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**Family &
Community Services**
Ageing, Disability & Home Care

Design guidelines

Group accommodation





Foreword

Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) is committed to a person centred approach so that people with

disability will have more opportunities to live as independently as possible and in the way they choose.

The NSW Government has invested \$2 billion in the second phase of *Stronger Together 2* with the intent that this 10-year plan will reshape and improve the way people with a disability, their families and carers are supported in NSW.

As part of this investment, ADHC is increasing the choice and flexibility in how it supports the accommodation needs of people with disability. Person centred planning aims to put people with disability at the centre of the decision making process and enables them to exercise choice and control over where they choose to call home. The design of someone's home must meet the needs of the person and may require specific design modifications to make the home practical and accessible.

These design guidelines aim to help people with disability identify the types of designs and modifications they may need in their home and translates them into practical, design and construction specific information for architects

and construction professionals. The guidelines are also an invaluable resource for architects, capital service providers and managers on ADHC projects. They may also be used by non-government organisations where those organisations are responsible for the design of a house using government funds.

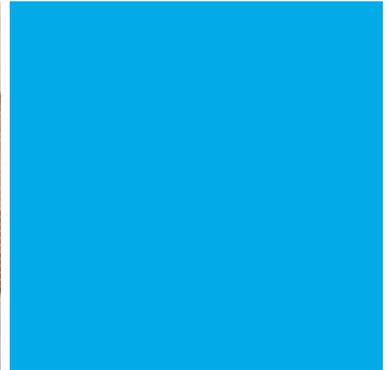
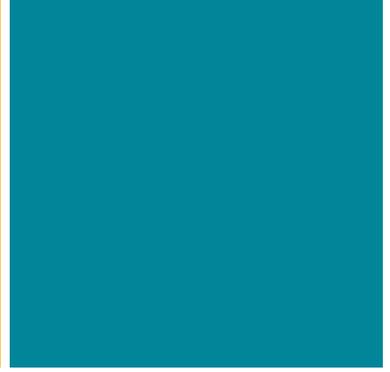
The guidelines contain practical information as a supplement to existing building codes and design standards and are supported by a reference specification particular to the specialist requirements of design to support people with disability.

I believe the guidelines will provide an invaluable resource for all people involved in developing group accommodation projects.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Longley". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jim Longley
Deputy Secretary

Ageing, Disability and Home Care
Department of Family and Community Services



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Introduction

Purpose

These guidelines bring together the professional experience of many people who have been involved in the specialist disability-housing sector. They have been developed to assist architects, designers, planners and project managers plan and design group accommodation for residents who may require up to 24 hour supported care. They need to be read in conjunction with the Building Code of Australia and the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010.

ADHC is committed to a ‘person centred’ approach and recognises that each resident wants accommodation that best suits their requirements. These guidelines will help to ensure good housing is provided and that ADHC shares its experience with others who work in the accommodation area.

Where the residents for a house are known, they and their families should be consulted to ensure that the house fulfils their needs. Where the residents for a house are not known, the guidelines will ensure a comfortable, accessible and safe house is provided.

The guidelines are underpinned by a number of important international and domestic laws and agreements including:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- the National Disability Strategy and Agreement
- the NSW *Disability Services Act*

ADHC has mainly built group homes – either as one single house or as a group home villa-style model.

Group homes are covered by the State Environmental Planning Policy, Affordable Rental Housing (AHSEPP), where they are broadly defined as dwellings that:

- are occupied by a number of people as a single household with or without paid supervision or care and whether or not those persons are related or payment for board is required
- are used to provide permanent household accommodation for people with disability or people who are socially disadvantaged.

ADHC has completed many villa-style models as group accommodation. For ADHC, a villa is a domestic scale one to three bedroom single storey unit for people who choose to live more independently but who may still require some access to up to 24 hour support.

Context

Group accommodation exists to support people with a disability to live in the community with the support and care they require.

Residents who live in group accommodation may require one or more of the following:

- general support
- additional health care support
- specialist behaviour support
- complex and challenging behavioural support.

Acts, Standards and other references

The guidelines supplement mandatory minimum law and regulation requirements by referencing other material and imposing additional requirements where appropriate. The Acts, Standards and guides that underpin these guidelines include:

- Australian Standard: Design for access and mobility Part 1 (AS 1428.1)
- Building Code of Australia (BCA)
- Disability (Access to Premises) Standard 2010
- State Environmental Planning Policies including Affordable Rental Housing and
- Platinum Level of the 'Livable Housing Design'.



How to use these guidelines

These guidelines introduce designers to the principles of designing for group accommodation while encouraging creativity and responsiveness to the needs of residents and staff, as well as the site and local neighbourhood. However, they are only guidelines and it must be remembered that the general provisions of the Building Code of Australia (BCA) and the relevant provisions of the Premises Standards must be complied with at all stages.

The guidelines are not intended to replace drawings, plans, specifications or planning controls for a particular construction project on site. These must be developed by qualified design professionals such as architects, engineers, planners and accredited BCA consultants.

The types of group accommodation and the support required by those who might choose it are described on pages 6–9.

The design principles for group accommodation are detailed on pages 10 and 11.

The site and layout section explains what to look for in a site, how the site will affect the layout of the accommodation and the various priorities that must be balanced.

The remainder of the guidelines explores in detail the rooms found in the house and the design principles. There are considerations and advice to help plan the best house possible for the residents, site and neighbourhood, including advice on the office and external areas.



Key for alerts and needs

Under each section, and where appropriate, prompts have been included.

CHECK

These are things which should be looked into and confirmed before proceeding.

REMEMBER

These are items which will need careful attention paid to them.

CONSIDER

These are things which could be explored and included if suitable and practicable.

There are also noted in each section, design considerations specific to each of the various residents' needs and which should be included when residents with particular needs are going to live there.

General needs

Additional health care support

Specialist behaviour support

Complex and challenging behaviour needs



Types of group accommodation

Group accommodation is housing which offers up to 24 hour support. It is suitable for adults of all ages who may have an intellectual or other disability, high support needs, additional health care and/or behavioural support needs. In group accommodation, a resident can expect individual access to significant levels of support and assistance with daily living needs as well as being involved in their household's activities. These household activities might include deciding on group activities and outings, weekly menus, household cooking and cleaning, and all other community activities.

Group accommodation can offer four broad categories of service, each of which informs the planning and design of the home.

General needs

'General needs' group accommodation provides support to people with disability who actively participate, or who are learning to participate, in the running of the household, doing such things such as the cleaning, washing and cooking in the house, but who may also:

- require support to get ready for and/or travel to and from work
- use a wheelchair or other supports to assist with their mobility
- require aids to communicate with others
- have a vision or hearing impairment
- have epilepsy and/or health conditions which impact on their daily life
- require assistance in managing their behaviour
- have minor drug or alcohol related illnesses.

Shauna's story

Shauna is a 23-year-old woman living with cerebral palsy and an intellectual disability. She has a vision impairment in one eye. Shauna lives with two friends in a three bedroom villa. While she is ambulant, she can have difficulty negotiating steps and uneven surfaces. She needs support with most aspects of her daily life including dressing for work in the morning, assistance with meal times and being supported to attend the gym and art classes, which are her favourite recreational activities. Shauna enjoys going to a café after work, where she is learning how to send emails to her family and friends.

Shauna's house is on one level and has unobtrusive grab rails around the house to help her maintain her independence and mobility. Shauna enjoys gardening on the weekends, particularly looking after the herbs, which she uses regularly in the meals she helps to prepare.

Shauna's family was worried when she decided to leave home and live somewhere away from them. They are glad to see how happy she is, now she has settled into her new home.

Additional health care support

People who might choose 'additional health care support' group accommodation are likely to have one or more disability as well as stable or unstable health conditions or disabilities that require ongoing intervention. Examples might include people who require naso-gastric/gastric tube feeding or oxygen therapy, people who need mealtime support, people who cannot turn over in bed or toilet themselves without prompting and/or physical assistance and/or those who have drop falls or severe epilepsy.

People with additional health care support needs often require health care and interventions on a daily basis, as well as the administration of prescribed medications and therapies. They are likely to need support on a more regular basis.

Leanne's story

Leanne is 35 years old and has a chronic lung condition which requires her to access around the clock nursing support. Leanne uses a wheelchair and needs full assistance with all aspects of her daily life including dressing, bathing, mealtimes and enjoying leisure pursuits. She shares her house with four other housemates who also require full time nursing support.

Leanne enjoys visits from her sister on weekends and loves going to the park when she is feeling well enough. Leanne really looks forward to seeing her physiotherapist twice a week and particularly enjoys a foot massage. Leanne uses a customised storyboard to communicate her needs and wishes. Leanne requires a registered nurse to administer her with oxygen every day and so needs somewhere safe to store her oxygen tanks.

Types of group accommodation (continued)

Specialist behaviour support

People who may choose 'specialist behaviour support' group accommodation may have an intellectual disability and/or autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and mental health diagnosis or substance abuse or other behavioural disorders. Specialist clinical behavioural services are provided to residents as part of their ongoing support plan.

Examples of behaviours that require a considered design response include:

- self injurious behaviour
- compulsive eating disorder e.g. Pica or eating non edible materials
- assault on others and/or property damage
- leaving the home without staff support, where the person is placed at risk by doing so.

Some issues to consider include:

- choosing robust and long-lasting construction materials that are non poisonous and that can withstand force
- consideration of the layout of the home by providing areas of egress and retreat for staff and other residents during a critical behaviour episode
- the ability to divide the house into two parts to promote safety and privacy for residents
- consideration of aspect, lighting and privacy with the understanding that some people may prefer open areas and others quiet spaces
- selecting plants and vegetation that do not place people at risk of harm.

Paul's story

Paul is 33 years old and lives with four other people in a group home in his own self contained apartment. Paul is ambulant, has limited verbal communication skills and needs assistance with most daily living tasks including preparing meals and getting ready for work. Paul attends a day program three days a week and participates in a recreational program on the other two days. Paul particularly enjoys sport and plays with a local indoor soccer team. Every Sunday, Paul visits his parents for lunch. On Tuesdays, he prepares afternoon tea for his grandmother who visits him at home.

Sometimes, when Paul does not feel he is being understood by staff, he can become aggressive, hit walls and damage furniture. While Paul generally has a good relationship with his housemates, when he is feeling angry he prefers to be left alone. To provide Paul with an area of retreat and to keep his housemates safe when he is angry, his apartment area can be secured from the rest of the house.

The staff who support Paul are well trained in recognising the trigger signs of his anger and will implement his behaviour support plan to ensure his safety, and that of his housemates and staff. In this way, Paul returns to a calm state as quickly as possible.

Complex and challenging behavioural needs

People who might choose 'complex and challenging behavioural needs' group accommodation may have an intellectual disability accompanied by behavioural disorders, psychiatric disability or substance abuse. Some of these people may exhibit behaviours of such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety or emotional well-being of themselves or others may be placed at risk. They may have recently left the Corrective Services system and require accommodation support in this period of transition. They are likely to require high level supervision and behavioural and/or therapeutic support from specialist staff to minimise such risk behaviour, but may be self caring with respect to their activities of daily living.

Also included in this group are people who may have been recommended for the Community Justice Program (CJP). Particular requirements may need to be built into the home to accommodate their needs.

Rhonda's story

Rhonda is a 32-year-old woman with a mild intellectual disability who is away from her home country.

Rhonda has been diagnosed with a number of psychiatric conditions including Borderline Personality Disorder. She has a range of interpersonal and emotional difficulties and regularly places herself in harmful situations. She has called emergency services on several occasions and informed them that she has ingested large amounts of prescription drugs or engaged in other self-harm behaviour. Rhonda has spent a significant amount of time in acute mental health facilities as well as emergency departments of local hospitals.

Rhonda has been charged with many offences. On occasions while incarcerated, Rhonda has been non-compliant with medication and has self-harmed.

Rhonda requires a safe environment with an ongoing high level of support providing strong and consistent boundaries. She needs a lot of help in understanding how she might live successfully in a more independent environment. Rhonda hopes to improve her life with the help of this support.

Design principles

Like all housing in NSW, group accommodation must comply with the relevant and most up-to-date codes and standards as well as the relevant local council policies and procedures (such as Local Environment Plans and Development Control Plans). It must also be able to achieve Universal Design principles, which benefit all people, contained in the Platinum level performance under the Livable Housing Design Guidelines.

To this end, the houses must be barrier free, or have the capacity to be adapted to be barrier free, and they must be flexible to allow for changing residents or the existing residents' changing needs over time. All these houses will have up to 24 hour supported care provided and they are all houses for a number of unrelated people. Where it is possible, the future residents or their family and carers should be involved in the design process and make the house fit their specialist needs – this may involve including culturally appropriate features such as larger rooms to accommodate family staying over or carefully placing the entry and openings for privacy.

There are a few key principles that help in designing supported accommodation:

The house should be a homely one

The house should be a safe one

Outside of the house is also important



The house should be a homely one

These buildings are people's homes and all planning and design decisions must be made with this in mind.

There are a number of specific requirements built into group accommodation, including wheelchair accessibility around, inside and outside of the house, and at least one bathroom to be fully accessible. Where there is more than one bathroom, additional bathrooms must be designed to the Platinum level, Livable Housing Design Guidelines in order to accommodate amongst other things, grab rails if needed on the future. These should all be achieved in a 'low visual' impact way to maximise a sense of homeliness.

The house should be inclusive and planned so people can be involved in activities if practicable but there should be sufficient alternative places for people to retire to if they want to be left alone. Residents should be encouraged to be involved in the selection of colours and finishes, particularly for their bedroom. This will help to individualise the house. Small details (such as occasional decorative tiles in the bathroom and kitchen) can also contribute to this.

The house should be a safe one

This is a house for a group of residents as well as a workplace for staff. The whole house needs to be safe so that people can't get hurt either outside or inside. There should be good vision into most areas of the house, particularly the living rooms and garden.

An office must be provided where a staff member can write, file and store records and where there is a private space away from residents to rest and focus on tasks that need concentration or may be confidential.

The office, in particular, must be secure – a place just for staff. The rooms staff will use on a daily basis such as the laundry and store rooms also need special attention so that they help, rather than hinder them, in their daily work.

Outside of the house is also important

For many residents choosing group accommodation, the world outside of their house can feel unsafe and confusing. The response to gardens, courtyards, garages, paths and fences will all affect how the outdoor places are regarded and used. These choices also affect how the house blends into the streetscape and how readily it is accepted as part of the neighbourhood.

Gardens and courtyards can be used for social and therapeutic opportunities. Some people are likely to spend significant periods of time at home so the landscape they view from their bedroom or living areas is vitally important.

The site and layout

In designing group accommodation, the following points should always be kept in mind. There will be times when a choice will need to be made as to which of these has priority but they all remain vitally important and contribute to making a good supported accommodation house.

Streetscape

Remember that this is a house and it needs to fit into the neighbourhood. Make sure it blends in with the rest of the houses in the street rather than standing out as 'different'.

Take note of what the neighbouring houses are made of. The colours, materials, the window details and the roof pitch can all help give some pointers as to how this house should look. Check the neighbouring houses' setbacks and try to match these so the new house fits in.

Make sure the house has a similar treatment as the surrounding houses for its fencing and garden.

Do not place service rooms such as store rooms and bathrooms fronting onto the street. Most houses have large picture windows as their front windows, not frosted smaller windows such as are found in a bathroom or storeroom.

One feature that can set these houses apart is the parking. There is further information in the 'Outside of the house is also important' section which will help lower the impact of this.

Safety and security

Remember that this house may also be a workplace. Safety and security of residents and staff are major elements of group accommodation.

Staff should be able to readily keep an eye on what is happening in and around the house.

Residents will want to feel secure and maintain their privacy away from the neighbours.

The neighbours too should not have their privacy compromised and how this is done will assist the residents' acceptance into the neighbourhood.

Environmental sustainability

Remember that the house must keep the residents and staff comfortable. Making the house energy efficient and sustainable can help with this. The house needs to be able to achieve a minimum rating of four and a half stars NatHERS (Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme). This rating depends on:

- the layout of the house
- the construction of its roof, walls, windows and floor
- the orientation and size of windows and shading to the sun's path and local breezes
- how well all of these are suited to the local climate and take advantage of local conditions.

The house shape affects how well or not it will perform environmentally. A long thin building works well for cross ventilation in humid locations – a square courtyard building works better in hot dry locations. While it is not always possible to plan for the ideal building within a suburban or urban context, it is important to take advantage of the local environmental conditions wherever possible.

Northern aspect should be maximised and westerly facing rooms should be minimised – or where this is not possible, it should be service rooms such as bathrooms, store rooms or laundries that are predominantly used here. Try to maximise passive solar responses of the house through the appropriate placement of windows and verandas and to ensure cross ventilation can occur. Shade western walls and windows with awnings, wide eaves and/or planting of deciduous plants. This will help make the house a place that will easily accommodate the changing seasons and a good place to live year around.

The materials chosen will also affect how well or not the building performs. Internet sites such as www.yourhome.gov.au/technical provide useful information on which materials work best in which locations.

Although the house will be air conditioned, ensuring it takes advantage of local breezes and solar access will keep ongoing running costs to a minimum and help keep the residents comfortable.

The site and layout (continued)

Site selection

Everyone wants to be part of a welcoming neighbourhood. This includes the prospective residents of this housing.

The location, size, slope and orientation of the site will dictate how the house is designed. For these houses, there are a number of pointers to aid their success.

The site must:

- be a minimum of 700 sq m area
- be accessible by wheelchair to most areas of the site
- be close to accessible public transport
- be close to public facilities and shops
- be located on a quiet street
- be located in a neighbourhood that is not too hilly
- have access to services such as water and electricity
- be in a residential environment and have the appropriate zoning.

Complex and challenging behaviour needs houses

These houses might have additional restrictions on site selection which should be checked.



CHECK

That requirements in State Environmental Planning Policy (Affordable Rental Housing) 2009 (AHSEPP) have been met

That the Local Council and planning requirements have been met. These might include issues such as building set backs, height restriction, heritage restrictions and cultural implications

That there is a minimum useable open space of 35 sq m

That any restriction on the site set by the relevant local council's Development Control Plans (DCPs) have been met

That a survey with Australian Height Datum (AHD) levels with the location of all trees as well as a site analysis has been done.

REMEMBER

Ensuring the site is wheelchair accessible does not mean it must be absolutely flat. The path levels around the site should be sufficiently worked out to give a maximum slope of 1:20 or could be ramped for shorter distances at 1:14.

CONSIDER

That the two main sources of neighbourhood frustration are around parking and unacceptable noise levels

Choosing sites that are above the flood levels and out of the bush fire zone

Choosing sites in areas that are not too hilly so residents can get around easily

Choosing sites that are wider than 18m so there is sufficient room to plan a good house.



The site and layout (continued)

Layout

The house will need to be planned and designed in accord with the mix of residents, their individual requirements, the site and the neighbourhood around it.

Make sure the house is:

- domestic in scale, detail and appearance and forms part of the neighbourhood
- made of robust locally available materials which require minimal ongoing maintenance
- able to achieve Platinum level performance under the Livable Housing Design Guidelines
- safe and secure for both residents and staff
- planned with no blind corners
- built with a floor to ceiling height of 2700mm
- flexible enough to meet the various residents' needs should they change
- oriented well and takes account of views and accessibility
- laid out thoughtfully, co-locating activity spaces to reduce travel and separating noisy communal spaces from quieter ones.



CHECK

That the requirements of BCA have been met. For the house to be a Class 1(b) building, it needs to be less than 300 sq m in area.

REMEMBER

To discuss general layout and design with future residents and carers if possible

To co-locate activity spaces to reduce travel distances and to reflect typical domestic adjacencies

To separate noisy areas from quieter ones

That long linear houses have long corridors which can make them daunting and unfriendly unless handled carefully

That these houses can be large. Although a site may appear 'flat,' the house is likely to be higher out of the ground from one side to the other and a means to accommodating this that maintains internal and external accessibility will need to be carefully thought out.

CONSIDER

That as the floor to ceiling height is 2700mm, the window heads can be raised to 2400mm, making the house much airier and filled with light

Planting 1500mm along the side boundary for further privacy from neighbours.

Specialist behavioural support

Complex and challenging behaviour needs

The colours and materials selected can have a profound affect on residents who have behavioural issues.

Clear sight lines throughout the house should be maintained at all times.

Residents are more likely to enter a space if they can see who is occupying it and assess the potential social interactions.

It may be necessary to divide the house into sections and have separation between people at times.

Additional health care support

While the residents of these houses may not always be able to take part in everything within the household, they still like to be an integral part of what is happening. People like to see into other rooms, particularly the kitchen and living room, and watch what others are doing.

The house should be a homely one

This section looks at each of the rooms of the house in detail, outlining their essential features as well as offering some ideas for consideration to best accommodate specific needs for some residents.

The kitchen and living rooms are at the heart of the house, where the residents will spend most of their time. The entry, where you arrive, leads you into these. If these rooms are well planned and designed, the house will be a good place to be.

This is a house and the residents want it to be welcoming to come home to and to feel comfortable and relaxed when they are there.

The entry

It is essential that the entry is as welcoming as possible. It is from here that the initial impression of the house is created. Residents want to come home to a warm and welcoming place – staff want to be able to survey comings and goings from the house without intruding on the privacy of the residents and their friends and family.

The entry to the house must:

- be clearly visible and recognisable from the street
- have a covered porch outside providing shelter for residents and visitors when they arrive
- have wheelchair access from the street to the porch to inside the house
- be a separate foyer from other corridors
- have a level landing of 1500mm x 1500mm and minimum clear door opening width of 900mm
- have a letterbox accessible by a path from the entry door
- keep pedestrian and vehicle access separate.



CHECK

That there is an alternative path from the driveway to the front footpath. Sometimes residents may get out of the vehicle before it is put inside and they need to have a pathway to walk on to get to the front door.

REMEMBER

That the house needs to be welcoming to come home to.

CONSIDER

Having a bench seat at the front door – somewhere to put the shopping while the front door is opened, or where you can sit to take off your shoes before going inside.



The house should be a homely one (continued)

Living rooms

The location and layout of the living rooms in the house will dictate how well used they become. The single group home will generally have two separate living rooms: a large one which is also used for eating in (dining room) and a smaller one, which may have a kitchenette should this part of the house need to be secured from the other end.

Where a number of villas are planned, in the 'villa-style' model of group home, each villa will have its own living room and kitchen as well as a separate common area, refer to the section later in these guidelines.

All living rooms must:

- have free space for wheelchair circulation of 2250mm diameter clear of furniture
- try to face within 15 degrees of north (or where there are two living rooms at least one should be facing north.)
- have direct access to an outdoor area.
- have window sills low enough to ensure people can view the outdoor areas when seated.

The dining room (if within the larger living room) must:

- have a minimum dimension of 3300mm in either direction
- have space for a table and chairs with adequate circulation space and ready access to the kitchen.





No of bedrooms	Living room area
5 bedrooms	65 sq m
4 bedrooms	52 sq m
3 bedrooms	45 sq m
2 bedrooms	32 sq m
1 bedroom	23 sq m

CHECK

That the living room is central to the whole house on the way from the entry to the bedrooms and close to the kitchen. The living room should not be a 'dead end' room which is out of the way to get to or that it is more corridor than room.

That there is a bathroom close to the common areas, but not opening directly onto them.

REMEMBER

People may not always want to meet with their family in their bedroom or in a common living room. A small informal area where residents can talk with their family and friends without feeling inhibited could be provided. This might also serve as a telephone room.

A small kitchenette in the second smaller living room may be provided for those times when the house has been divided into two separate parts.

CONSIDER

Providing living areas which allow for different types of interaction such as a smaller quieter darker place as an area of respite and a larger more open brighter living and dining area for general use

Trying to have different spaces within the living room such as a built-in window seat, a place where you can view what is happening without being fully involved or a place to watch TV, to add to the usage and vibrancy of the room

Having windows on two sides of the living room

How to meet the Platinum level Livable Housing Design Guidelines in relation to elements such as switches and power points, flooring and window sills.

Specialist behaviour support

A common area could include active and quiet spaces within one contiguous larger space. Window seats can offer opportunities to participate from the periphery.

Built in furniture such as built in seating or an enclosed television cabinet can sometimes help with furnishing the house.

The house should be a homely one (continued)

Kitchen

The kitchen is often the hub of a house. People like to feel involved in the preparation of food and cooking – even if they can only watch. It is useful for staff to have a view into both living areas from the kitchen, if possible, and for residents to see from the living room into the kitchen to see what is happening. Residents with a range of mobility will want to help in the kitchen.

The kitchen in a single group home must:

- be a minimum 15 sq m
- have space for a separate fridge and freezer, a double sink, a stove and cook top, a dishwasher, and a large pantry
- have access to good natural light as well as artificial light
- have a minimum 1550mm between benches
- have visual sight lines to other living areas
- have minimum 400mm bench space on either side of the stove.



CHECK

That there is good light and ventilation in the kitchen

The distinction between kitchen and kitchenette in the villa-style model accommodation.

REMEMBER

Cooking and food preparation are activities that people like to feel a part of, even if they cannot assist directly.

Where a kitchenette is required in a single group home, it should provide minimum 2400mm bench length with space for a small single sink, space for a microwave and an underbench fridge.

CONSIDER

Having a chest freezer in the laundry instead of a freezer in the kitchen.

Specialist behaviour support

Complex and challenging behaviour support needs

There may be a requirement in this house to have two means of egress from the kitchen – which should be able to be locked off and/or the ability to lock all cupboards and drawers.

Having a half door or a door with a glazed panel, so that the kitchen can be closed to access but people can still view the kitchen activities, might sometimes work.

Additional health care support

Have a lower bench space so that people in a wheelchair can work in the kitchen alongside staff.



The house should be a homely one (continued)

Bathroom

The bathroom is perhaps the most complex room in group accommodation and where the various bathrooms are located, can be as important as how they are planned and what facilities are in them. The bathrooms must be in accordance with AS1428.1 as well as the Platinum level of the Livable Housing Design Guidelines, which ADHC is committed to achieving.

In a five bedroom single group home, the requirement is for two bathrooms, both with a toilet, hand basin and shower, and one with space for a bath as well. This bath is likely to be a shower tray or equal to an Arjo bath. The ceiling's structure needs to be suitable for a lifting hoist. A third toilet and hand basin in a separate bathroom is also needed. This toilet needs to comply with the Platinum level of the Livable Housing Design Guidelines as a minimum.

In a villa-style model group home, each villa will have its own bathroom with a shower, hand basin and toilet and must comply with AS1428.1 and the Platinum level of the Livable Housing Design Guidelines. There will need to be a toilet and hand basin associated with the group living area as well – this toilet and hand basin must be to AS1428.1.

Bathrooms should be designed and planned with care so they will still look domestic.

Bathrooms must have:

- plenty of natural light and ventilation
- the shower located in a corner and as far as possible from the door to ensure that water does not leak into the hallway
- a built in wall cabinet with a mirrored door
- sufficient hanging space for towels and clothes
- the toilet pan located in the corner of the room to enable the installation of grab rails.





CHECK

The Standards and Guidelines for bathrooms as these change regularly so it is important to check what the current requirements are – an Access Consultant can assist with this

That the layout is configured so the door does not open directly onto a living area.

REMEMBER

To strengthen the walls in the bathroom so that grab rails can be installed at a later date if required

To make sure that towel rails can also be used as grab rails if needed.

CONSIDER

Using some decorative wall or floor tiles, at least occasionally

Having vinyl for the flooring and ceramic wall tiles.

Additional health care support

Make sure the accessible bathroom is close to where the residents who might use this have their bedroom.

Make sure plenty of circulation space is left around the bath for lifting and manoeuvring.

Non-slip vinyl can assist cleaning and safety.



The house should be a homely one (continued)

Bedrooms

Bedrooms are the only personal space that residents will have in a group home or shared villa. Each resident will have their own bedroom. Plan them so that they can be easily personalised and so they have a good aspect, making use of orientation and possibly views from the house. Bedrooms should comply with both AS1428.1 and the Platinum level of the Livable Housing Design Guidelines.

Bedrooms must:

- be minimum 13 sq m in area (not including the wardrobe)
- have room for a single king size bed and bedside table
- have a wardrobe of at least 1200mm long by 600mm deep
- have easy access to a bathroom
- be able to be arranged so that the bed is not adjacent to a window
- have the ceiling joists reinforced to possibly accommodate a hoist later.



CHECK

That the bedrooms don't open directly into the living rooms unless this is specifically required perhaps for 'Additional health care support' residents who may spend a large amount of time in their bedroom

That the Platinum level of the Livable Housing Design Guidelines are met in relation to elements such as switches and power points.

REMEMBER

That the use of picture rails means that pictures or photos can be hung easily and moved around.

CONSIDER

Having additional room for storage or display of personal belongings

Including built-in dressers, desks and closets and free floor space for increasing movement and other activities around the bedroom

Where a television set for each person might be placed in someone's bedroom.

Specialist behaviour support

Furniture should be built in and fixed as much as possible.

Avoid using adjustable shelves or drawers.

TV screens may need to be protected.

Loose furniture may need to be too heavy to lift, or be fixed to walls or floors.

Recessed lighting should be considered.

Additional health care support

The placement of windows and the height of the window sills is important here so people can have a view out yet remain private from outside.

Perhaps have a door to outside so staff can easily assist if people choose to be moved into an outside private courtyard.

A hoist or other lifting equipment may be required and the furniture selections and positioning should reflect this.

Safeguarding the health and wellbeing of staff is vital to maintaining caring relationships so clearances around beds for care giving activities need to be provided.

Good lighting, natural and artificial, with the ability to control intensity depending on the activity, should be provided.

There will need to be a separate air conditioning control to keep the bedroom how the resident likes it.



The house should be a safe one

This is a house, yet it is also the workplace for staff. Everyone needs to feel safe and secure here.

The whole house must be planned to minimise any Work Health Safety risks and to streamline household activities. Safety of the residents and staff is important. Oversight from the office to as much as possible of the whole house is desirable to ensure this.

Office

Staff may assist residents in preparing meals, doing the laundry, helping with their daily routine such as taking the residents to and from their workplace or day program activities and ensuring that they can enjoy a range of different experiences without fear of being harmed or, in some cases, hurting themselves.

The office must:

- be a minimum of 9 sq m in size
- have a desk, lockable file storage for record storage, a secure medication store and shelving for books and equipment
- allow for wheelchair circulation
- be wheelchair accessible by the front or rear of the house
- be close to a separate toilet and hand basin
- be lockable with the safety of both residents and staff kept in mind
- have glare controllable through window treatments, such as blinds or curtains
- have acoustic integrity so that conversations can be kept private for the staff particularly at night when they are working and residents may be asleep.

CHECK

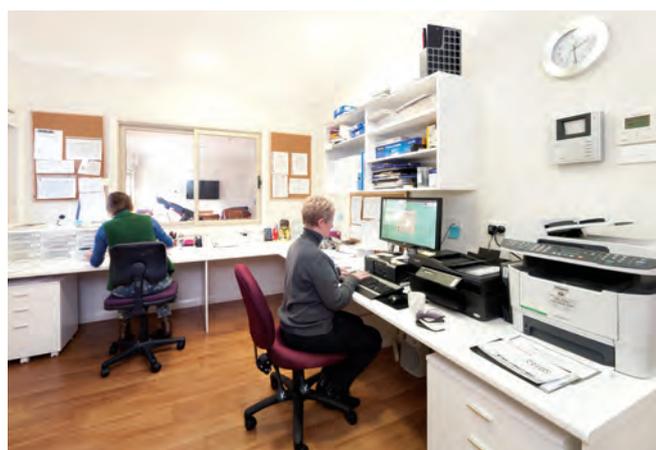
That the sight lines throughout the house are good – particularly from the office space and shared areas living rooms, kitchen and external areas. Staff want to be able to see what is happening so they can assist when necessary.

REMEMBER

That the office is like the study in a house.

CONSIDER

The desk (as per NSW Government office standards) will be at least 1800mm x 750mm.



Sleepover/store/sensory room

Sometimes it may be necessary for staff to sleep over at the house. Where this is likely to be a regular occurrence and in places where it is part of standard practice, a sleep over area might be necessary.

Where this space is not likely to be used as a sleep-over room, it might also be used as a 'sensory room' for people who require some quiet time to themselves or could be used as a store for wheelchair storage or other equipment.

The sleepover space must:

- be close to a toilet area
- have sufficient space for a full sized single bed
- provide a lockable bedside table for valuables.



Specialist behaviour support

Complex and challenging behavioural support needs

Two means of egress from the office to ensure the safety of residents and staff are often required for offices in these houses.

Vision panels in office doors or walls can help to ensure the safety of all residents is possible.

The house should be a safe one (continued)

Laundry

All houses have a laundry. In group accommodation, it is most likely that staff will use the laundry, although it should be planned so that residents can use it too if they choose to.

The laundry must:

- be minimum 8 sq m in size, with 1550mm clearance provided in front of fixed benches and appliances
- have a door to outside to a secure area where clothes can be aired and dried
- be located in the house, so that soiled or wet clothing does not have to be carried through living rooms or food preparation and storage areas
- have adequate room for storing, sorting, and handling laundry
- must have no steps to outside.

CHECK

That the drying area is going to get plenty of sunlight and a breeze to help with drying and keep down energy bills.

REMEMBER

Most houses have their laundry at the back of the house, although here staff need to be able to keep an eye on what is happening throughout the rest of the house.

Residents may choose to do their own laundry so the space should be accessible to all.

CONSIDER

A lockable linen storage or a cleaner's cupboard might be best located in the laundry or close to it.

Consider locating the freezer in the laundry rather than in the kitchen.

Additional health care support

Where there are a number of residents who are fragile or incontinent, the laundry will approach commercial usage and needs to be planned with this in mind.



Storage and corridors

The storage spaces needed as a minimum are:

- a lockable broom cupboard of minimum 900mm x 450mm with a high shelf for storage of cleaning products, close to the laundry, office or kitchen
- a linen cupboard of minimum 1800mm x 450mm, close to the laundry
- a lockable pantry of minimum 600mm deep and 1000mm wide
- a house store of minimum 3000mm x 1500mm for items such as wheelchairs, which could be located outside or in the garage
- a lockable storage for medicines, sharps, cleaning products and private records in the office
- provide an external lockable store for items such as garden tools and outside activity items – approximately 2000mm x 2400mm.

Corridors should be kept to a minimum in length and steps avoided.

Corridors in the house must:

- include special requirements on the latch side of any doorway as detailed in AS1428.1
- have a minimum width of 1200mm clear with doors having a minimum clear opening width of 900mm
- have an external light source and should not require lighting during the day.

CHECK

That doors do not interfere with clearance in the corridors.

REMEMBER

To minimise the use of corridors in planning. They restrict easy access to rooms for people using walkers and wheelchairs.

Complex and challenging behavioural needs

Keep corridors as light and clear as possible and make sure they lead somewhere.

Additional health care support

Corridors should be kept to a minimum: have a clear width of 1500mm generally and 1800mm around doors.

Outside of the house is also important

By paying attention to the levels around the house, by making the outdoor spaces 'positive', by having a great garden and external areas, the outside of the house will be used as much as the inside.

Walkways and fencing

Walkways give people access around the garden. Fences, and hedges will define the areas around the garden – making certain places private or secure.

Avoid steps in the garden or yard.

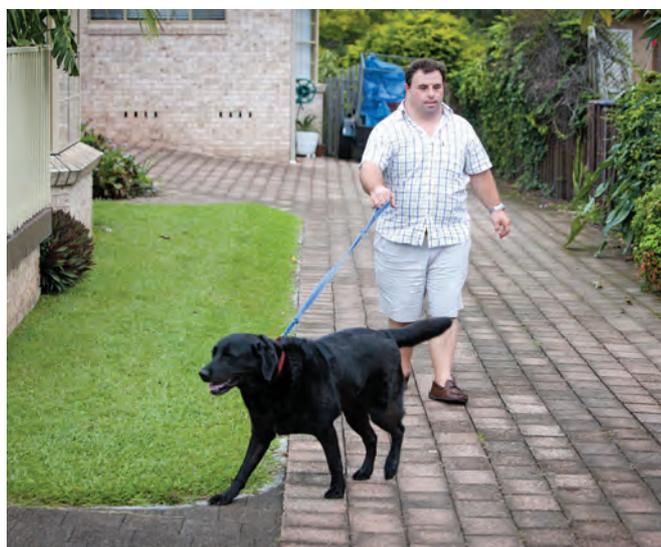
Walkways and paths must be:

- accessible for people using wheelchairs or other mobility devices
- a minimum of 1200mm wide.

If used, ramps need to comply with the conditions as set out in BCA and AS1428.1.

Fences must be:

- around the perimeter of the site, ie there must a front and back yard with cut off fences and gates that can be locked
- in keeping with the surrounding house properties.



CHECK

There is a safe and continuous pathway from the street and parking area to a dwelling entrance.

REMEMBER

Fencing needs to address privacy and security needs and retain safe zone for fire egress.

A long curving pathway may accommodate changes in levels if need be.

CONSIDER

Too many fences within the boundaries will make the house look uninviting.

The surrounding houses' fencing and landscaping will provide some cues as to what to provide.



Car parking

Of all the elements of these houses, the single item that separates them from the rest of the neighbourhood is the size of the garage and car parking. Careful attention to car parking will help minimise the affect this deduction can have on the house as a whole.

Car parking must:

- be provided for one vehicle under cover
- be a minimum of 4500mm x 7000mm in area and have enough area around the vehicle so the car doors can be opened and sufficient space to manoeuvre wheelchairs
- have easy undercover access to an entry point to the house
- have a roof that is integral and consistent with the rest of the house and the others houses around it
- be set back behind the front wall of the house
- must not be a storage place for the garbage bins.



CHECK

That the garage door height is suitable for the selected vehicle.

REMEMBER

The garage is **not** the most important thing about a house – it is there to store a vehicle. It should be set back behind the front line of the house and should not dominate its facade.

That buses/vans may have their main door on the left hand side of the vehicle. Make sure people will have enough room to get out and inside under cover.

CONSIDER

Using porous pavers where cars can park so grass will grow and it will not look like a car parking area when there are no cars parked there

How the garage might be used when the vehicle is not there – perhaps residents could play table tennis or games in the space if it is raining.

Outside of the house is also important (continued)

Gardens and courtyards

The type of dwelling (individual units through to a group home dwelling) will influence how the yard is divided around the house.

The garden and courtyards must:

- have planter beds with planting that is attractive, drought resistant, low maintenance and allows future additional planting by residents and staff
- provide an enclosed secured area for the rain water tank and the clothes drying area
- not use pebbles or stones as a cover material
- have a minimum 15 sq m paved external area to be used as a barbeque area or external eating place and minimum 50 sq m open space, if a single group home
- provide a secure location for the garbage bins where they can be easily accessed, washed, are protected and are out of site of the living areas.



REMEMBER

People often enjoy gardening

Gardens have perfumes or can provide food. They can have themes with colour or water

To use plants that are low maintenance, drought resistant and are not toxic

To use mulch to conserve water and keep weeds down

An irrigation system will be provided but make sure it cannot be tampered with

To provide external lighting which is low and diffused without creating an imposition on the neighbours

The elevation of adjacent surfaces should be the same as the walkways. If not, use a curb to prevent wheelchairs from tipping over, a feathered edge or an unobtrusive handrail provided.

CONSIDER

Providing raised garden beds in some places for access by people in wheelchairs

Changes in colour, textures or materials can help accentuate transitions for people that are visually impaired.

Specialist behaviour support

Complex and challenging behavioural needs

People may ingest plants and materials in the garden so all of these must be selected so they are not dangerous or damaging in any way.

No plants with thorns or prickles or any which are poisonous should be used.

Do not use stones or pebbles and loose objects that can be thrown.

Additional health care support

In some homes where care is provided, there may be substantially more garbage per person per week plus hazardous waste which needs to be removed from the house by specialist procedures.

Provide additional external paved areas for those in wheelchairs or who have minimal mobility.

CHECK

That the levels around the garden have been thoroughly worked out. A Landscape Architect can help with this

That where smaller one or two bedroom units are being provided, these will require their own small yard for sitting in and drying clothes

An irrigation system has been provided but make sure it cannot be tampered with.



Single group homes

Typically, a single group home will consist of the following rooms with the following sizes.

Room	Typical sq m	Number	Total sq m
Entry	4.0	1	4.00
Living/dining	65.0	1	65.00
Kitchen	15.0	1	15.00
Large bath	16.5	1	16.50
Bathroom	8.0	1	8.00
Toilet	3.6	1	3.60
Bedroom	13.0	5	65.00
Office	9.0	1	9.00
Sleepover	6.5	1	6.50
Laundry	8.0	1	8.00
Storage	10.0	Various	10.00
Sub-total			210.60
Travel	25%		52.65
TOTAL			263.25

This keeps the house within the 300 sq m (measured to the external face of the building) required by BCA for it to be constructed as a Class 1 (b) building.

(NOTE: Room sizes in this document are INTERNAL areas.)

The bedrooms might be clustered together as for a typical house or they might be divided by the office into a three (or four) bedroom part clustered around the larger living/dining room and a two (or one) bedroom part around the smaller living room. The office would need to be located between these two divisions to maximise oversight of all areas. In this way, the house can be effectively divided into two separate 'houses' if required.

It is also possible to make the smaller section of the house into a separate unit of one or two bedrooms which may have its access either through the house or separately from the street. In this situation, the separate unit would have its own fenced yard.

A typical group home will be constructed for residents with general and behavioural needs to the Platinum level of the Livable House Guidelines with:

- a slab on ground
- high impact resistant proof lining
- a roof that matches the surrounding houses in pitch, height and material
- fencing that matches the materials and heights of the surrounding houses
- a 150mm high skirting
- vinyl flooring throughout and perhaps non-slip vinyl in the bathrooms
- door handles and taps that are easy to use by someone who may have difficulty holding things
- ceilings strong enough to accommodate future lifting hoists in the bedroom and bathroom
- 35mm solid core doors with a 900mm clear width
- recessed fittings in the bathroom
- perhaps, picture rails in bedrooms, living areas and corridors
- air conditioning in zones
- a fire sprinkler system
- heavy duty mesh screening to all openable windows.

Additional health care support

Will have:

- hoists fitted over beds and in the accessible bathroom
- an Arjo bath or shower tray in the bathroom
- doors 1200mm wide and double leafed wide
- 1500mm wide corridors
- protective non-institutional corners on wall returns.

Specialist behaviour support

Complex and challenging behavioural needs

Will have:

- 13mm USG Powerscape Fibrerock Aqua-tough VHI or equal lining throughout
- Crim-mesh or equal on the 6.38 lam glass windows
- solid fencing to all courtyards (concealed rails)
- attention to making sure corridors and rooms have a means of egress.

Villa-style models

Increasingly, the 'villa-style' model is being chosen over the single group home. Residents of the villa-style model live independently while still having close-by support and share facilities. A 'villa' can have one, two or three bedrooms, a bathroom and living areas. A number of villas will be clustered together on a site, in close proximity to the common areas and office space.

There are a lot of competing elements to consider in this model to make sure it fulfils the needs of the residents. Broadly speaking, the villas must work together as a 'large sprawling' household with each villa having its own individual area but with easy access to the shared areas. There is one common entry point to the site to which the entries to each villa are linked. The office and common rooms (living/dining room, kitchenette, laundry and store) should be located to maximise visibility, security and support.

Villa-style developments must:

- look like a single dwelling from the street
- have a separate entrance for pedestrians and vehicles
- have a clear common entry
- have common outdoor areas which minimise hidden areas
- have a clear distinction between common areas and private areas
- have 1200mm wide pathways, which may or may not be covered, linking all areas.

REMEMBER

That it is preferable that the villas not be planned like a motel with a single long verandah or corridor with doors opening off it

That good site planning, including careful attention to levels and landscaping, is crucial to making this model work successfully

That the entry to the development and to each villa should have a generous porch or verandah to protect the residents as they enter

That a covered walkway should be provided at the entry and a protected area at the entry to each villa.



Villas

The villa-style model offers residents full independence with nearby support from a staff member and access to common areas. Each villa will have one, two or three bedrooms, an accessible bathroom, a living/dining area and a kitchen or kitchenette. There should be an individual outdoor area directly accessed from the villa and space outside here for a table and chairs, a clothes drying area and somewhere for a small garden for flowers or herbs.

One bedroom villa

- The kitchenette should contain a single sink, a space for a microwave, a two burner cooktop, an oven and a 220 litre upright fridge.
- The bathroom should have space for a small single tub and a small washing machine or have space for these in a cupboard.
- The bedroom should be 13sq m not including the wardrobe.
- There should be a clear connection between each villa and the common areas, where there is a share living/dining room and kitchen, laundry, and office facilities.

Two bedroom villa

- The kitchen should have space for a 350 litre upright fridge, a bowl and a half sink, an oven and cook top as well as space for a microwave and a pantry.
- Each bedroom must be a minimum of 13 sq m, not including the wardrobe, and be designed so that a TV can be mounted on the wall so it can be watched from bed if necessary.
- A small tub and space for a washing machine should be available in a separate small laundry.

Three bedroom villa

- The kitchen should have space for a 520 litre upright fridge, a bowl and a half sink, an oven and cook top as well as space for a microwave and a pantry.
- Each bedroom must be a minimum of 13 sq m, not including the wardrobe and be designed so that a TV can be mounted on the wall so it can be watched from bed if necessary.
- A tub and washing machine space as well as benchtop and storage should be available in a separate small laundry space.
- A second toilet may be required in a room of its own with a hand basin.

All villas must have sufficient space to store brooms and mops, linen and all other usual household items.

Villa-style models (continued)

Common areas

The common areas are an essential part of the 'villa-style' model of supported accommodation. The common areas are made up of the office for support staff, a sleepover or storeroom, an accessible toilet, a laundry and where there are more than three people, a common living/dining/kitchen area is provided. The common living/dining room is a place where residents will eat meals together and can take their family and friends if they come to visit or where group activities might take place. It will also be used by the staff at times to make a cup of coffee, and will have a large common laundry area.

The common living/dining area must:

- be designed with maximum accessibility to all villas
- be a minimum of 24 sq m in area and allow for wheelchair circulation
- allow for wheelchair circulation
- have acoustic integrity so that activities there do not disturb the other residents
- have direct access to an outdoor area
- should be located in close proximity to the office and common entry to the development – or at least be easily visible from there
- provide a kitchen, with space for a 350 litre fridge, a single bowl sink, a dishwasher space, a cooktop and oven. There should be a laundry and accessible toilet close by. The kitchen space is additional to the living/dining area.

REMEMBER

That the common area should be linked to common open usable space

That there will need to be an accessible toilet associated with the common area which is available to staff after the common room has been closed up for the night

To try to have the common area with a north aspect. It should be somewhere people want spend time in and be in with their family

That while it is best to have the common areas and office space all together, where this is not possible, the office, laundry, stores and an additional toilet should be grouped together

That the Platinum level, Livable Housing Design Guidelines are met in relation to elements such as switches and powerpoints, flooring and window sills.



There are a number of competing interests that need to be addressed when designing a 'villa-style' model group home.

From the street, the development should look like any other house in the street and neighbourhood. Lots of carparking spacing or turning circles for cars will not help achieve this – attention to surrounding fencing and landscaping will help.

The entry to the villa-style model group home should be clearly identifiable from the street. All residents, staff and visitors will use the same entry point. The entry should be covered and lockable. Once inside this entry, it is preferable for all villa entries to be clearly visible from this point or a clear path to each provided. It is best if pathways do not run too close in front of other's villas and it is kept away a little from the building line – although with one bedroom villas, the villas and the common areas must read together as a single household. It is best not to have a shared landing in front of a number of villas.

Pedestrian access should be separated from the car access as many of the residents will come and go independently from the house. The pedestrian access to the house should be clearly indicated with a letterbox, a gate and a path to the entry.

The carport should be as low as possible yet still accommodate a large model vehicle such as a Toyota Hiace. The carport should be set back behind the front line of the house. Similar to the single group home, only one car or bus car parking space need be accommodated. It is important that the levels around the site are properly worked out for accessibility and drainage.

Landscaping of the site should be undertaken by a landscape architect.

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