from industry experts. Then we've compiled it into a simple 3-step plan to help care homes recover and rebuild.

Each section is full of practical tips and free resources to help care homes to:

- 1.** Survive the immediate risks of COVID-19.
- 2.** Return to operating at a sustainable level.
- 3.** Strengthen their services to achieve future growth and success.

Ready to get started?

/ About Innova

Innova Care Concepts – you can call us Innova for short – was founded in 2008. We had a clear mission which remains the same today: to enhance quality of life through innovation.

For the last 12 years, we've worked alongside care home operators and managers to create world-leading care environments. We have supplied everything from hoist systems and care beds to full interior design and furniture packages.



"We've worked with care homes for a long time – forming lasting partnerships and a trusted relationship.

After hearing about the challenges you were facing, we knew we wanted to do something meaningful to help. Between us, the Innova team have over 200 years' experience in health and social care. Having experienced decades of industry change and worked with a diverse range of care facilities puts us in a unique position to support you and your care homes through these tough times.

Providing free advice and resources seemed like the least we could do, care homes support thousands of people in later life. Keeping as many homes as possible open and thriving is key as the country needs you! This eBook is a small token of our appreciation for the work you do."

JOE HULBERT

INNOVA DIRECTOR & CARE HOME ADVISOR

/ Overview

We know every care home has been affected differently and circumstances are still changing.

That's why the plan is split into sections. You can skip a stage if you feel ready to move on. If you think an area needs more work, just go back a step!

SURVIVAL

Protect residents and staff against COVID-19. Support the mental health of staff. Continue caring for resident's general health and well-being. Reassure stakeholders.

SUSTAINABILITY

Avoid relatives withdrawing residents from the home. Reach a point where beds are consistently filled. Operate so incoming funds cover outgoing costs.

STRENGTHENING

Start increasing profit through expansion and/or improvements to your home.

/ Survival

Tips for tackling the four key challenges right now:

- Preventing infections and minimising deaths.
- Protecting the mental health of staff and residents.
- Continuing to provide quality resident care.
- Showing stakeholders that you're handling the situation seriously.



“Care home fatalities account for 21% of all COVID-19 death in England, 25% in Wales, and 45% in Scotland.”

ECDC [1]

/ Preventing Infection

Preventing an outbreak of COVID-19 in their home is the number one priority for all care providers right now.

TIP 1: MAKE SOMEONE RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING UP WITH GUIDELINES

We know everyone is monitoring the COVID-19 situation closely. But the advice and official guidelines are changing daily. It's easy to feel overwhelmed and worry about missing something.

Assigning responsibilities can help keep everything under control. It might be that the care home manager is responsible for checking all updates. Or you might ask team leaders to monitor guidelines for one area e.g. training.

Go for whichever method will best help you to balance staying informed with running the home and caring for residents.

Here's a recap of the sources you should be checking regularly for new information:

- **CDC** – Guidance for all areas of adult social care.
- **Skills for Care** – Guidance on essential training.
- **GOV.UK** – Guidance for admissions, resident care, and staff safety.

You can find links to all their websites in the 'Resources' section – page 57!

What else can we do?

Following the official guidelines ensures you're meeting your legal requirements to prevent infection.

However, many care home operators are concerned about relying on these guidelines alone. Access to testing and PPE aren't fully under an individual care home's control.

Plus, there can, understandably, be pressure from residents' relatives to go beyond the guidelines to keep their loved ones safe.

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Let's look at some more proactive steps you can take to prevent infection...

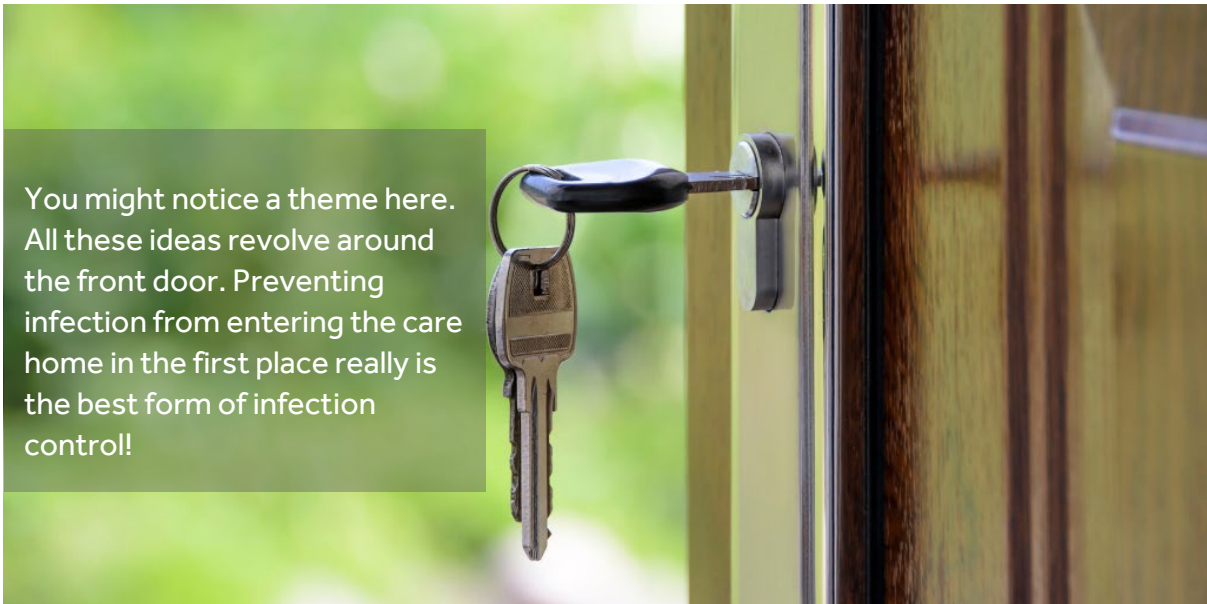
TIP 2: LEARN FROM THE CARE HOMES WITH NO COVID-19 CASES

Of course, there are many factors that determine whether a home will experience a COVID-19 outbreak.

Care homes in isolated areas are less likely to be exposed than care homes in cities. Care homes with frailer residents are, sadly, more likely to experience COVID-19 deaths.

That being said, care homes who have avoided outbreaks can still reveal some great ideas for infection control:

- Prevent anyone coming through your front door that doesn't need to! It isn't easy for relatives and residents, but it only takes one person (with or without symptoms) to bring the virus into your home.
- Rent a vehicle to collect your staff so they are all travelling in a safe environment rather than on public transport.
- Install a sink by the front door. That way you can ensure anyone entering the home has thoroughly cleaned their hands before touching anything.



You might notice a theme here. All these ideas revolve around the front door. Preventing infection from entering the care home in the first place really is the best form of infection control!

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What if we've already had a COVID-19 case?

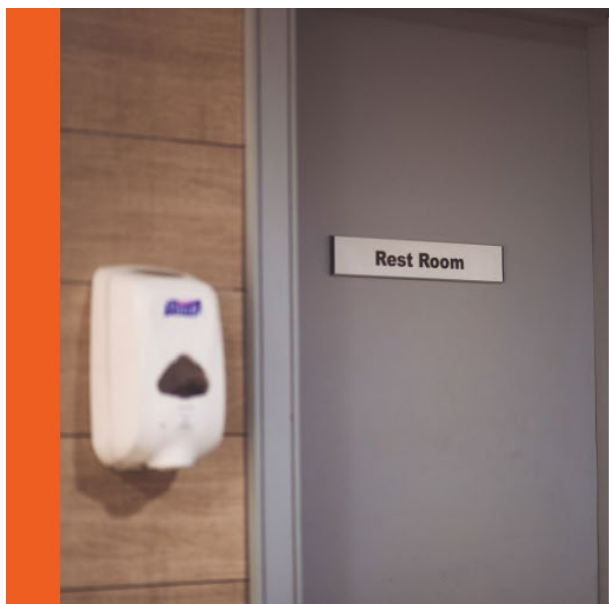
Unfortunately, despite their best efforts, many care homes have already been exposed to Coronavirus.

Here are some additional steps you can do to prevent the spread of infection within a care home:

- If you accept any residents from a hospital discharge or similar, ensure they are allocated to a specific isolated area of the home. It's not nice but you are protecting the rest of your residents here!
- Assign staff to a set area of the home. That way, if one individual becomes infected it is easier to stop the spread throughout the rest of the home.

Some care homes have been providing staff with different coloured t-shirts to make it easier to know who's working in which area.

- Consider replacing your antibacterial gel with a 'foot activated' antibacterial gel hand near entrances, exits, and key locations where staff cannot easily wash their hands.
- Add signage clearly defining where the closest sink is and encouraging regular hand washing.



“Because all of our homes are single room ensuite, the number of infections we've had have been relatively low.”

NATALIE-JAYNE MACDONALD

UK CEO, SUNRISE SENIOR LIVING & GRACEWELL HEALTHCARE

Lots of advice is focused on how staff can help to prevent infection. But you should also be doing everything you can to help residents follow good handwashing practices.

- Ensure the bathroom door is decorated in contrast to the wall to enable residents to easily find the bathroom when they want to wash their hands.
- Check the soap is easy to see, the soap dispenser should be a different colour to stand out from the wall it's fitted to.

PPE SHORTAGES

If you are struggling to get hold of PPE, please get in touch. We have some trusted contacts and will be happy to point you in the right direction.

TIP 3: TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FREE TRAINING

Finding time for training might feel challenging right now. But taking 30-minutes to learn more about infection control measures saves time and reduces risks long-term.

Infection Prevention Society (IPS)

The IPS have created a free training guide for preventing and controlling the spread of COVID-19 in care homes.

It explains how Coronavirus is transmitted and provides practical tips for cleaning and staff safety at home. Everything is laid out in a simple PowerPoint, so it couldn't be easier!

You can find the link to download the training pack in our 'Resources' section – page 57.

InnovaLive

In 2020, Innova launched our own online training service. As well as running virtual CPD events, we can arrange individual video calls with our specialist advisors.

If you'd like some advice on disinfecting mattresses and other care equipment, get in touch! We'd be more than happy to run a training session.

We can also provide consultations on the best equipment for infection control. Email enquiries@innova.uk.com to book a free session.

/ Mental Health

The UK lockdown has put many people's mental health under strain.

Changes in practice, staff absences, not seeing loved ones, fearing for their own health, and a whole host of other factors, are proving especially challenging in care homes.

Care homes have an obligation to look after residents' mental health as well as their physical health. But it's just as important to support the mental wellbeing of your staff.



“My biggest challenge right now is managing staff anxieties and the constant pressure of monitoring PPE resources.”

CEO

UK GROUP OF RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES

TIP 4: MAKE THE MOST OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology can help both residents and staff to get the social support they need whilst remaining physically distant from others.

Care Workforce App

Launched by the department for Health and Social Care, the Care Workforce app contains lots of free resources.

There's advice on coping with stress and tools to help people sleep better. It also contains all the latest policies and guidelines. So, it makes keeping up with changes more manageable too!

Just search '**care workforce**' in the app store or visit workforce.adultsocialcare.uk if you don't have a smartphone.

Video Calls – With Care

Video calls are a great way for staff in care home groups to stay in touch across individual homes.

Make sure everyone has been walked through how to use your chosen software. If you're familiar with Zoom or Microsoft Teams, it's easy to forget not everybody will feel confident straight away!

TAKE TIME TO CATCH UP

At Innova, we've found it's important to use video calls to socialise as well as work. This is especially true for our office workers who are currently working from home.

We like to do a short quiz every morning. It only takes 5 minutes, but it gets everyone smiling and starting the day positively.

Kahoot is a great free quizzing app. There's lots of topics to choose from, or you can add your own questions. Just search '**kahoot**' in the app store.

You don't have to be using video calls to try this out. It would work just as well for care home staff taking a break together during a shift.

THINK ABOUT HOW EACH RESIDENT WILL RESPOND

Video calls and online games can be a great mood-booster for residents too.

They can chat to each other whilst staying safely in their own rooms. It can also provide a much-needed connection to their families when visits aren't possible.

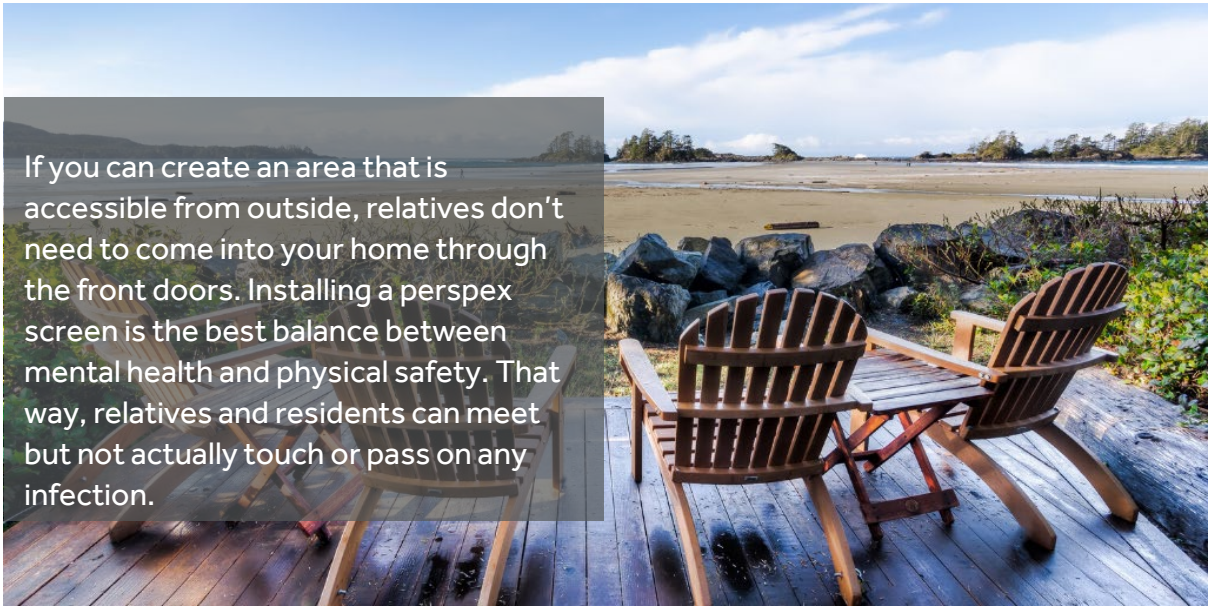
However, it's important to think about whether video calls are something an individual resident will enjoy.

The average age of a care home resident is 85. Many won't be confident with technology and some will want nothing to do with it at all!

In dementia care settings especially, a video call with family could be more distressing than comforting.

Here are some alternatives you could try in these cases:

- Ask the family to send a letter (or an email for you to print). Some residents will feel more comfortable with staying in touch using a traditional method. Doing this regularly can give them something to look forward to each week!
- Can you set-up a designated meeting room for residents and relatives to meet? As lockdown measures start to ease, it's not possible or fair to keep residents and their relatives apart forever. The key is to keep people from entering the main care home building.



If you can create an area that is accessible from outside, relatives don't need to come into your home through the front doors. Installing a perspex screen is the best balance between mental health and physical safety. That way, relatives and residents can meet but not actually touch or pass on any infection.

/ Maintaining Quality Care

Efforts to protect residents from Coronavirus should not come at a cost to their everyday care.

Getting the balance between taking safety precautions and still providing a happy, quality care environment can be tricky.

Here is a simple idea you can try to maintain the right balance:

TIP 5: AUDIT FOR COMFORT AS WELL AS INFECTION CONTROL

Many care homes we've spoken to are updating their infection control policies.

Part of this update will often include auditing furniture and equipment for infection risks. Combine this with a review of the comfort and support the equipment offers residents.

If you're going to invest in more infection control-friendly options, it's an ideal time to see what you can do to enhance comfort too.

- Check your furniture, particularly riser recliner chairs and armchairs are clean and comfortable. Could you improve the comfort with a pressure relieving cushion? Consider replacing certain chairs with high back chairs for additional support to their head and neck.
- Check your mobile hoists. Are they sufficient for the number of hoisted residents you have? Would a fitted hoist system be more appropriate in certain rooms?



The Arene rise and recline chair has been built for infection control and comfort.

/ Demonstrating Progress to Stakeholders

The definition of a stakeholder is “a person with an interest or concern in something”.

All care homes have stakeholders and you need to demonstrate to them how seriously you’re taking the situation.

Unfortunately, it’s not just about what you are doing to help. It’s about what you are perceived to be doing to help.

This is especially important for care home groups who report into boards or Venture Capital firms.

They don’t see the day-to-day activities in your home and need reassurance that their investments are being spent wisely.

TIP 6: INCORPORATE VISUAL SAFETY MEASURES

As the saying goes, “you’ve got to see it to believe it.”

Incorporating highly visual safety cues is one of the most effective ways to show people outside the care home that you’re taking the situation seriously.

Think about when you’ve been to the supermarket. Have you seen the 2 metre markers placed on the floor?

This immediately makes many shoppers feel reassured. They know they can maintain social distancing.

You can take this idea and apply it to your care home:

- Add signs to the front door reminding delivery drivers, and any other visitors, to ring the doorbell then step back.
- Consider investing in a temperature monitoring system and/or hygiene stations.

Having contact-free thermometers installed by the entrances shows you are monitoring who comes in and out of your care home. You can get systems that use facial recognition to store the temperature reading of regular visitors and staff. If needed, they can even be connected to the doors and stop them opening if a high temperature reading is recorded.



Whilst we all hope the Coronavirus pandemic is a one-off event, there is a risk of a second spike. Plus, no matter what happens next, this has changed how we all think about safety. Installing a system like this is a clear show of commitment to resident safety.

Take as many precautions as you can and keep up consistent communications.

/ Sustainability

To keep operating sustainably, care homes must do three things:

- Look after your team to keep them well and fit for work.
- Avoid concerned relatives taking residents out of the home.
- Attract new residents to fill any empty rooms.



“74% of care home providers are now concerned about the sustainability of their service.”

NATIONAL CARE ASSOCIATION [2]

/ Protecting Your Team

Many of the temporary care home closures we've seen during the COVID-19 outbreak are due to staff shortages. Keeping your team well and fit for work is essential for sustainability moving forward.

After all, they are the ones who keep the home running and the residents cared for!

TIP 7: CREATE SOMEWHERE STAFF CAN RELAX

It's undeniably been a stressful time for care home staff. Even if your home has not had any cases, Coronavirus will have had an impact on the entire team.

Giving them a dedicated space to relax and destress is essential. Happier, more relaxed teams will provide a higher level of resident care.

Here are some of our favourite ideas we've seen homes try out:

- **Add an indoor garden to the staff room** - It's a proven fact that nature helps us to relax. Creating an indoor garden can create a relaxing area where staff can take 5 minutes to themselves. Check out page 45 for more on the science behind the benefits of plants!
- **Provide access to support resources** - Some people will prefer something a little more practical to help them stay positive. There are hundreds of free and affordable resources out there. From breathing exercises to visualisation activities. Invest in a few different options and set up a private area, with an iPad or some print outs, where staff can go if they start to feel overwhelmed.
- **Get the local community involved** - Ask friends of the care home, local businesses, and anyone else you can think of to share their appreciation for the staff. Something as simple as an email or video message saying thank you can really brighten someone's day.

/ Easing the Concerns of Relatives

Many families are questioning whether a care home is the best place for their loved one to be right now. This is understandable...

The number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in care homes have been widely reported. Plus, with more people working from home, some families now feel they're able to care for their relatives at home - at least in the short-term.

However, if existing residents leave the home faster than new residents are admitted, it leaves care homes in a difficult financial position.

Occupancy rates must be maintained so there are enough fees coming in to cover staff pay, food, and other essential running costs.

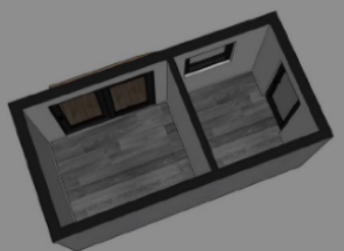
What can we do to avoid knee jerk reactions?

Tip 6 (add visual safety measures) will also help with easing the anxieties of relatives.

But family members aren't making decisions in the same way as board members.

If they're thinking of taking their relative out of your care home, they're likely feeling stressed. They might also feel time-pressure to make a choice. It's a very emotional decision.

So, we recommend taking some direct action to reassure them that you're working to keep their relatives safe.



One popular way care homes are working to prevent occupancy levels dropping & help attract more residents is to set up a designated outdoor booth or meeting pod which allows relatives and residents to meet safely.

CONTACT US FOR A QUOTE!


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TIP 8: TAKE A PERSONALISED APPROACH

It's important to get in touch with each resident's family individually. A mass newsletter isn't going to make them feel heard.

Here are some ideas to try instead:

- **Assign each family a direct point of contact.**
This gives a personal touch which relatives will appreciate. It also helps to split up the communications workload across the team. If one person is responsible for handling all enquiries, they could quickly become overwhelmed. Slow responses are likely to make families feel their concerns aren't being taken seriously.
- **Present the facts alongside personal updates.**
Relatives will still expect to be informed about any new COVID-19 cases or deaths within the care home. You have a responsibility to share honest updates. However, each family's main concern is their own relative. Sharing personal updates about what they've been up to and how they are helps make the situation feel less scary. You're reassuring them that their loved one is still happy and well cared for.
- **Remember that not everyone will have the same concerns.**
All families will be worried about their relatives' safety. But some will also be dealing with new financial pressures and other personal problems. Take some time to check in with relatives. Ask them how they're doing. If you understand their top concerns about their relative staying in a care home, then you can start to address them.



If you have any budget available, consider sending a postcard or small gifts. Coffee, chocolates, or something practical, like hand sanitiser, helps to show you care about their wellbeing.

TIP 9: REMIND THEM OF THE VALUE YOU OFFER

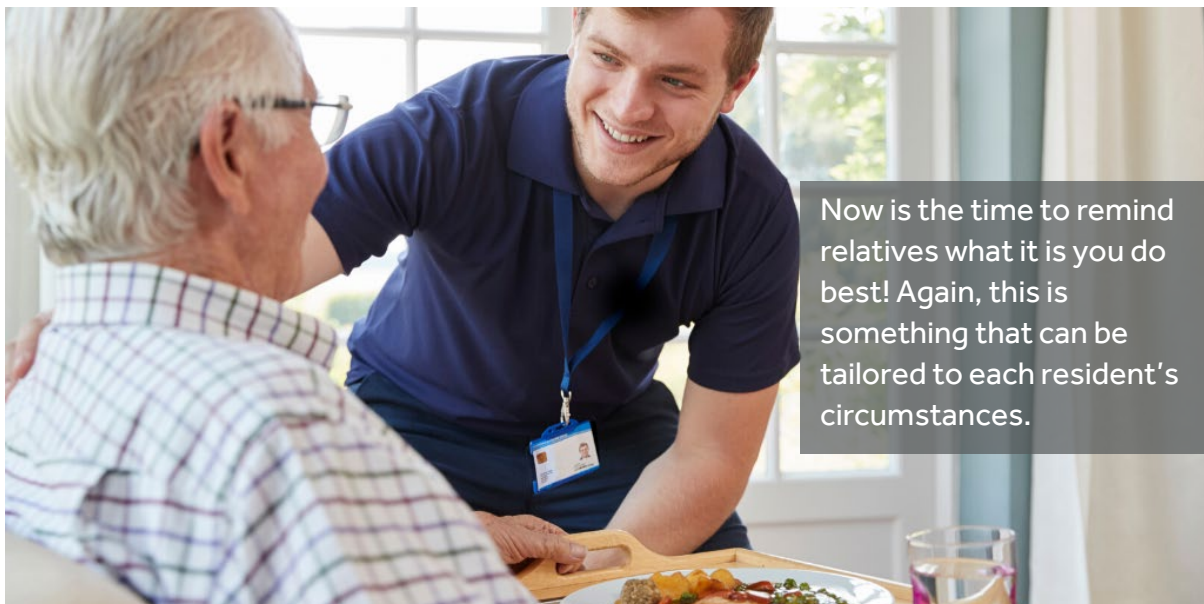
Why did they choose your care home in the first place?

Now is the time to highlight everything you do that enhances quality of life for your residents and their families.

The world feels very different from this time last year. It's easy for people to forget the benefits a care home gives their family. It's up to you to remind them!

For example...

- Do you specialise in an area e.g. dementia care? Shine a spotlight on your staff and their qualifications and experience.
- Are you based in a rural area? Emphasise your sense of community and opportunities for socialising. Away from a care home setting, this could be difficult for an older person with limited mobility.



/ Attracting New Residents

Over the coming months and years, you will need to attract new residents to maintain your occupancy rates – even if none of your existing residents leave due to COVID-19 concerns.

Trying to promote your services to prospective residents can feel like an uphill battle right now. But the best methods are the same as they've always been...

1. Stand out from competitor care providers.
2. Make existing residents, and their families, want to recommend you.

The key question is, how do you go about doing that?

Tip 8 (take a personalised approach) and Tip 9 (emphasise your value) should go a long way towards generating recommendations long-term. But we've got a few other suggestions for standing out from the crowd.

TIP 9: COMMUNICATE EVERYTHING YOU DO

There will be lots of behind the scenes changes you're making which aren't immediately visible.

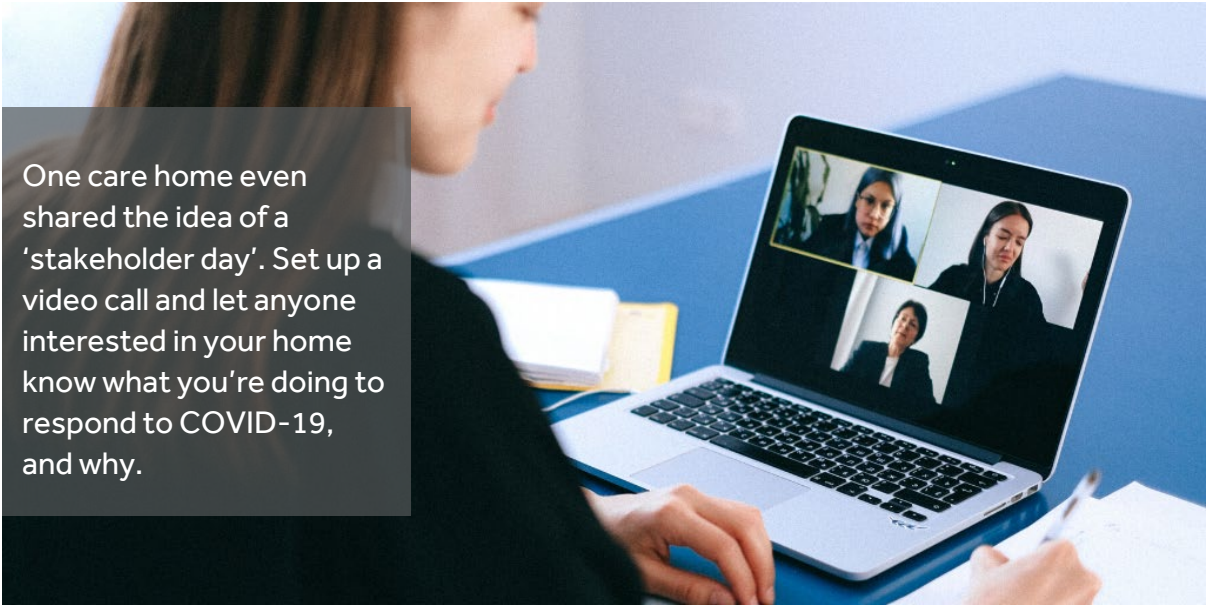
It's critical that you make existing and potential residents aware of as much of this work as possible.

If you've found a new way to facilitate social distancing, let them know. If you've improved your infection control policy, share it!

There are lots of ways you can get the information out there:

- Regular newsletters.
- Social media.
- Your website - if you haven't already, set up a blog section and share a weekly update.

Just taking a bit of time to communicate what you're doing goes a long way to making people feel confident in your ability to handle the situation.



One care home even shared the idea of a 'stakeholder day'. Set up a video call and let anyone interested in your home know what you're doing to respond to COVID-19, and why.

TIP 10: GET ADVENTUROUS WITH YOUR MENUS

Now is a great time to change up your food menus more often.

Lots of things feel outside of care homes control right now. But mealtimes will always be part of residents' daily routines. It's something stable - which makes it a great area to work on improving.

Good nutrition is key for maintaining good health in older people. Unfortunately, stress can lead to reduced appetite. So, there will be many families considering care homes who are particularly concerned about their loved one's eating habits right now.

Malnutrition in those aged 65+ is associated with...

- More hospital admissions and longer stays.
- Impaired recovery from illness.
- Impaired immune response.
- Increased frailty.



“1 in 4 residents were affected by malnutrition before being admitted into a care home.”

MALNUTRITION PATHWAY

This is another tip which really benefits your current residents too. With the risk of Coronavirus, protecting against malnutrition becomes even more important.

Interesting, varied menus can encourage residents to keep eating well. Try an outdoor BBQ, have themed evening meals, and get residents involved with menu choices wherever you can.

Making meals into more of an event can give existing residents something to look forward to and give you something to promote to potential residents.

Be a line of positivity, consistency, and reliability in times of uncertainty.

/ Strengthening

Remember, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Here are our two top recommendations for planning for the future, growing, and thriving:

- Offer the facilities people are willing to pay more for.
- Establish your brand as high end.



“The social care sector is the most likely to bounce back in 2021. Sustained, medium-term growth is still expected from 2020 – 2025.”

ICAEW [3],[4]

/ Facilities

When we assist care homes with their planning for the future, one question keeps coming up...

How can we improve and stay one-step ahead of our competition?

Having excellent staff and the right clinical strategy will always be important.

But some factors that often get overlooked are the importance of facilities and good design.

TIP 11: REVIEW WHETHER YOUR FACILITIES LIVE UP TO EXPECTATIONS

Before you can work out which areas of your care home to invest in, you need to understand which facilities people are willing to pay more for.

Taking some time to understand what potential residents, and their families, expect to see in a care home will help to maximise return on investment (ROI) on any improvements you make.

Age UK has a great list of suggestions for what families should look for when looking around care homes.

Some of the top facilities they list are:

- Accessible bathrooms.
- Secure personal storage in bedrooms.
- Reading, TV, and radio rooms.
- Communal spaces which can accommodate a range of social activities.

You can find the link to the full checklist in our 'Resources' section – page 57.

It's worth looking and seeing how many boxes your care home ticks through the eyes of a potential resident!

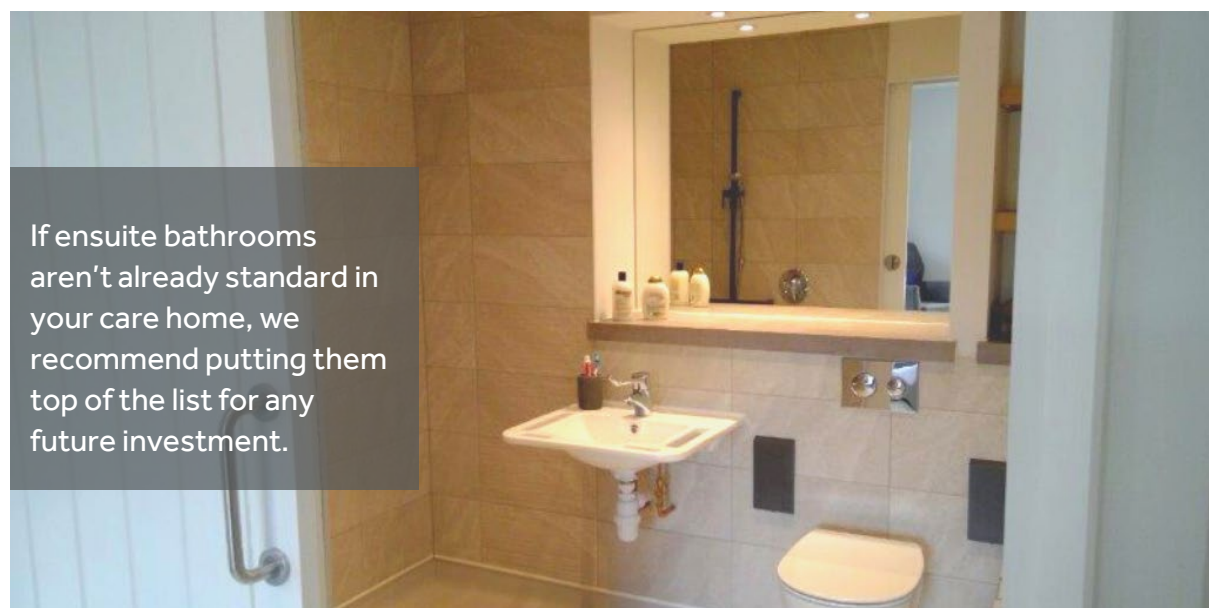
Has Coronavirus changed what people expect?

The Coronavirus outbreak has had an immediate impact on what's important for attracting new care home residents.

Facilities which were once 'desirable' have become 'essential' overnight.

Ensuite bathrooms are probably the best example. The idea of sharing toilet and hygiene facilities will be a deal breaker for a lot of people.

TIP 12: INCORPORATE THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF GOOD DESIGN



If ensuite bathrooms aren't already standard in your care home, we recommend putting them top of the list for any future investment.

For relatives - who are often the key decision makers when choosing a home - good design is high on the list of things they're looking for!

Think about how much you charge per week. Then think about the look and feel of your bedrooms. Would you pay the fees to sleep in there?

Of course, care homes are not hotels. We know that the fees have to cover around the clock care and many other facilities besides the bedrooms.

But the fact is, you can't charge premium rates without a premium design. Lighting, layout and finish all affect how much someone is willing to pay.

Innova's interior designer, Jane Verity-Smart, has shared her top tips for impressive care home design!



"I was passionate about interior design from a young age, studied in Newcastle, then worked in the corporate sector with leading blue chip companies, before developing a personal interest in dementia and care home interior design.

With over 25 years experience in the development of large new build and refurbishment projects. I can help with everything from the initial brief and concept, design development, detail design & specification through to overseeing the production of visualisation and onsite completion.

Whatever you're looking for, I can assist you in making the right choices for your development!"

JANE VERITY-SMART
INNOVA INTERIOR DESIGNER

Interior design is much more than just choosing a paint colour. There are seven key principles for creating a good design:

- 1.** Space.
- 2.** Line.
- 3.** Form.
- 4.** Light.
- 5.** Colour.
- 6.** Texture.
- 7.** Pattern.

Here is Jane's advice on how each principle can be applied to care homes.

If you're contemplating a refurbishment or new build, follow this guide to create a home that **enhances residents' wellbeing** and **commands a higher fee!**

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/ Space

Are you making the best use of your space? Could a new bed, for example with a low footboard make a small room feel bigger? Has the available space been made best use of?

Space is one of the most important elements of your home. Interior design can help to use it in a way that aids and enables the lives of your residents.

CONSIDER YOUR REQUIREMENTS

Space acts as a foundation on which your entire environment works. When reviewing your space, it is a good idea to discuss all your requirements with an interior designer.

Access requirements, i.e. wheelchair access and the ability to easily move furniture, like riser recliner chairs, is especially important in a care home setting.



The chairs aren't blocking the entrance, and there's space to move them if a resident needs to sit in their own care chair or wheelchair instead.

FUNCTIONAL SPACE VS. OPEN SPACE

It's helpful to remember that space is balanced by 'functional objects' such as furniture and accessories and 'open space' for movement and access.

A balance needs to be maintained to achieve a safe environment and reduce the risk of slips, trips, and falls. Working with an interior designer can help you to find this balance whilst still creating an attractive room.



The space around the bed and chairs are free from trip hazards.



You'd be amazed how rearranging your space can impact your number of ambulance callouts and hospital admissions!

Keeping residents safe has always been a top priority. But in the years to come, there will be even more focus on preventing hospital stays for care home residents.

REDUCING HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS

/ Line

Lines are responsible for establishing a sense of harmony, contrast, and unity in an environment.

They define shapes and forms and act as visual guides within an interior environment.

HORIZONTAL, VERTICAL & DYNAMIC LINES

Lines are broadly categorized into three types:

- Horizontal lines adorn structures like chairs, beds, and tables. They add a safe and secure feeling to the space
- Vertical lines can be found on windows, doorways, and wardrobes. They emote a free and expansive nature.
- Dynamic curves, or angular lines, are 'action-oriented'. They add a bit of interest and can be seen on structures like stairs and reception counters.



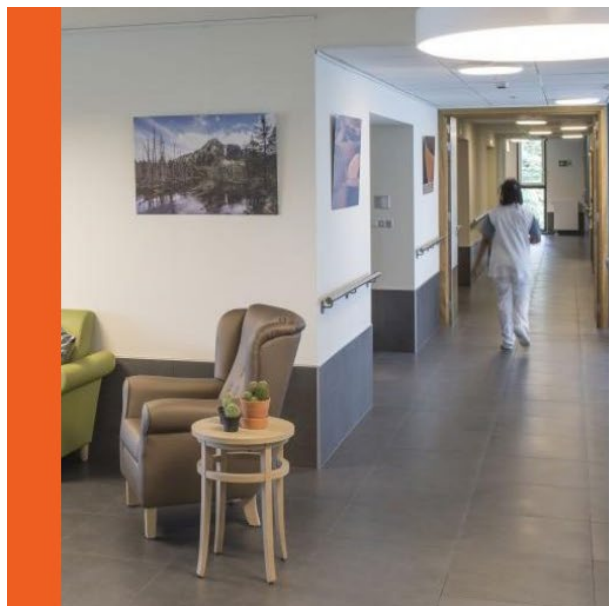
The curves on the reception desk contrast with the room's straight lines to create a focal point.

An interior designer knows how to utilize these lines to define the forms, another important interior design element. By defining spaces within your care home, a designer can improve the flow.

DEMENTIA CARE

Another key benefit is their application to dementia care.

The simplicity of lines is usually helpful for residents with dementia to minimise confusion and aid wayfinding and memory.



"These grab rails, wall panels and photos all work together to emphasise the doorway to the left.

This is a great example of how practical and aesthetic elements of design can be combined to aid wayfinding."

USE OF LINES IN CARE HOMES

/ Form

Form is the shape of the room, as well as any objects within the room. In other words, it relates to the physical form of anything three dimensional.

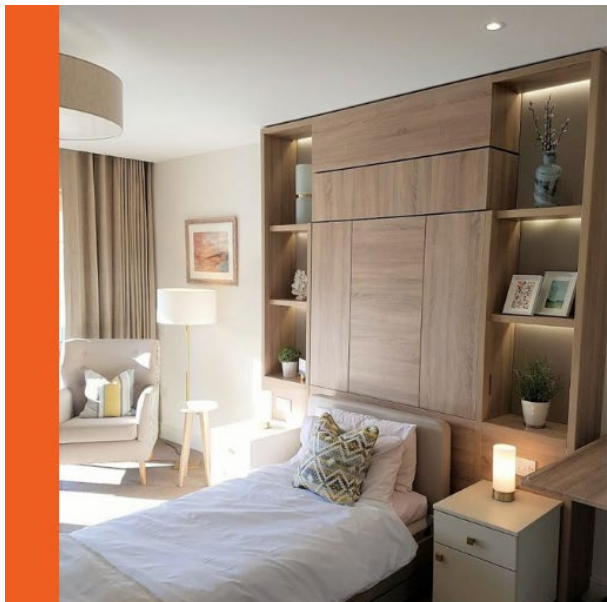
GEOMETRIC VS. NATURAL FORMS

Forms can usually be described as either geometric or natural.

Geometric refers to hard lines and square edges, often looking man-made. Natural, by contrast, relates to more organic forms that seem to be created by nature, such as curves.

For care homes, geometric forms will often be more cost-effective and better for infection control. This is because they lend themselves better to finishes such as laminates. Laminate is a popular material choice in care homes. It's affordable and can have an antimicrobial finish.

However, if you're aiming for a high-end finish then using organic materials, like wood, to create natural forms can be highly effective!



"Our custom bedheads are a great example of geometric form. There's lots of square edges!"

Using a wood-finish laminate gives a more high-end look, whilst still being easy clean."

GEOMETRIC FORM IN BEDROOMS

OPEN VS. CLOSED FORMS

Forms can also be categorised as open or closed.

Open forms are forms you can look into, like open-fronted wardrobes with non-reflective surfaces. They are helpful to some individuals with dementia and the ageing eye.

Closed forms are enclosed and self-contained. Chest of drawers or bedside tables are good examples in care homes.

PROPORTIONS & SCALE

The key consideration with form is the proportions and scale of objects in comparison to the room itself.

Adding forms of similar shapes can create harmony and balance. Whereas adding too many different shapes can have a confusing result.

A space is typically more pleasing if the dominant form, e.g. circles or squares, is repeated in minor objects, like cushions or mirrors, throughout the room.



Rectangles are repeated throughout this bedroom as the dominant form.

/ Space, Line & Form Considerations

These three design principles are very interconnected. A solid understanding of the space and line is required to achieve a good form.

They are also very important principles when purchasing new care home furniture.

Here are some key points to think about before you buy:

- Ensure new furniture contrasts with the existing flooring and decoration.
- Check the furniture has an antimicrobial finish to maintain infection control.
- Review the furniture to ensure the finishes are non-reflective.
- Ensure mirrors can be easily replaced if needed for dementia care residents to minimise upset.
- Check the floor finish contrasts with any wood effect flooring adjacent.
- Check the handles have a clear contrast to the furniture fronts.
- Try furniture in the room where it will be placed first to ensure there is good flow and the finish doesn't absorb the light.
- Ensure there is adequate space around the furniture to manoeuvre a wheelchair or other furniture, such as a riser recliner chair.
- Check you have adequate seating for visitors which is easy to clean.

/ Light

Light is one of the key elements of care home interior design.

Whether it's natural or artificial, sufficient light is critical to provide reliable, consistent levels to aid the ageing eye.

Like colour and texture, light sets the mood and ambience in a room. It also highlights every other element, including space, line, and forms.

NATURAL VS. ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

You always want to maximise natural light. Considerate placement of doors and windows will take care of this!

Unfortunately, the UK doesn't get that many bright sunny days. So, you'll need some artificial lighting too.

There are three key types of artificial:

- Accent lighting: Includes light sources like table and bedside lamps which have a defined purpose, dedicated for a specific task.
- Mood, or ambient lighting: Sets the mood of the living space. Brighter, white lighting is good for functional areas, like dining rooms. Whereas bedrooms will often benefit from some warmer lighting.
- General illumination: For lighting the overall space. It's basically about making sure residents can still see when it's dark or cloudy outside!




Large windows and well positioned white lighting create a bright and airy dining/social area.

GETTING THE RIGHT LIGHT LEVELS

There are a few things you can do to avoid insufficient lighting:

- Replace bulbs on a regular schedule. Old bulbs give less light than new ones, so replace them before they burn out. Follow manufacturers' instructions.
- Clean light fixtures regularly. Dirt on light fixtures reduces the amount of light given off. Light fixtures with open tops allow air currents to move dust up through the fixtures so dust and dirt do not accumulate on them.
- Add more light fixtures in appropriate places. E.g. floor standing lamps in darker corners to aid general illumination.
- Paint walls and ceilings light colours so light can be reflected.
- Use more reflected light and local lighting to eliminate shadows.



"Poor lighting can be a safety hazard – misjudging the position or shape of an object can lead to injury.

It can also be a health hazard – too much or too little light strains eyes and may cause eye discomfort (burning, etc.) and headaches."

LIGHTING & RESIDENT WELLBEING

Although insufficient lighting can negatively affect residents' health, too much bright lighting isn't the answer either!

This can cause glare which can come with its own negative consequences.

Luckily, avoiding glare is quite simple. Here are some tips to try:

- Use several small low-intensity light fixtures rather than one large high-intensity light fixture.
- Use light fixtures that diffuse or concentrate light well. Indirect light fixtures or direct light fixtures with parabolic louvers are two possibilities.
- Cover bare bulbs with louvers, lenses, or other devices to control light.
- Increase the brightness of the area around the glare source.
- Use adjustable local lighting with brightness controls.
- Position light fixtures to reduce the amount of light reflected toward the eyes.



"Glare happens when light reflects off a shiny or glossy object e.g. windows or a photo frame.

The eyes adapt to the brightest level of light. This makes it harder to see detail in darker areas of the room (even though they are actually sufficiently lit).

It can cause discomfort, confusion and distress. Long-term it can actually decrease a person's ability to see."

GLARE IS A COMMON PROBLEM

LIGHTING & SLEEP

Light also affects how we sleep. If you've ever noticed that you tend to feel energized and drowsy around the same times every day, you have your circadian rhythm to thank!



"Your circadian rhythm is basically a 24-hour internal clock that is running in the background of your brain and cycles between sleepiness and alertness at regular intervals.

It's also known as your sleep/wake cycle."

WHAT IS CIRCADIAN RHYTHM?

Simulate natural daylight to improve residents sleep

There are lighting products available which automatically simulate daylight to follow the natural rhythm of the day.

This makes it easier for residents to register when it's time to sleep and wake. It's far easier to get into a structured sleep routine!

Better sleep during the night then leads to increased activity during the day.



Homes who upgrade their lighting often experience fewer episodes during the day. Residents become calmer, happier, and have more energy to join in with daily activities

Beyond its functional purpose, light helps set the mood and atmosphere of a space while defining colour, line, and texture.

A good interior designer also knows that the lighting fixtures are a visual feature in themselves, which can add the right touch to any design.

/ Colour

Colour establishes an aesthetic connection between objects and sets the mood.

In a care home environment, use of colour should be subtle and dementia friendly. All colours must be chosen based on the room's function as well as the light and space provided.

Here are some examples of how to use colour in a care home environment:

IN DINING AREAS

Orange for comfort

Orange tones will help keep you alert as you dine. This palette is also often associated with stability, warmth, and cosiness.

It's great for creating an atmosphere of hospitality and general comfort for everyone. Some research shows it helps with food digestion too!



You can balance out the orange by adding beige or wooden highlights.

(As you can tell, the Innova team are big fans of this colour!)

Turquoise for freedom

Turquoise is a brilliant colour associated with freedom and rest. It's often used on plates and dishes in restaurants, especially on dessert plates as it's considered an appetite stimulant!



However, it's important not to confuse turquoise with blue. Blue has been linked to decreased appetite.

Yellow for Happiness

Yellow promotes happiness, and happy people tend to eat better.

It makes a room feel more spacious. It's also associated with sunny and cheerful days spent outdoor.

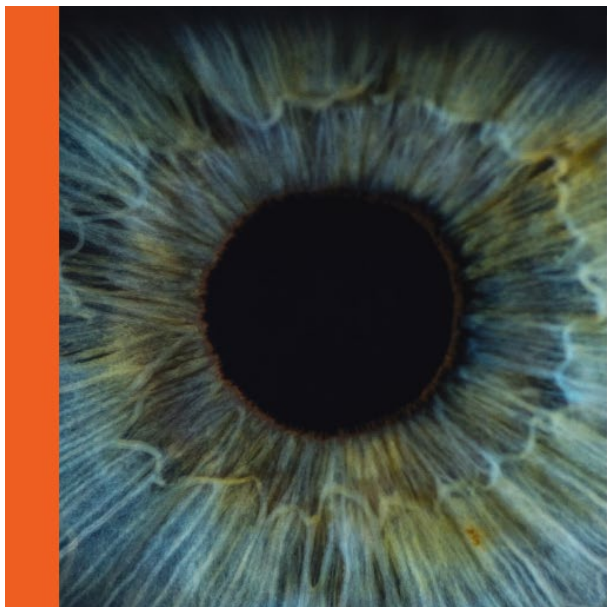
So, pair muted yellow walls with white highlights and fresh flowers for the ultimate 'outdoors brought indoors' look.

IN BEDROOMS

Blue for Calm

Believe it or not, people whose bedrooms are painted blue tend to sleep longer than those who get their shuteye in different coloured rooms.

The reason why has a whole lot to do with your eyes...



"Specialised receptors in the eye's retina of your eyes - called ganglion cells - are most sensitive to blue.

The cells relay information to the part of your brain that controls your body's circadian rhythm."

WHY IS BLUE CALMING?

Head to page 39 to learn even more about circadian rhythm.

So, when ganglion cells register the colour blue and relay it to your brain, it helps to reduce blood pressure and heart rate.

This helps you have a good night's sleep!

Alternatives to blue?

If you're not keen on blue, try other relaxing shades like grey, silver, and neutrals.

These cool colours have also been known to help lower blood pressure and heart rate.

It is important to at least try and keep bedroom wall colour in the realm of relaxing shades.

Warm colours, like pale yellow, may also work for care homes, since they can help create an inviting, cosy feel.



Blue features with a neutral wall colour creates a peaceful and welcoming bedroom.

Remember, simply painting the walls blue won't guarantee your residents sleep well at night! Following a regular sleep schedule and good sleep hygiene guidelines will always be essential.

INCORPORATE EACH RESIDENT'S PERSONALITY

You want your bedrooms to be relaxing. At the same time it's important to create an identity for each residents' own bedroom.

This helps define one room from another and helps residents find their own bedroom.

Here are some tips for promoting individuality:

- Vary the secondary colours of each resident's bedroom. E.g. if the main colour for all bedrooms is blue, combine with green for one, brown for another and lilac for a third.
- Place memory boxes by each door.
- Have a different graphic or image outside each bedroom.

COLOUR & MOOD

Have you ever noticed how much your mood changes with the seasons?

It's not just because you need to layer up in the autumn, or because the sun wakes you up early in the summer.

With each change of season comes a change in colours. The colours change on trees, the sky, and even our clothing. This can have a significant impact on your mood.

You can't control what hue the oak tree turns or the reds in the sunset, but you can control the colour scheme in your care home setting and make use of colour therapy.

Our advice for decorating bedrooms and dining areas explains how you can use colour therapy to boost the energy in any space!

Creating consistency in tone and some contrast throughout your home can enhance your residents' quality of life more than you might think.

THE POWER OF GREEN

There's one more popular care home colour we've not talked about yet. Green.

The colours and textures of plants are something humans resonate deeply with. So, another great way to rejuvenate your home is by adding some green!

This can be on the walls, furniture, or decorations. But adding some real plants can make a huge difference to a space, and they don't cost the earth.



"Being in nature drops our cortisol levels, makes us calmer, reduces anxiety, and improves our mood.

Incorporating plants has been associated with reduced violence, aggression and challenging behaviour. This can go a long way to providing residents with the healthy environment they need for psychological and spiritual well-being."

NATURE HAS POWERFUL EFFECTS

/ Texture

Texture refers to the tactile surface of an object or finish.

It's a design element that often gets overlooked, but really does bring a unique dimension to a room.

Just like mixing colour and pattern, an interior designer mixes the textures within a space to give a subtle sense of depth.

Think glossy, coarse, smooth... From furniture to accessories to fabric, texture adds interest and detail, making a room visually pleasing.

In short, it gives a room feeling.

VISUAL VS. ACTUAL TEXTURE

Texture is broadly classified into two types - visual and actual.

Visual texture is only perceived by the eye. For example, wallpaper.

Actual texture is both seen and felt. For example, a soft, colourful cushion can be appreciated not only with the eye but also with touch.



Here, the wallpaper and paintings create visual texture whilst the rug and cushions provide actual texture.

CONTRASTING TEXTURES

There always needs to be a dominant texture to define a mood and purpose. But a contrasting texture should also be included to avoid monotony.

For example, an interior designer could specify a chair to be upholstered in faux leather for cleaning and hygiene purposes, with an upholstered back or piping to create textures.



In this seating area, combining fabric upholstered armchairs with faux leather settees creates contrasting texture.

If there is a sense of 'something missing' in a room, a good interior designer will usually tell you it's due to lack of texture.

Texture plays a part in every object selected for a room, and therefore is best managed with careful consideration.

It's widely considered the final piece of the puzzle for creating a high-quality, inviting environment.

/ Pattern

Last but not least, pattern. When paired with colour, it offers similar benefits to texture by adding appeal to a room.

A pattern is created using a repetitive design.

In care homes, patterns are usually found in wallpaper, upholstery, soft furnishings, and fabrics.

Which patterns work well in care homes?

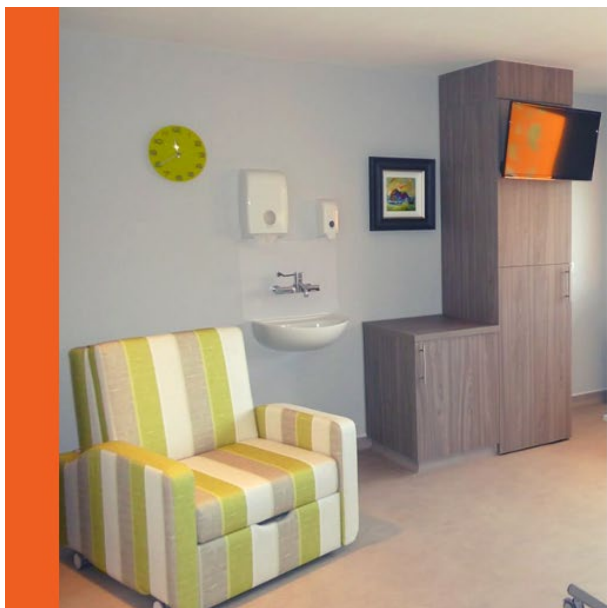
You should look for patterns with low colour contrast and tone.

Before implementing patterns, you must consider the size and style of a room:

SMALL ROOMS

In a small room, patterns should be used sparingly to avoid overwhelming the space.

Vertical or horizontal stripes can give a heightened sense of space.



"In dementia care settings, stripes need to be used very carefully - they could be misconstrued as bars or barriers.

Adding a simple striped chair in an otherwise neutral room can be a good way to get the balance right."

GETTING STRIPES RIGHT

Avoid complex patterns. They can give residents the urge to investigate and touch.

An individual with sight impairment or dementia might see a pattern as a 3-dimensional object, which could encourage unsafe movement.

LARGE ROOMS

Low contrast patterns can flourish in a large space, e.g. dining room or lounge, by creating a distinct focal point.

It's vital to know what 'style category' a chosen pattern falls into to ensure that the essence and concept of the room styling is maintained.

For example, you wouldn't typically want an art deco pattern in a traditionally styled room.



This spacious café area can pull off a bold, modern pattern. But most care homes wouldn't want something like this in a resident's bedroom!

MORE DEMENTIA FRIENDLY PATTERNS

For dementia friendly environments incorporate organic fabrics and prints. As mentioned, stick with low contrast colour and tone - Experiment with geometric and abstract prints for a contemporary look!

PATTERNS ARE FUN TO USE CAN BRING A ROOM TO LIFE

As a rule of thumb however, it's best to include patterns all styled on the same design concept and colour scheme.

This can also help with your branding - we'll talk about that more in the next section!

/ Colour, Wallpaper & Fabric Considerations

When you're choosing paint, accessories and upholstery fabrics is when you need to think the most about colour, pattern, and texture.

Here are some key points to consider before you finalising any decisions:

- Most fabrics should be waterproof and wipe down for hygiene and cleanliness. So, faux leather is a popular choice. However, it can also be firm and cold to touch. Bear this in mind before opting for all leather chairs.
- Don't be afraid of fabric upholstery. Incorporate waterproof, flame retardant options which can be cleaned within CQC guidelines. It can really soften a room's appearance.
- Bedding should be washable at 70 degrees and curtains at 90 degrees to maintain infection control protocols.
- Check your choice of wallpaper is antimicrobial and wipe clean. Choose from healthcare ranges to ensure bio-master coating is incorporated.
- Consider tactile & feature colours to aid wayfinding.
- Consider using low VOC paint. They contain less Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) solvents than traditional paints. High levels of VOC solvents can contribute to pollution and reduce the indoor air quality.
- Consider using Sterishield paint. It is antibacterial, durable and stain resistant. Designed specifically for healthcare environments, it contains an active silver bactericide and is water-based.

WOULD YOU BENEFIT FROM PROFESSIONAL INTERIOR DESIGN ASSISTANCE?

Spending a small amount on a professional interior designer now could save you £000's long-term and provide a quicker ROI by helping you validate higher weekly fees!

Please get in touch if you're looking for advice or a quote.

T: 0345 034 1450 | W: [innovacareconcepts.com](https://www.innovacareconcepts.com) | E: enquiries@innova.uk.com

/ Branding

There's a reason people pay more for cars like Mercedes and Range Rovers. They've established themselves as high-end brands.

If you want to charge higher fees than other care homes in your area, potential residents and their families will expect higher quality.

Think about what you offer that stands out...

- Can you offer specialist care for residents with certain conditions?
- Have you hired an interior designer to create a consistent, inviting, well-finished look and feel throughout the home?
- What values does your care home have? Do you really push for resident independence? Are you very active in the local community?

These are all part of your brand!

Often, care homes are already offering high-quality services and facilities. They just aren't doing much as they could to promote this quality through their branding.



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TIP 13: TAKE HIGH QUALITY PHOTOS OF YOUR CARE HOME

This is especially important after having any interior design work done!

Most people will do research online well before choosing which care homes to look around.

If the photos on your website or directory listings are outdated, you could be losing out on residents before they even get to see your home in-person.

Here are our top photography tips:

- Schedule your photoshoot when there will be plenty of natural light. So, avoid late evenings and aim for Spring/Summer if you can.
- Show real staff and residents (with permission) to humanise your brand and really show your personality. This will build brand trust far more than using models!
- Get a variety of images. You don't need to take photos of every single room, but make sure you get a range that represents everything you have to offer. This is especially important if you have bedrooms with different price points or classifications.



TIP 14: PICK A BRAND IDENTITY. THEN STICK TO IT.

So, you've revamped your interior design and taken some great new photos! What's the final piece of the puzzle?

The key thing is making sure your branding and the design of your care home match up. To really strengthen and grow you need to appeal to the right potential residents!

Choose 3 - 6 things that are important to your ideal resident (and their family) then define your brand around those points.

For example, at Innova, we have one company slogan and five key values:

- Creating world-leading care environments.
- Innovative, friendly, dynamic, honest, and passionate.



These are all things that are important to our team and our customers. Therefore, everything we do is built around these six points!



"People make decisions based on what solves their problems and what reflects their personal values."

WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE SERVICES & BRANDS

Creating a solid brand identity - then expressing it on your website, social media, brochures etc. - will go a long way to securing more residents who will love what you offer and be willing to pay for it.

Just remember, once you have an identity, you must stick to it!

Inconsistent messages are confusing and off-putting for potential residents.

/ Summary

2020 may feel like the year that permanently changed the residential care sector. There have been many challenges and the tough decisions won't go away overnight.

But we hope this eBook helps give care home providers the confidence that there is a positive future ahead – and a plan for how to get there!



The UK will always need care homes.

"75 and overs account for 90% care home residents. There are currently about 398,000 care home beds for 4.9million over 75s - 81 beds for every 1000 people."

As our ageing population continues to grow, the need will increase.

**THE CARE HOME
ENVIRONMENT [6]**

Together, let's take three steps to make every home the best it can be...

Survival, Sustainability & Strengthening

1. Survive the immediate risks of COVID-19.
2. Return to operating at a sustainable level.
3. Strengthen services to achieve future growth and success.

To all the frontline care
staff and behind the
scenes teams,

Thank you for all you
have done and continue
to do.

– get in touch any time!

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✉ enquiries@innova.uk.com
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Thank you on behalf
of team

INNOVA®



/ Resources

Official COVID-19 Guidelines

CQC: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/information-adult-social-care-services-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

Skills for Care: <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/About/News/COVID-19-Essential-training.aspx>

GOV.UK (admissions and residents):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-admission-and-care-of-people-in-care-homes>

GOV.UK (working safely in care homes):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-how-to-work-safely-in-care-homes>

Training & Support

Infection Prevention Society: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Prevention and Control for Nursing & Residential Care Homes: <https://www.ips.uk.net/professional-practice/resources1/covid-19-advice-and-guidance/>

InnovaLive Online Training:

<https://www.innovacareconcepts.com/en/services/training/>

Care Workforce App: <https://workforce.adultsocialcare.uk/login>

Age UK Care Home Checklist: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/care/arranging-care/care-homes/choosing-care-home/>

Data

1. COVID-19 Fatalities Figures, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC): <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19-long-term-care-facilities-surveillance-guidance.pdf>
2. Care Home Sustainability Statistics, National Care Association: <https://nationalcareassociation.org.uk/news-events/news/covid-19-care-provider-impact-study>
3. Industry Bounce Back Analysis, published in The Care Home Environment: <https://www.thecarehomeenvironment.com/story/32701/social-care-most-likely-sector-to-bounce-back-in-2021>
4. Economic Outlooks Across Sectors, Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales: <https://www.icaew.com/technical/economy/economic-insight/coronavirus-uk-economic-outlook-differences-across-sectors>
5. Malnutrition Pathway, Integrating good nutrition into daily practice: https://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/care_homes.pdf
6. The Care Home Environment, January 2020 Edition: <https://www.thecarehomeenvironment.com/archive>



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