



Vale House Dementia Nursing Home

Oxford

Client: Vale House Oxford

Contractor: Feltham Construction

Construction Cost: £4.0m

Completion: 2013



Built by charitable donations, Vale House is a unique 40 bed nursing home providing specialist end of life care and support for people with severe dementia. The use of architectural features, the domestic scale, homely finishes, the character of the two courtyards and the circular routes all make a valuable contribution to the holistic design of the building.

The scheme has evolved with contributions by the main charitable community, the staff representatives and residents and their families. This has enabled the design to focus on what are important features.

- Homely detailing of the patient areas.
- Three hydro-therapeutic bathrooms.
- Rooms for family overnight stay.
- The wander loops to reduce boredom and restlessness.
- Areas to sit with loved ones or for quiet contemplation.
- Memory boxes for familiarisation and orientation in corridors and outside individuals' room.

Qualitative application of materials

The team's main focus as the qualitative application of the materials, which showed tangible benefits to the residents. E.g. architectural features such as a circular stairway and the memory boxes used for way finding and familiarisation.

Strong links to familiar activities

The design focuses on clear observation within areas with strong links to identifiable familiar activities. Being involved in the day to day life of the home is an important factor and the communal room and kitchen are at the heart of the home. Views out to the external/ internal courtyards and landscapes with water features and planting generate external interests and stimulation, whilst the choice of several lounges provided with books, music systems a piano and television offer a range of activities whilst the single bedrooms with en suites and window seating afford the residents more privacy.



Exterior - West courtyard

Interior - courtyard corridor



The careful thought put into the original concept of the home, the development of its operational policy and training programme, and the approach to care sustained over the years, that treats each resident as an individual whose life has a meaning and value, has made Vale House a source of learning and example throughout the country and further a field.

Dr Catherine Oppenheimer, formerly medical director for Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire NHS Partnership Trust



Exterior - main entrance

Interior - circular staircase

Environmental services

To accommodate the services requirements we have designed a part single storey and part two storey building. The takes maximum advantage of the southerly aspect by placing the higher part of the building to the north. Issues of biodiversity were addressed by the design of the green roof to the single storey parts. Views out from the first floor are onto these roofs and the sunlight is able to penetrate the courtyards creating an ever changing natural centre to each wing of the building. Photo voltaic cells and solar panels in the roofs help to generate power to supply the dramatic evening lighting to the courtyards.

Success of Vale House in the community

Vale House has already made an impact in the community. The 20 additional beds the home now offers has removed some of the strain on the local services. As a centre of excellence, the training programme developed at the Charity's new base has enabled other healthcare professionals to learn and develop their skills in this field, thereby delivering better care in the community and help to increase the understanding of this devastating disease.

Architectural assessment scoring

The building scored an 'excellent' at the design stage in its BREEAM assessment, (awaiting certificate) its energy performance greatly enhanced by the use of natural light, photo voltaic and solar panels, bio diversity, green roofs and quality choice of finishes. It has utilized a piece of land which has remained unused for a number of years, to become a building that has amassed considerable experience in its field and is now recognized both nationally and internationally as a benchmark of good practice.

Vale House has received excellent (three star) ratings from regulators and inspectors of the Care Quality Commission. This is only awarded to 13% of the care homes nationally.