

Connection to Nature in a Residential Care Home

Having a connection to nature is known to be beneficial for residents but is often lacking in dementia care environments. Research was carried out in numerous homes in the US, the UK and Scandinavia over the past 5 years. Below is a short 25 item checklist to determine the potential for connection to nature a care home can offer. Having such information can help a family caregiver make an informed choice when placing their loved one into a care home. It can also help a professional caregiver to assess their work environment and may therefore contribute to improving practice. Fill in the name and address of the care home and the date.

Name of care home _____ **Date** _____
Address _____

Views and Fresh Air (sit in a chair in the lounge and also in the dining room)

- ___ Does the view from either room contain trees, plants and sky?
- ___ Does the view from either room contain people, traffic and real life activities?
- ___ Are there any tree branches close to the windows (to watch birds & squirrels)?
- ___ Are there windows to the outside on more than one wall of either room?
- ___ Are there any windows open at the moment?
- ___ Can you smell or feel fresh air in either room?

A Nearby Outside Area to Use and Enjoy

- ___ Is the dementia care unit on the same level as the ground outside?
- ___ Is there a door from the dementia care unit to an outside seating area?
- ___ is there level access (no steps) to an outside seating area?
- ___ Is the door unlocked and easy to open?
- ___ Are residents using the outside area right now (or does it look like they normally do)?
- ___ Is there outdoor furniture such as tables, chairs or benches for residents to use?
- ___ Is the furniture sturdy, clean and well-maintained?
- ___ Are there any umbrellas or awnings for sun protection?
- ___ Is there sporting equipment such as bowls, shuffleboard or horseshoes?
- ___ Is there play equipment such as a swing, slide, climbing frame or ball hoop?
- ___ Are there hanging baskets, planters or trellises being used for plants?
- ___ Are there trees, shrubs and flowering plants visible from the seating area?
- ___ Can residents see the outdoor seating area from where they sit or walk inside the home?

Nature Indoors

- ___ Are there any live or artificial plants or flowers indoors?
- ___ Do the live plants indoors seem healthy and watered?

Animals and Pets

- ___ Does the dementia care unit have any pets (dog, cat, birds, rabbit)?
- ___ Do animals/pets come to visit the residents? (ask the residents or staff)

Horticultural Therapy or Therapeutic Horticulture

- ___ Does an Occupational or Horticultural Therapist do nature-related activities?
- ___ Is there a greenhouse, a potting bench or tool shed the residents use?

___ TOTAL SCORE