

Physical Design Features

for autism friendly accommodation



A few words about these slides...

- They are made up mainly of headings and key words
- When we give talks about this subject, we say a lot more
- They are based, not on theory, but on experience
- We hope they are a helpful checklist for you

Autism and the home environment

- What makes the home environment an issue for people with ASD?
 - Sensory sensitivities
 - Noise, Light, Touch, Smell, Space
 - Social impairments
 - Challenging behaviour
 - Personal care issues

Things to think about

- Location
- Internal layout and space
- Furniture and fittings
- Decoration
- Windows
- Toilets and bathrooms
- Garden
- Other people

Location

- Closeness to a busy cross-road (or school, factory or place of entertainment)
- Closeness to neighbours – two-way noise
- Access to a range of community facilities
- Closeness to family and social networks

Internal layout and space

- Large rooms with a simple layout
- Spacious, airy and well-lit
- Extra high ceilings
- Problems with shared rooms:
 - kitchen and dining area
 - lounge

Furniture and fittings

- No metal carpet strips
- Quiet door shutters
- Simple lighting
- Light switches and obsessive behaviour
- Protruding fittings
- Plasterboard walls
- Air conditioning

Assistive Technology

- Shared telephone lines
- Alarms that bleep
- Accidental alarm triggers
- Continual pressing of the call button
- Flood detectors, automated taps
- Vibrating pillow fire alarms

Decoration

- Neutral decorations: calm colours, no patterns
- Satin paint instead of gloss
- Non-reflective worktops

Windows

- Double glazing
- Things like triple glazing and internal blinds are great – but expensive
- Velux roof windows create rain noise

Toilets and bathrooms

- No baths, only showers
- Toilets are not geared for different needs
- Toilets are not geared for constipation
- No warm air hand-driers
- Flooring and walls are not non-slip
- Tiles create distracting patterns

Gardens

- A good size garden offers a place of calm and freedom
- Some freedom is best enjoyed in private, so a private garden is best
- Freedom needs boundaries, so a garden with good walls and gates that lock offers security

Other People...

- Compatible groups are hard to find
- Coping behaviours can irritate others
- One person's peace is another's oppression
- Tenants sharing, plus lots of staff = "anxiety triggers"
- Too much congregation can inhibit social acceptance

- But a specialist support team working in close proximity does have advantages

Advantages of a specialist service

- Staff share good practice and knowledge
- Staff can support each other
- Autism focused staff are more consistent
- And more attuned to autism related needs

Suggestions for service designers

- Design primarily for independent living
- Design with an individual in mind
- But design for future changes of tenant
 - “Universal design principles”
- Try small clusters of flats
- With an area for optional communal activity

Any questions or comments?

Email us:

enquiries@cartrefi.org