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FROM THE EDITOR

“Adjustments made for people with disabilities benefit everyone”



Accessible design makes the built environment better for all users! I've recently seen social media posts about the 'kerb-cut' effect explaining that adjustments made for people with disabilities benefit everyone.

Kerb cuts and ramps allow trolleys, wheeled-suitcases, and baby buggies to get up a step without bumping.

Automatic and widened doors make it easier for anyone carrying something heavy, someone using crutches for a broken leg, someone with both a dog on a lead and a pram...

Shower seats allow pregnant women to take their time in the shower, and make it easier for many to wash their feet!

Good contrast on way finding and information panels mean they can be read even in bright sunlight or if it's overcast.

I've lost count of the times when style over substance means I can't see the

lettering on labels, can't hear others talking because of poor acoustics, and tripped over steps that merge into the rest of the floor.

So if designers put proper consideration into making their creations accessible for people with vision impairment, hearing loss, limited mobility, then they are opening them up to everyone. Not difficult is it?

Some of our features come about because readers get in touch to tell us what they're doing, so what do YOU want to see in our next issue? Let me know, get in touch!

Juliet
Juliet Davies, Editor

Join the debate: [f](#) IncDesMagUK [x](#) IncDesMagUK [in](#) inclusive-design-magazine

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Greg is an Architectural Designer & Project Manager with Steven Docker Associates, specialising in creating accessible homes for people with disabilities.

GADGET: My phone allows me to communicate with clients and builders on projects all around the country.

PASTIME: I volunteer as an Adaptive Ski Instructor with Disability Snowsport UK and as a Mentor at The Wave Project.



STUART FEARN

Stuart is the Regional Director of Sales at AKW, leading manufacturer of accessible bathroom, kitchen and mobility support solutions.

GADGET: I spend most of my downtime in the kitchen, so my favourite gadget has to be my food processor.

PASTIME: I've recently caught the golf bug. I'm taking lessons and will be competing in our charity golf day in September.

The Complex Care Environment Specialists



With over 15 years of experience in the healthcare sector, Innova is a trusted leader in designing and fitting out complex care environments across the UK.

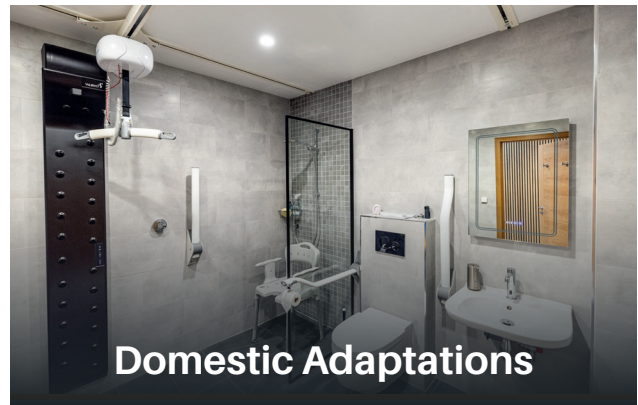
Our team specialises in Ceiling Hoist Systems, Hydrotherapy Pools, Changing Places Toilets, Accessible Kitchens & Bathrooms, and Bespoke Care Furniture, delivering tailored solutions for a range of complex care needs, all backed up by ongoing servicing & maintenance support.



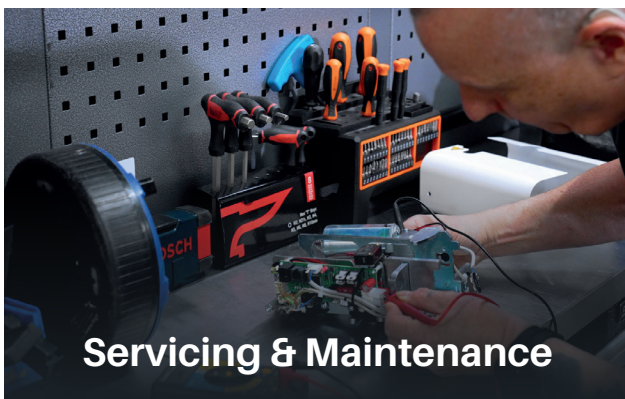
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Multi User Environment Fit-Out



Domestic Adaptations



Servicing & Maintenance



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Innova have installed one of the most comprehensive overhead hoisting solutions ever delivered in a UK hospital



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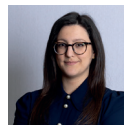
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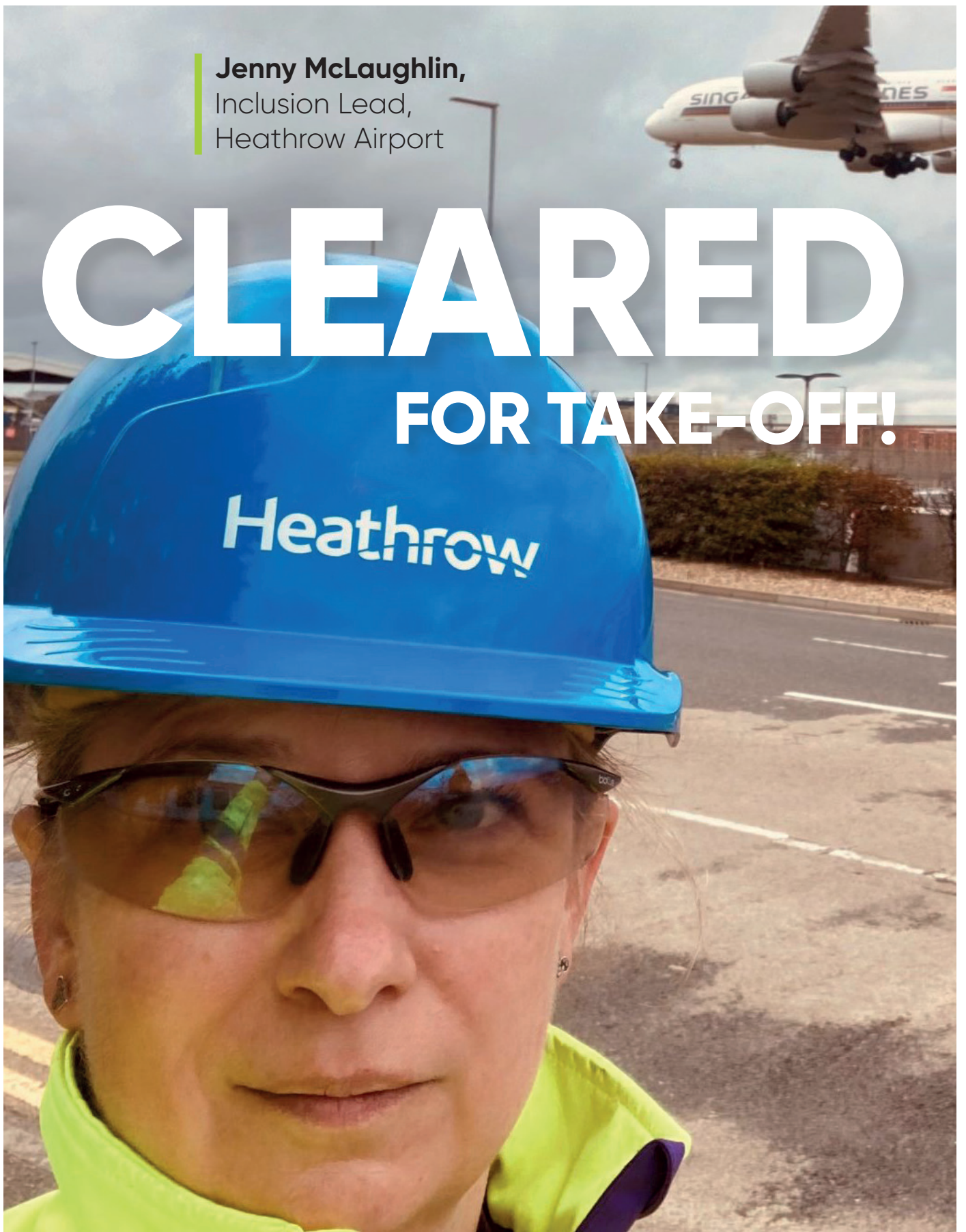
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Jenny McLaughlin,
Inclusion Lead,
Heathrow Airport

CLEARED FOR TAKE-OFF!

Heathrow



Jenny McLaughlin is the Inclusion Lead at Heathrow Airport. She has worked at Heathrow for over 18 years, starting in the Environment team, before moving to Airside and now working in Expansion. Inclusive Design Magazine finds out what a (not very) average week looks like...

MONDAY

Mondays begin early – not just in time, but in headspace. I've learned that if I don't anchor the week with 'intention' lists, then I can struggle to know which activity to prioritise.

The school run is already a sensory balancing act. Two brilliant, neurodivergent children navigating a world that rarely flexes enough. By the time I reach my desk, I've already practised patience, negotiation, regulation, advocacy; all before 9am.

My first meeting of the week is focused on equitable safety. We're interrogating how safety systems – often built with good intent – still unintentionally exclude.

We talk about human factors, fatigue, cognition, power, language. I push us gently but firmly away from compliance-only thinking and towards care. Safety not as paperwork, but as a lived experience. This is the heart of equitable safety; recognising that wellbeing, trust, cognition, and power shape whether people feel able to speak up when something hasn't been designed with their needs in mind.

Whether for example you are one of the one in twelve men that are colourblind, the one in four that are neurodivergent in the construction industry, or the situation means your body is asked to do something beyond its means.

In the afternoon, I work through strategy documents making the links to skills, social value, and inclusion across major infrastructure programmes. In a rapidly evolving world, equitable safety and inclusive design are no longer optional, they need to be explicit. Recognising that everyone processes, communicates, senses and moves differently – assumptions go unchecked and barriers are unintentionally created.

By the end of the day, my brain buzzes with questions rather than answers. I count that as progress.

Dinner is quick. Homework is negotiated. There's a quiet moment on the sofa where one child leans into me, exhausted by the effort of masking all day. Leadership looks like this too, creating the safe space for your team is critical if trust is to thrive.

"IF WE RECOGNISE THAT UNDERPINNING EVERY SUCCESSFUL SOLUTION IS CULTURE, BEHAVIOUR, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY, THEN WE MUST ALSO ACCEPT A SIMPLE TRUTH: COMPETENCE DOESN'T SIT IN ISOLATION" JENNY MCLAUGHLIN, INCLUSION LEAD, HEATHROW AIRPORT

Below: Jenny is mum to two brilliant, neurodivergent children

TUESDAY

The day starts with a gathering of Construction Leadership Council's EDI group, a meeting that reminds me both how far we've come and how far we still have to go.

The meeting room (virtual this time) is full of people who care deeply about culture change across construction and infrastructure. Today's topic runs through the BE Inclusive action plan, looking at not just data, but the competencies that need to be addressed if project teams are going to be able to deliver at scale and pace with scarce resources.

I speak about inclusive design training – how every engineer, designer, and architect can no longer construct around a mythical "average human." How inclusion must sit upstream, not as mitigation. If we are to meet our CDM 2015 regulations, we must anticipate difference and design for diversity. Despite legislation already asking us to anticipate difference, much of our industry still designs for sameness, placing the burden of adaptation on individuals rather than systems.

There's a moment where the room goes quiet. Not because of disagreement, but because something has landed.





Above: Attending the launch of the BSI Suicide Prevention Standard (BSI 30480) at Speaker's House in Parliament

After lunch, I catch up with emails, answering queries on design decisions, connecting project teams with operational colleagues to better design for equitable outcomes. And update my diary with incoming peer review, and engagement with our Employee Resource Groups and Heathrow Airport Accessibility Group to ensure we listen and engage with lived experience.

The workday ends, but the thinking doesn't. On the way home, I listen to an eclectic mix of music, as thoughts fade in and out, solutions pop, and conversations are rehearsed and repeated.

In the evening, the cats have delivered us a 'gift', which disrupts the routine. After initial outburst of frustration I pause, breathe, forgive. Kindness (even to yourself) is not indulgence; it's equity in action.

WEDNESDAY

This is an all-day in-person design review day. I have my fidget gadget in hand and find a place at the back, so if needed I can stand and move about. I do my best thinking when moving and often draw pictures to help me express ideas.

The discussion turns to how to deliver human centred design and remove unintended barriers. We talk about accessibility not as compliance, but as



"WELLBEING, TRUST, COGNITION, AND POWER SHAPE WHETHER PEOPLE FEEL ABLE TO SPEAK UP WHEN SOMETHING HASN'T BEEN DESIGNED WITH THEIR NEEDS IN MIND" **JENNY MCLAUGHLIN, INCLUSION LEAD, HEATHROW AIRPORT**

levels of agency. Unlike sustainability, inclusive design rarely has a shared language or metric, which means it is often unintentionally value-engineered out.

This is where the Wheel of Considerations comes in, a tool that can help shape curious conversations of access requirements for different demographics, the environment constraints, and the activities that take place. The output helping to guide with a metric and record the impact of decisions, the residual risk that will require to be mitigated and the legacy that can be created and shared to improve the industry as a whole. The Wheel isn't about scoring people or projects, but about making visible the consequences of decisions before they become embodied risk.

By late afternoon, the effort to remain present is starting to show, and I am grateful for a break to walk around the building. It's often in these moments where I talk about my needs, that others also start to notice and talk about their own.

Vulnerability can be a strength, often emerging as a byproduct of inclusive work. This aligns with Heathrow's values on the importance of mental health and reflect a shared commitment to fostering an environment where wellbeing is valued and supported.

That evening, I go to the theatre. It's a deliberate act of cultural nourishment. Sitting in the dark with strangers, feeling something collectively, reminds me why storytelling matters, why humanity matters, and why we can't separate technical excellence from emotional intelligence.

I go home lighter than I arrived.

THURSDAY

Thursday is full of governance, the kind that looks quiet from the outside but is heavy with influence.

Part of the day is supporting alignment with objectives, of which accessibility, equitable safety and sustainability are key pillars.

Next there is a 'Heathrow Inclusive Learners Partnership' meeting with supply

chain and education partners, focused on pathways into infrastructure for young people who don't fit the traditional mould. SEND and care experienced learners gain insights from work experience and internships as part of Heathrow's 'World of Work' programme. Lead by Heathrow Academy, it is a community employability programme that helps local people, particularly young people, build skills, confidence and real-world experience, opening pathways into jobs and long-term careers at the airport and beyond.

This is legacy work, a chance to provide opportunities that will deliver economic benefits to those within our local communities.

This is my why, the overlap between home and work: the desire to create a space where my children can thrive because their needs were recognised and included in the design as standard.

FRIDAY

Friday takes me to site, and this is where the magic happens. Watching project teams deliver in a dance of collaboration, each flexing their particular skills set in the service of the shared outcome.

Main pic: A meeting of the RIBA Inclusive Design Overlay panel

Below: An unusual way to see if there's any energy left!



Because if we recognise that underpinning every successful solution is culture, behaviour, and psychological safety, then we must also accept a simple truth: competence doesn't sit in isolation. It lives in the interaction between skills. It is created, or eroded, in how people listen, respect one another's expertise, and close the feedback loop between practical application and technical intent.

On site, this matters viscerally.

If the experience of the person applying the skill isn't heard, or fed back into design, planning, or facilitation, the system can unintentionally cause harm. When technical touchstones become disconnected from lived reality, projects falter. Not because individuals lack capability, but because the conditions for combined effort haven't been created.

Continues over...

"WHAT WE DON'T CHANGE, WE CHOOSE"

**JENNY MCLAUGHLIN,
INCLUSION LEAD,
HEATHROW AIRPORT**





Above: Visiting Air Traffic Control

My favourite moments in projects are those where I get to witness skills in action.

The quiet choreography of machine operators, reading the ground and each other with barely a word.

The electrician bringing light, not just power, but clarity and possibility.

The structural engineer, calm and measured, translating immense complexity into equations you can trust your life to.

The planner shaping time and space, seeing paths where others see constraint.

These moments remind me that 'skills' do not build great infrastructure, humans do. Communication, trust, care, accountability, collaboration.

These human skills are not adjacent to safety, they are safety critical. When trust, communication and care break down, risk increases for those already carrying the greatest burden.

I leave the site thoughtful, grounded, and reminded of why I do this work. Friday doesn't feel like an ending, it feels like a reaffirmation. The RIBA Inclusive Design Overlay reminds us that good design starts with who we imagine build, maintain, operate and as well as use.

When that thinking is translated into training, everyday language, and decision-making, inclusion stops being specialist knowledge and starts being shared capability.

That's when safety moves from compliance to care.

That afternoon, one child needs me in a way that can't be postponed, so I log off.

The week ends not with a flourish, but with presence.

THE WEEKEND


For my own mental health, I call a 'wine and chips' gathering. A meeting with my friends to share the chaos of the week's events, which stops the mental whirlwind from becoming a tornado. Listening to their own stories unfold, I recognise that processing is better done as a team sport. No judgement, just naming the mess, laughing at the mishaps, and recognising that life is better when we drop the 'I'm fine' and connect with being human.

This is what leadership looks like for me: not linear, not tidy, but intentional.

It's about holding systems and stories at the same time. About knowing that equitable safety doesn't live in documents, but it lives in decisions, behaviours, and whether people feel able to show up as themselves.

And it's about accepting that the most important work happens not in isolation, but through connection; with colleagues, communities, family and friends, and with ourselves.

There is rarely a typical week. I feel incredibly privileged to be able to not only support the key work of delivering change within Heathrow, but also being a voice of change within industry.

For Equitable Safety and Inclusive Design are not destinations, they are ongoing practices. They show up in moments when someone notices they're adapting to a space that wasn't designed for them, and chooses to speak up. Because what we don't change, we choose. 

"THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK HAPPENS NOT IN ISOLATION, BUT THROUGH CONNECTION; WITH COLLEAGUES, COMMUNITIES, FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AND WITH OURSELVES" **JENNY MCLAUGHLIN**, INCLUSION LEAD, HEATHROW AIRPORT

>> MEET JENNY

Having already delivered several business changes, Jenny's latest is embedding the 'Inclusion as Standard' approach throughout the Heathrow design and delivery process.

Jenny is dyslexic and has ADHD and believes that it is because of, not despite her difference, that she is able to deliver complex change projects. She is a speaker at a number of industry events on 'Systematic Inclusion', bringing to life the criticality of accessibility if we are to remain a safe and sustainable industry. This is most evident in her being a key player in creation of RIBA Inclusive Design Overlay published summer 2023 and launch of Equitable Safety Initiative (ESI) in 2025.

Finally, Jenny is a Governor for Harrow, Richmond and Uxbridge Colleges (HRUC), and leading the Heathrow Inclusive Learners Partnership to ensure equitable pathways for learners to gain experience, internships and work.



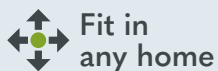
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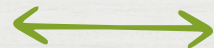
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DESIGNING FOR DIGNITY

EMBEDDING INCLUSIVE PATIENT HANDLING IN THE DNA OF HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENTS

In conversations about the future of healthcare design, the spotlight often falls on digital transformation, cutting-edge clinical technologies, and sustainability targets. Yet, points out *Innova Care Concepts*, one of the most immediate, human aspects of care - how patients physically move through and experience a hospital - can still be underrepresented in early design thinking.

This raises an important question: how inclusive can a healthcare environment truly be if it does not fully support the safe, dignified movement of every patient, regardless of ability, condition, or size?

At its core, inclusive design is about anticipating diversity, removing barriers, and creating environments that work for as many people as possible without the need for adaptation. In healthcare, this principle becomes even more critical. Patients are often at their most vulnerable, with reduced mobility, heightened anxiety, and a greater reliance on others. The way a building supports their movement is not a peripheral concern; it is central to their experience of care.

The work undertaken by Innova Care Concepts at Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (Midland Met/MMUH) offers a compelling case study in how inclusive design principles can be applied to patient handling at scale. More importantly, it demonstrates why these considerations must be embedded from the earliest stages of estate planning if they are to deliver meaningful, long-term impact.

RETHINKING PATIENT HANDLING AS AN INCLUSIVE DESIGN PRIORITY

Patient handling has traditionally been viewed through a narrow lens: compliance, risk management, and equipment provision. While these elements are undeniably important, they only scratch the surface of



Above: *How inclusive can a healthcare environment truly be if it does not fully support the safe, dignified movement of every patient?*

what patient handling represents within a healthcare setting.

From an inclusive design perspective, patient handling is about equity of experience. It asks whether all patients, whether elderly, bariatric, post-operative, or living with long-term disabilities, can move through a space safely, comfortably, and with dignity. It considers whether environments enable independence where possible, and provide seamless support where needed.

Too often, these questions are addressed

late in the design process, once spatial layouts are fixed and structural decisions are locked in. At that point, options become constrained. Solutions are retrofitted rather than integrated, leading to compromises in usability, efficiency, and sometimes even safety.

By contrast, when patient handling is treated as a foundational design principle, it influences everything from room dimensions and circulation routes to structural loading and equipment integration. It becomes part of the architectural language of the building rather than an overlay.

THE HIDDEN IMPACT OF POORLY DESIGNED MOVEMENT

For healthcare staff, the consequences of inadequate patient handling design are immediate and cumulative. Inefficient layouts can result in longer transfer times, increased reliance on manual handling, and greater physical strain. Over time, this contributes to fatigue, musculoskeletal injuries, and reduced capacity to deliver direct patient care.

But the impact on patients is equally significant, if less frequently articulated. Being moved between bed, chair, or treatment areas can be one of the most uncomfortable and anxiety-inducing aspects of a hospital stay. Where systems are lacking, patients may experience unnecessary discomfort, loss of dignity, or a heightened sense of dependence.

Inclusive design challenges us to see these moments not as routine tasks, but as critical touchpoints in the patient journey. A well-designed environment can transform them, making transfers smoother, less intrusive, and more respectful of personal autonomy.

INFRASTRUCTURE AS AN ENABLER OF INCLUSION

One of the most effective ways to support inclusive patient handling is through the integration of ceiling track hoist systems. Unlike mobile equipment, which can be cumbersome, space-consuming, and inconsistently available, ceiling track hoists provide a fixed, reliable infrastructure for patient movement.

From an inclusion standpoint, their benefits are multifaceted. They reduce the physical effort required from staff, enabling safer handling practices and often allowing a single caregiver to perform tasks that would otherwise require multiple people. This not only improves efficiency but also reduces the number of individuals involved in a patient transfer which is an important factor in maintaining dignity and privacy.

For patients, the experience is typically more stable and controlled, minimising discomfort and preserving a sense of



Above: *The Trust required a solution that would work seamlessly within both single rooms and multi-bed bays, integrate with privacy curtain systems, and support the operational demands of a busy acute hospital*

"BY REDUCING RELIANCE ON MANUAL HANDLING, THE SYSTEMS INSTALLED AT MIDLAND MET HELP TO LOWER THE RISK OF MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURIES AMONG STAFF"

security. For those with complex needs, including bariatric patients, ceiling track systems can provide levels of support that are difficult to achieve through manual methods alone.

However, the effectiveness of these systems is highly dependent on how and when they are incorporated into the building design. Retrofitting ceiling track hoists into an existing structure can be technically challenging and prohibitively expensive. Structural limitations, spatial constraints, and conflicts with other building systems often result in partial or suboptimal installations.

Early integration, by contrast, allows for comprehensive coverage, optimal positioning, and future flexibility. It ensures that the infrastructure truly supports the full spectrum of patient needs, rather than addressing only the most immediate requirements.

DESIGNING FOR A CHANGING PATIENT DEMOGRAPHIC

The importance of this approach is amplified by broader demographic and clinical trends. Healthcare systems are increasingly serving an ageing population, with higher levels of frailty and multimorbidity. At the same time, there is a

"THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IS NOT A PASSIVE BACKDROP TO CARE"

growing need to support bariatric patients, whose care requirements place additional demands on both equipment and space.

Standard room configurations, developed for a different era of healthcare, may no longer be sufficient. Inclusive design calls for environments that are adaptable and resilient and capable of accommodating a wide range of physical needs without requiring constant modification.

This has implications not only for equipment provision but also for spatial planning. Adequate circulation space, reinforced structural elements, and thoughtful integration of support systems all play a role in creating environments that can respond to evolving demands.

In this context, patient handling is not a niche consideration; it is a key component of future-proofing healthcare estates.

SUPPORTING STAFF AS PART OF INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Inclusive design is often framed in terms of end users and in this case, patients. But in healthcare environments, staff are equally critical stakeholders. Their ability to work safely, efficiently, and without unnecessary physical strain is fundamental to the delivery of high-quality care.

By reducing reliance on manual handling, the systems installed at Midland Met help to lower the risk of musculoskeletal injuries among staff. This has long-term benefits not only for individual wellbeing but also for workforce sustainability, reducing absenteeism and improving retention.

Moreover, by streamlining patient transfers, the design frees up time for clinicians to focus on what matters most: direct patient care. In this sense, inclusive design becomes a catalyst for better outcomes across the board, supporting both those who receive care and those who provide it.

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE DESIGN

As the UK continues to invest in new healthcare infrastructure through initiatives such as the New Hospital Programme, the lessons from MMUH are both timely and instructive.

First and foremost, they highlight the importance of early collaboration. Architects, clinicians, estates teams, and specialist providers must work together from the outset to ensure that patient handling is fully integrated into the design. This requires a shift in mindset, from viewing these systems as optional add-ons to

A CASE STUDY IN INTEGRATED DESIGN

MIDLAND MET



Midland Metropolitan University Hospital stands as one of the most significant recent additions to the UK's healthcare infrastructure. Serving more than half a million people across Sandwell and West Birmingham, the hospital brings together emergency, maternity, children's, and adult acute services within a single, state-of-the-art facility.

■ **Below:** For healthcare staff, the consequences of inadequate patient handling design are immediate and cumulative



For a project of this scale, the stakes are high. Every design decision has a ripple effect on patient care, staff wellbeing, and operational efficiency. Recognising the importance of patient handling early in the process, the Trust and its partners worked closely with Innova Care Concepts to embed inclusive movement solutions into the fabric of the building.

The result is one of the most comprehensive overhead hoisting installations ever delivered in a UK hospital. Hundreds of ceiling track hoist systems have been installed across single rooms and multi-bed bays, creating a consistent and reliable infrastructure for patient transfers throughout the inpatient environment.

Crucially, this was not a standalone intervention. It formed part of a coordinated design strategy that aligned estate planning with clinical workflows and operational needs. By engaging early in the design process, Innova was able to influence key decisions around layout,

“[IT IS] ONE OF THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE OVERHEAD HOISTING INSTALLATIONS EVER DELIVERED IN A UK HOSPITAL. HUNDREDS OF CEILING TRACK HOIST SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN INSTALLED ACROSS SINGLE ROOMS AND MULTI-BED BAYS, CREATING A CONSISTENT AND RELIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PATIENT TRANSFERS THROUGHOUT THE INPATIENT ENVIRONMENT”

structure, and integration, ensuring that the system would function effectively from day one.

INNOVATION IN PRACTICE: BALANCING FUNCTION AND DIGNITY

One of the defining features of the Midland Met project is its attention to the interplay between functionality and patient dignity. In multi-bed bays, for example, the integration of ceiling track systems had to be carefully coordinated with privacy curtains and other spatial elements.

As Emma Loosley, Senior Commissioning Manager for the Trust, noted: “Innova’s innovative design solution was able to meet the challenge of coordinating the ceiling track with the curtains around the bed space while maintaining patient privacy and dignity.”

This seemingly simple detail speaks volumes about the complexity of inclusive design in healthcare settings. It is not enough for a system to work in isolation; it must coexist harmoniously with other elements of the environment, supporting both clinical efficiency and the human experience of care.

Another key innovation lies in the ability to share hoist units between bed spaces. This approach allows the Trust to reduce the total number of units required while maintaining flexibility and accessibility. From a design perspective, it represents a more efficient use of resources without compromising on inclusivity.



Above: Patient handling may not always capture headlines, but its impact is profound

recognising them as essential components of an inclusive environment.

Secondly, the project underscores the value of thinking at scale. While individual solutions can make a difference, it is the consistency and comprehensiveness of the approach that truly transforms the patient and staff experience. Embedding infrastructure across entire wards and departments creates a seamless environment in which inclusive practices can flourish.


Finally, it reinforces the idea that the built environment is not a passive backdrop to care. It actively shapes how care is delivered, influencing everything from workflow efficiency to patient dignity. Designing with this in mind opens up new possibilities for innovation and improvement.

DESIGNING FOR DIGNITY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

The story of Midland Met Hospital offers a powerful reminder that inclusion is not just about access, it is about experience. It is about ensuring that every interaction within a space, no matter how routine, is as safe, comfortable, and respectful as possible.

Patient handling may not always capture headlines, but its impact is profound. When embedded early in the design process, it has the potential to reduce operational friction, support staff wellbeing, and, most importantly, enhance the dignity of patients at their most vulnerable.

As healthcare systems continue to evolve, the challenge (and opportunity) is to carry these lessons forward. By placing inclusive design principles at the heart of estate planning, and by recognising the critical role of infrastructure in enabling equitable care, we can create environments that truly work for everyone.

In doing so, we move closer to a vision of healthcare that is not only efficient and innovative, but fundamentally human. 

Find out more about the MMUH and Innova case study, and watch the video, at www.innovacareconcepts.com/case-studies/midland-metropolitan-university-hospital or scan the QR Code.



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CONNECT, GROW INSPIRE

At the Business Design Centre, London, on the 11th June, the **Care Innovation Summit 2026** will be bringing together senior leaders from across adult social care, including care homes, home care, complex and specialised care, and healthcare design and build for a day of practical insight, meaningful connections, and forward-thinking strategies.



Curated for decision-makers shaping the future of care, the Summit moves beyond high-level discussion to explore how design, strategy, operations and care delivery intersect to deliver better outcomes for people, communities and care teams.

Expect evidence-led case studies, actionable insight, and meaningful connections with those driving change across the sector.

Above: Hear directly from CEOs, policymakers, clinicians, designers, investors and innovators working at the intersection of care and design



Building on the legacy of the Future of Care Leaders Conference and Dementia Summit, Care Innovation Summit introduces an expanded and highly anticipated Healthcare Design & Build stream, to form three focused content streams. These topics form three focused streams, each designed to deliver practical solutions, operational insight, and proven approaches to growth. Hear from industry experts across all streams, including care home and homecare CEOs, top innovators, and researchers, as well as policy makers and regulatory representatives.

THREE CONTENT STREAMS

Dementia Care: Explore the latest research, policy developments and frontline innovations improving outcomes for people living with dementia, covering everything from young onset dementia to integrated care pathways and workforce empowerment.

Future of Care: Gain clarity on the financial, regulatory and operational challenges facing care providers today, with sessions on financial resilience, digital transformation, interoperability and the role of data and research in driving real change.

Healthcare Design & Build: Discover how intelligent and inclusive design, refurbishment strategies and sustainable development can enhance resident wellbeing, improve staff efficiency and unlock long-term value for care operators and investors.

Who should attend?

The Care Innovation Summit 2026 will be bringing together senior leaders from across adult social care.



- Residential, home care and specialist care providers
- Social care leaders interested in design and build
- Architects, designers & engineers in healthcare
- Investors & developers in care projects
- Government & healthcare advisors
- Senior care professionals from residential, homecare and specialist care services (C-level, owners and managers)

Who will you meet?

At Care Innovation Summit 2026, you'll be in the room with the people actively shaping the future of care, from care home and home care CEOs and policy makers to clinical specialists, design experts and investors.

Beyond the stage, you'll connect with over 500 senior decision-makers, giving you the opportunity to:

- Build relationships with peers facing the same operational and regulatory challenges
- Exchange ideas and solutions that are

already working in similar care settings


- Identify trusted suppliers and partners who can support your organisation's growth
- Create long-term partnerships that strengthen your organisation beyond the event

"EXPECT EVIDENCE-LED CASE STUDIES, ACTIONABLE INSIGHT AND MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS WITH THOSE DRIVING CHANGE ACROSS THE SECTOR"

WHY ATTEND?

With three streams, you can build a personalised agenda aligned to your organisation's priorities - whether that's improving care quality, strengthening operational resilience or investing in inclusive, future-ready environments.

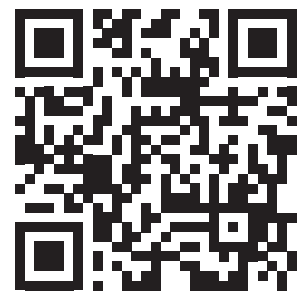
Across the day, hear directly from CEOs, policymakers, clinicians, designers, investors and innovators working at the intersection of care and design. Expect candid discussion, practical takeaways and opportunities to engage with peers navigating similar challenges.

From rethinking environments for better outcomes to implementing innovation that works in practice, every session is designed to leave you with ideas you can apply immediately. 



BOOK NOW

Join an exclusive community of health & social care's most influential leaders at Care Innovation Summit 2026 to discover new ways to inspire, connect and grow. Find out more at www.careinnovationsummit.co.uk.



A PATHWAY TO THE FUTURE

Following an accident or injury, the person involved can often find that their home is no longer accessible for their new needs. Whilst the input from architects and occupational therapists are essential in determining and designing the best adaptations, correct legal representation is the key to securing funding to finance the project. Specialist personal injury solicitor **Ben Townsend**, Stewarts' Head of Personal Injury Leeds, outlines what is involved in making an accommodation claim.

Catastrophic injury claims involve every aspect of a client's life because their injuries change every aspect of their life, including their housing needs.

Accommodation claims are therefore an intrinsic part of catastrophic injury cases.

After a catastrophic injury, the injured person can often have severely impaired mobility.

Most people do not happen to live in a house that is suitable for a wheelchair user or someone with significant mobility impairments. So, in almost every case, the catastrophic injury solicitor needs to investigate whether the client's present home can be adapted to make it suitable for them or whether an alternative home will be required.

MEDICAL SUPPORT

There needs to be evidence upon which to base an accommodation claim.

The first step for the claimant's solicitor is to find out whether the medical expert they engage to report to the court supports the claimant's need for alternative accommodation due to their injuries. An accommodation claim cannot succeed without such medical support. If the medical expert believes the present accommodation does not meet the claimant's needs, the accommodation claim can proceed.

The accommodation experts will report to the court about the injured person's present property and, if it can't be appropriately adapted, the requirements of a new property and the likely cost of any adaptations required to that property.

"INJURIES CHANGE EVERY ASPECT OF THEIR LIFE, INCLUDING THEIR HOUSING NEEDS"

BEN TOWNSEND



At the outset, the accommodation evidence will be based on a hypothetical alternative property. In estimating purchase costs, the accommodation expert may refer to their own brief survey of properties on the market, some of which might prove to be suitable.

It is important that the accommodation expert has experience in purchasing and adapting properties for catastrophically injured people, as this gives them credibility in estimating costs.

REASONABLE REQUIREMENTS

As with all non-medical experts involved in legal claims, the accommodation expert is engaged in the case purely to comment upon the reasonable requirements of the injured person. They do not manage the adaptation project for the injured person after purchasing a property, as that would generate a conflict of interest. They need to comment on the reasonableness of any such work and its cost. Another architect will be brought in to manage the adaptation process.

A catastrophically injured client will often require single-storey accommodation, usually a bungalow. Identifying a suitable property and bringing the process to fruition can take a long time and involves significant planning by the claimant's solicitor, working with a number of other professionals (see panel).

Unfortunately, calculating an accommodation claim is not straightforward, as the court does not allow an injured person to simply claim any further cost of the property they now require and add the cost of adapting it. Space here



does not allow for a detailed explanation of the formula the court uses.

However, it is predicated on the assumption that buying a new house is different from buying a wheelchair or other item of equipment, because the house will still exist at the end of the claimant's life.

It will also probably have increased in value, unlike items of disability equipment. This means (in theory) that the money has not been spent; it has just been locked into a house so that the claimant cannot spend it during their life.

A COMPLICATED FORMULA

The courts use a complicated formula to try to reflect the overcompensation in the accommodation claim. Unfortunately, it does not change the fact that the injured person requires capital up front to purchase and adapt the property. This means claimants often need to raid other parts of their compensation to fund the property purchase and adaptation.

The problem with the formula used is more acute for people with a short life expectancy. The law is still not settled in such cases, which adds a further layer of complication.

It is extremely satisfying as a lawyer to oversee from start to finish a client moving into a suitable property. For many clients, this can be an exciting process as it is an opportunity for them to exercise control over their lives following a period when they may have had many choices taken away from them and their lives changed irrevocably.

"IT IS EXTREMELY SATISFYING AS A LAWYER TO OVERSEE FROM START TO FINISH A CLIENT MOVING INTO A SUITABLE PROPERTY"

BEN TOWNSEND

When a catastrophically injured person is choosing a solicitor to represent them, they should ask the solicitor for their experience of completing this type of project. It will be reassuring to know that the solicitor has a track record of dealing with the complex issues surrounding the purchase and adaptation of a property. When managed properly, this process can really change lives.

You can contact Ben for advice at
btownsend@stewartslaw.com

The Timeline

The following steps will need to be completed by the team involved in the case:

1. Identifying a suitable property.
2. Obtaining confirmation from the rehabilitation team that it is appropriate for the client's needs.
3. The client confirming that they wish to proceed with the purchase.
4. The accommodation expert reporting on the reasonableness of the purchase and adaptation work.
5. Engaging an architect to manage the project.
6. Obtaining money for the purchase and adaptation from the defendant.
7. Completing the purchase.
8. Finalising the design for the adaptation.
9. Engaging a quantity surveyor.
10. Going through a tendering process to select a contractor to complete the adaptation.
11. Completing the adaptation work.
12. The client moving into the property.

Some of the steps will run alongside each other. The process might take a year, depending on the number of properties available in the search area.

HIGH TRAFFIC HIGH STYLE

Design-led accessible washrooms specialist, **Fitzroy of London**, will be launching their Oxford Doc M Commercial Pack and previewing their innovative Digital Configurator at Clerkenwell Design Week 2026.

Clerkenwell Design Week is taking place between 19th – 21st May 2026, and Fitzroy of London is proud to be participating. The brand will showcase its latest innovation in accessible washroom design, unveiling the new Oxford Doc M Commercial Pack, alongside a preview of its new, upcoming online configurator – a considered approach to inclusive design for commercial washrooms.

STREAMLINE SPECIFICATION

Designed to meet UK Building Regulations Doc M requirements, the Oxford Doc M Commercial Pack combines pre-considered, correctly configured components and solutions that streamline specification and installation.

All fixing heights, clearances, colour contrast and reach zones all meet DOC M regulations, reducing the risk of non-compliant layouts.

Bringing safe, dignified access to high-use commercial, hospitality, leisure and public environments, products are engineered using quality, robust materials, strengthened mounting points and non-porous surfaces to ensure durability, hygiene and long-term performance.

This ensures long-term stability and user confidence in high-traffic and frequently cleaned washrooms, without compromising design intent in the process.

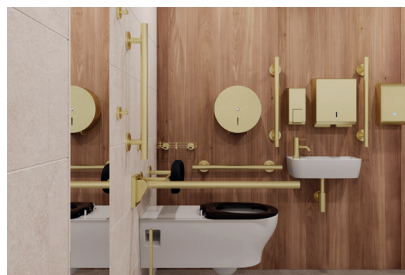
COMFORTABLE, INDEPENDENT USE

The Oxford Pack is available in five finishes – Satin, Polished, Dark Bronze, Matt Black and Satin Brass. Dispensers sit within compliant reach zones, and carefully considered backrests, grab rails, and accessories are ergonomic and positioned to support comfortable, independent use.

Visitors to Clerkenwell will also enjoy an exclusive preview of Fitzroy of London's new



“THE OXFORD DOC M COMMERCIAL PACK ENSURES LONG-TERM STABILITY AND USER CONFIDENCE IN HIGH-TRAFFIC AND FREQUENTLY CLEANED WASHROOMS”




Top: Fitzroy of London will showcase its latest accessible washroom design at CDW 2026; **Above:** Carefully considered backrests, grab rails, and accessories are ergonomic and positioned to support comfortable, independent use

online configurator, launching in June 2026.

The digital tool enables users to have full control to design compliant, project-ready Doc M solutions in minutes. This includes configuring precise component combinations, exploring finish options, and downloading specification-ready outputs including visual, technical documents, drawings, and BIM files.

REAL-TIME VISUALISATION

By improving accuracy and reducing design-stage errors, it supports faster, clearer specification, guides component selection, creates real-time visualisation, and supports inclusive design across multidisciplinary teams.

Aimed at architects, interior designers, development managers and project managers working across commercial, hospitality and multi-site developments, Fitzroy of London's latest innovations reflect a growing demand for faster, clearer accessible washroom solutions that meet both regulatory and aesthetic requirements. 

■ Visit www.fitzroyoflondon.com to find out more



Home Adaptations In Social Housing Conference



Wednesday 1 July 2026



Bridgewater Hall, Manchester



Did you know that over half of all social housing tenancies are home to someone with a long term health condition or disability?

So why are home adaptations, refurbishment and new build still too often treated as separate conversations?

Join Foundations in Manchester on 1 July for **Home Adaptations in Social Housing**, a new conference exploring how social landlords, local authorities and partners can think more clearly about adapting existing homes, improving accessibility through refurbishment, and designing homes that work better for people over time.

<https://events.humanitix.com/home-adaptations-in-social-housing-conference-2026>

seen by county councils (who administer the grant) as a short-term measure to deal with backlogs, due to increased demand, rising construction costs, and operating in a system that can't keep pace with the need.

Although the DFG Delivery Guidance aims for 155 working days (approximately seven months) from identifying the works and submitting the grant application to its approval and completion of the adaptation, the reality can be very different. At present, only 1 in 10 councils is currently meeting this target⁵. While statutory guidance says that local authorities must make a decision within six months of a valid application, waiting lists for OT assessments and contractor availability mean that the process is rarely as fast as would be liked.

A case in point is that AKW is working with quite a few councils at present who are dealing with significant backlogs in their DFG adaptations. Despite having funding allocated, the process can still cause significant delays, as they are restricted by the availability of OTs to carry out essential assessments.



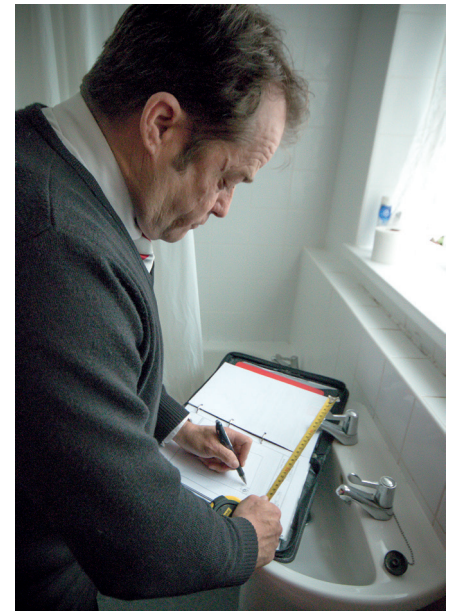
About AKW

AKW is the UK market leader in showering, daily living and kitchen solutions for people with mobility needs. Choice, competitive pricing, and first-class customer service makes AKW the first choice for clients across the UK and abroad.

AKW works closely with Occupational Therapists and Healthcare professionals, to design and manufacture a full range of easy access showering, kitchens and mobility support products. AKW's clients include the majority of local authorities, housing associations as well as national and regional contractors.

“AKW HAS DEVELOPED AN EXCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICE THAT ALLOWS HOUSING PROVIDERS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACCESS TO FAST, INDEPENDENT OT ASSESSMENTS”

STUART FEARN



Above: AKW is in attendance to provide design and supply expertise

“THE SERVICE OFFERS A SCALABLE WAY TO HELP TACKLE DFG WAITING LISTS”

STUART FEARN

INNOVATIVE SOLUTION TO REDUCE DFG BACKLOG

When it comes to the type of properties given DFGs, 55% were awarded to owner occupiers in 2024/25 and 38% to housing association tenants⁶. Although there are not figures detailing how big the backlog in adaptation assessments is, anecdotal evidence heard by the AKW team shows the size of the problem, with one of the housing associations they are working with having a 600 property backlog at present.

Whether the backlog being experienced is in the hundreds or not, the real issue lies in the fact that the ongoing backlog of OT assessments is blocking much needed adaptations and impacting many residents' ability to live their lives more comfortably and safely.

So, to help rectify this situation, AKW has developed an exclusive partnership with The Occupational Therapy Service (TOTS) that allows housing providers and local authorities access to fast, independent OT assessments to minimise delays.

“HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES NOW HAVE A WAY TO CLEAR BACKLOGS, WHILST ENSURING PEOPLE CAN LIVE WITH GREATER INDEPENDENCE, SAFETY, AND DIGNITY AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE”

Here is some more detail of the benefits of TOTS and AKW:

Independent OT expertise: The Occupational Therapy Service is a team of private occupational therapists that provides nationwide support to the public and private sector, whilst also offering commercial consultancy and training. The service has worked with AKW for many years, helping deliver industry-leading guides for OTs, installers and specifiers, promoting best-practice adaptations. The team also worked with AKW, advising on content for the new clinical hub at www.akw-ltd.co.uk/clinical-hub that features condition-specific information, for OTs and specifiers.

Below: 21,000 OTs are employed by the NHS, with 3,500 working in local authorities

Market-leading adapted product design, manufacturing, surveying and supply:

AKW is a UK market leader in showering, daily living, and kitchen solutions for people with mobility needs. The company is used to working closely with OTs and healthcare professionals, to design, manufacture, survey and supply easy access showering, kitchens and mobility support products. Clients include the majority of local authorities, housing associations, as well as national and regional contractors.

THE NEW AKW CLINICAL ADAPTATION SERVICE

By combining forces in this exclusive partnership, AKW can now offer customers a unique fully integrated, single end-to-end clinical and technical solution for housing adaptations. It is designed to reduce pressure on statutory therapy services, and act as a helping hand to the wider OT community, housing associations and local authorities.

By joining the dots, housing providers and local authorities can now access OT assessments, adaptation specifications, surveying, quotation, and materials all through a single coordinated visit, led by AKW in conjunction with TOTS.

Some of the many benefits already being experienced by housing associations across the country who have used the Clinical Adaptation Service include:

It overcomes fragmentation: This integrated model removes fragmentation. Instead of separate teams for assessment, surveying and supply, the independent OT clinical assessment is supplied by a TOTS expert during the same visit as an AKW surveyor (one of AKW's highly experienced, nationwide surveying team). If possible the contractor is also invited to attend this on-site assessment meeting to complete the loop.

It overcomes communication gaps: By co-ordinating the OT assessment with the surveyor – and where possible the contractor – communication gaps are removed, minimising misunderstandings, repeated visits, and potential costly adaptation reworkings.

It still provides an independent assessment of need: Although AKW is in attendance to provide design and supply expertise, if the needs of the end-user require alternative solutions, then these are prioritised. The TOTS clinician delivers a person-centred assessment, not a supplier-led specification.



Adaptation specification that hits the mark:

Due to the fact that the AKW surveyor is on site with the OT, the TOTS clinical specification can be clearly understood and no client-need is missed in its interpretation for translation into a practical building adaptation plan.

Accurate technical validation that suits end user needs:

Thanks to the direct involvement of the surveyor with the OT on-site together, the AKW expert is able to quickly technically validate the OT's recommendations before an accurate quotation and supply plan is created. This removes any guess-work and potential for error that can happen when the process is more disjointed.

Reduced risk of costly future-adaptations:


Thanks to the close collaboration between the OT assessor, the AKW surveyor and the contractor, the end-users present and potential needs are captured. This ensures that the adaptation takes into account their progressive needs and reduces the risk of costly future re-adaptations.

BENEFITS TO STAKEHOLDERS

For local authorities, the Clinical Adaptation Service operates independently, which preserves in-house statutory OT resources. As well as lending a helping hand when needed to ease workflow, the service offers a scalable way to help tackle DFG waiting lists and ensures each adaptation is clinically robust, evidence-based and fully auditable for compliance.

For housing groups the service offers a single point of contact for accountability that dramatically speeds up projects. It again helps housing associations and local authority housing providers reduce backlogs, whilst streamlining the process and ensuring high value for money for each and every adaptation.

Thanks to this unique partnership between TOTS and AKW, housing associations and local authorities now have a way to clear backlogs, whilst ensuring people can live with greater independence, safety and dignity as quickly as possible.

This is achieved cost-effectively, quickly, and accurately, using an assessment process that ensures the adaptation is clinically appropriate, technically accurate and built to last. 

FOOTNOTES:

- <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/making-the-case-for-specialist-homes-for-older-people/>
- Department for Work and Pensions, Family Resources Survey 2022 – 2023, Updated 26 March 2024.
- Local Government Association, Health Check National Summary for Occupations therapists 2026, 22 Apr 2026.
- CountyCouncilNetwork.org.uk, Government announces £50m for the DFG: CCN responds, 10 Jan 2026
- Foundations.uk.com, DFG Performance Report, 2026.
- Foundations.uk.com, DFG Performance Report, 2026.



Above: By co-ordinating the OT assessment with the surveyor, communication gaps are removed

Real benefits in figures

The AKW Clinical Adaptation Service has been operational since September 2025 and is already making a marked difference to stakeholders across the country.

Here is how one London housing association has benefitted over a four-month period to date using the service:

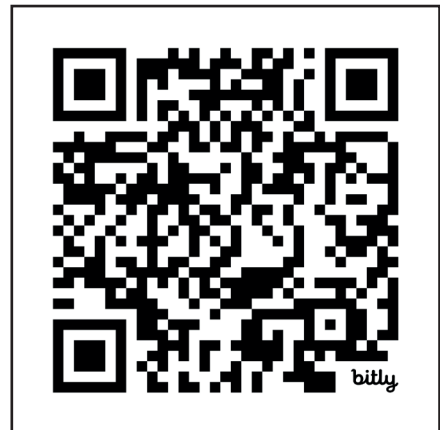
- AKW initially met with the HA's programme delivery lead and agreed the product check list to be used during the bathroom and/or kitchen adaptation assessment process.
- AKW booked property visits directly with tenants on the HA's backlog list, that were attended by experts from TOTS, AKW, and the contractor.
- Completed clinical assessments and design surveys were returned to the programme delivery lead within three weeks of the initial request/assessment.
- The work was carried out quickly and efficiently by the contractor, the DFG backlog cleared for this HA, and further batches of adaptation assessments are in the process of being set up on an ongoing basis.

For more information contact AKW on 01905 823 298, email sales@akw-ltd.co.uk, or visit www.akw-ltd.co.uk.

"AKW CAN NOW OFFER CUSTOMERS A UNIQUE FULLY INTEGRATED, SINGLE END-TO-END CLINICAL AND TECHNICAL SOLUTION FOR HOUSING ADAPTATIONS"

STUART FEARN

■ For more information on the AKW Clinical Adaptation Service visit www.akw-ltd.co.uk/clinical-adaptation-service, check out the overview video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CjKGLwrjEU or scan the QR code. And to see AKW's products in action, why not visit AKW's Virtual Showroom at www.akw-ltd.co.uk/virtualshowroom.



Vicky Kolliopoulou, Associate, Carless + Adams

DRAWING ON EXPERIENCE

Care home design architects Carless + Adams have recently expanded their Senior Leadership Team with the promotion of **Vicky Kolliopoulou** to Associate. *Inclusive Design Magazine* caught up with Vicky to find out more about her role, her responsibilities, and challenges.



Carless + Adams is an award-winning, independent Architectural Practice, providing professional advice and services in architecture focussing solely on design for care.

The team delivers a wide spectrum of projects within the sector, including care homes (residential and nursing), dementia care homes, integrated retirement communities, extra care apartments, cottages and retirement villages, healthcare centres, specialist care, refurbishment and extensions, green belt, heritage assets and conservation areas.

In her new role, Vicky will lead projects across design and technical delivery, while also supporting ongoing business development initiatives. Her strong sustainability credentials will play a key role in reinforcing the practice's commitment to environmentally responsible care sector developments.

Tell us about your day-to-day responsibilities

As an Associate, my role combines leadership, design oversight, and business development. I support the Directors in both the day-to-day running and strategic growth of the practice, while leading project teams across all RIBA stages to deliver high-quality, functional schemes for our clients. I manage relationships, programmes, and project outputs to ensure delivery on time and within budget.

Alongside this, I'm responsible for mentoring and developing team members, overseeing resourcing, and identifying new business opportunities helping to shape the direction of the practice while maintaining a strong focus on design quality and client satisfaction.

Is your career what you envisaged when you were at school?

Yes, I always knew I wanted to become an architect. The only slight variation was when I was a child, when I thought about becoming an artist or painter, as I've always loved drawing and was naturally drawn to it.

In many ways, architecture has allowed me to combine both creativity and technical thinking, which is exactly what appealed to me from the beginning, and that balance is still what I enjoy most about the profession today.

What was your first job, and did this contribute to your current role?

My first job was actually a private commission around 2010, creating a physical architectural model for a villa. The client struggled to visualise the design through drawings alone, so the model became an important way of communicating the idea.

Looking back, it was a valuable early lesson in the importance of clear communication in architecture, ensuring that designs are accessible, understandable and meaningful to the people they are created for, not just those within the profession.

How long have you worked in this industry, and how long in specialist design?

I've been working in the industry since 2015 and have spent the past two years with Carless + Adams. Throughout my career, I've gained experience in the care sector, including SEN schools, SEND resource provisions, and various forms of specialist and temporary accommodation.

Was there anything in particular that brought you in to this sector?

I've always been fascinated by architecture, particularly the way it brings together art and engineering to shape how people experience spaces in their everyday lives. Growing up in a creative environment had a strong influence, one of my parents is an architect and the other a graphic designer, so design was always part of my world.

I was also fortunate to gain early exposure by helping with projects while I was still at school, which gave me a practical understanding of how ideas develop into buildings.



"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED BY ARCHITECTURE, PARTICULARLY THE WAY IT BRINGS TOGETHER ART AND ENGINEERING TO SHAPE HOW PEOPLE EXPERIENCE SPACES IN THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES."

VICKY KOLLOIOPOULOU

Left: Vicky onsite with colleague Phoebe Grey

Over time, that interest naturally evolved into a focus on the care and specialist sectors. I find it particularly rewarding to work on projects where design can have a direct and meaningful impact on people's quality of life, supporting independence, dignity and wellbeing.

What is the main challenge you face in work?

Another important aspect is working collaboratively with clients to achieve the right balance between aspiration, practicality, and long-term value. Ensuring there is a shared understanding of the brief, while also advocating for the end users, is essential. For me, the priority is always the people who will ultimately use the space, good design should respond to their needs, enhance their experience and stand the test of time.

What are you currently working on?

I'm currently working on a couple of new-build care homes that are at construction stage ranging from high-end, luxury schemes to more accessible developments, and a couple of other projects that are within the initial design stages and are of similar output. Across all of them, the focus is on creating environments that are not only visually appealing, but also practical, comfortable and supportive for residents and staff alike.

Anything in the pipeline you can share?

One project I'm particularly excited about is the first EasyResidences care home, which is focused on delivering high-quality care for a broader demographic. It's a project that aligns closely with my own values; creating well-designed, thoughtful spaces that genuinely improve people's lives, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Schemes like this reinforce the idea that inclusive design is not just about meeting specific requirements, but about creating spaces that are thoughtful, adaptable and genuinely enhance everyday life.

Do you have any long-term plans/ambitions in this sector?

My long-term ambition is to be able to look back and know that the work I've been involved in has made a positive difference to people's lives. Whether that's through improving living environments, supporting independence, or simply creating spaces where people feel comfortable and valued, that impact is what matters most to me.

Alongside that, I want to continue developing within the industry, strengthening my leadership role, contributing to the direction of projects and the practice, and building a reputation for delivering thoughtful and high-quality design. **Continues over...**

Have you won any industry awards?

A previous project I led, providing temporary accommodation, received an award for Best Residential Development and was also highly commended for Best Sustainable Project.

What are your most proud moments?

One of my proudest professional moments was hearing how families moved into that temporary accommodation just before Christmas. It was a challenging project to deliver but knowing it had such a direct and positive impact made it incredibly worthwhile. It's a reminder of the real value of what we do as architects.

On a personal level, sharing my achievements with my parents is something that stands out. Their influence and support have shaped my journey, so seeing how proud they are is very meaningful. I also value the everyday moments, positive feedback from clients or team members, or seeing someone within the team grow and develop. Those are often the most rewarding parts of the role.

Family has always been very important to me, both personally and professionally. Their support has played a significant role in shaping who I am, and being able to make them proud is something I value greatly.

Below: The first EasyResidences care home is focused on delivering high-quality care for a broader demographic

"MY LONG-TERM AMBITION IS TO BE ABLE TO LOOK BACK AND KNOW THAT THE WORK I'VE BEEN INVOLVED IN HAS MADE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE'S LIVES."

VICKY KOLLIPOULOU


Do you have any interests outside of your work?

Drawing is still a big part of my life. I tend to focus on portraits rather than landscapes or cityscapes. I find people far more engaging and expressive. It is a great way to stay connected to my artistic side.

If you had not become an architect, what would you do?

If I wasn't an architect, I would most likely have pursued a career as an artist. That said, I do think there's something to be said for keeping a creative passion separate. There is a certain freedom in it that can be hard to replicate when it becomes your profession.

Given the opportunity to take up to six months paid leave (and assuming your partner had the same), what would you do?

I would spend it on a sunny island in Greece with my husband, enjoying a slower pace of life and making the most of that time together. Taking a step back, recharging and appreciating the simple things is something that feels increasingly important, and often overlooked. 

 Find out more about the work of Carless + Adams at www.carless-adams.co.uk



GET TO THE HEART OF OUR INDUSTRY

DO YOU TARGET ARCHITECTS, INTERIOR DESIGNERS, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS, DEVELOPERS, BUILDING MANAGERS – ANYONE WHO CARES ABOUT CREATING ENVIRONMENTS THAT CAN BE ENJOYED BY ALL – WITH YOUR PRODUCTS OR SERVICES? OUR FLEXIBLE APPROACH MEANS THAT YOU CAN REACH THE AUDIENCE YOU WANT IN THE WAY THAT YOU WANT

**TALK TO OUR TEAM TODAY ABOUT OUR
MULTI-CHANNEL OPTIONS AND SEE HOW YOU
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DESIGNING FOR CHANGE

There comes a time when a home's layout that worked perfectly well five years ago no longer fits the life being lived inside it. **Paul Smith**, Director of Foundations, the National Body for Disabled Facilities Grants and Home Improvement Agencies in England, tells us why home adaptations belong at the heart of inclusive design in social housing.

A home rarely becomes inaccessible all at once. More often, it happens bit by bit. A step at the front door becomes harder to manage. The bath becomes a risk. Stairs that were once climbed without a thought begin to cut off part of the home.

That is when we tend to talk about home adaptations. Rails. Ramps. Stairlifts. Level access showers. Door widening. Extensions. Through floor lifts. The practical changes that help someone stay safe, independent and at home.

These interventions can be life changing. They can prevent a move, support hospital discharge, reduce pressure on care, and restore a sense of control that has quietly slipped away. But they also point to a wider truth. Home adaptations are not a side issue in housing. They are one of the clearest tests of whether homes are designed, managed and renewed in a way that can cope with real life.

That is why home adaptations deserve a much bigger place in the conversation about inclusive design in social housing.

Too often, the sector treats these issues as separate. New build sits in one discussion. Planned works and refurbishment sit in another. Adaptations are dealt with somewhere else again, often through a grant process or a specialist team. Each part makes sense on its own terms. But the effect is to split up something tenants experience as one simple question. Does my home still work for me?

For a sector committed to inclusion, that should give us pause.

"HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS AND COUNCILS DO NOT JUST RESPOND TO NEED. THEY SHAPE THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH THAT NEED WILL BE MET"

PAUL SMITH



NOT A NICHE CONCERN

This is not a niche concern. Over half of all social housing tenancies are home to someone with a long term health condition or disability. That single fact ought to change the tone of the debate. Accessibility is not a specialist add on. It is not just something to think about when a crisis lands on someone's desk. It is part of the everyday business of providing decent, sustainable homes.

Seen in that light, home adaptations tell us more than how to solve an individual problem. They show us where a home has not been flexible enough. They reveal where previous design choices, investment plans or refurbishment decisions have left barriers in place. They expose the points where housing, health and care still fail to join up properly.

That does not mean adaptations should be seen as evidence of failure. Far from it.

Many needs cannot be predicted in advance. People's lives change. Bodies change. Families change. Some adaptations will always be needed, however well homes are designed. The point is not that inclusive design removes the need for home adaptations. It is that a more inclusive approach to design, refurbishment and asset strategy should reduce avoidable barriers and make later changes easier, quicker and less disruptive.

This is where social housing has both a challenge and an opportunity.

Housing associations and councils do not just respond to need. They shape the conditions in which that need will be met. They decide how homes are built, how



Image © Tung Lam (Pixabay)

stock is improved, what planned works will cover, and whether accessibility is built into wider investment thinking or left to be dealt with later, one case at a time.

NARROW OR AMBITIOUS?

Take a bathroom replacement programme. It can be treated as a straightforward component upgrade. Or it can be used to think ahead about space, usability and future change. The same is true of new build. A scheme can be designed to scrape over the line on minimum standards, or it can be shaped around how homes will serve people over the long term.

Refurbishment too can be narrow or ambitious. It can focus only on compliance and like for like renewal, or it can ask what would make the home easier to live in if someone's health or mobility changes in the years ahead.

These are design questions, but they are also human questions.

Will someone be able to wash safely in their own home? Will an older tenant be able to stay near friends and family rather than face an unwanted move? Will a disabled child's home continue to work as they grow? Will a housing provider spot an opportunity to make things better during planned works, rather than waiting for a later crisis and a more complex solution?

This is why inclusive design in social housing cannot stop at new build. It has to run through the whole life of the home. It has to shape development, refurbishment,

"OVER HALF OF ALL SOCIAL HOUSING TENANCIES ARE HOME TO SOMEONE WITH A LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITION OR DISABILITY"

PAUL SMITH



Image © CDC on Unsplash

maintenance, stock strategy and adaptation. Otherwise, we end up treating the consequences while ignoring too many of the causes.

DFGS REMAIN VITAL

It is also why home adaptations should not be discussed only through the narrow lens of grants and casework, important though those are. Disabled Facilities Grants remain vital. For many tenants they are the route through which necessary changes become possible. But if that is the only frame we use, we miss the wider point.

Adaptations are also about how homes are planned, how stock is invested in, and how landlords think about long term usability.

That broader view sits behind a new conference we are hosting in Manchester on 1st July called Home Adaptations in Social Housing.

Despite the title, the conference is not simply about adaptation casework in isolation. Adaptations remain at its heart, because they matter hugely. But the day is also about what sits around them. How can social landlords think more clearly about accessibility across existing stock? What role should refurbishment play in reducing future barriers? What should new homes look like if we take changing needs seriously? How can landlords, local authorities and occupational therapists work together more effectively when significant change is needed?



“PEOPLE DO NOT LIVE IN A FUNDING STREAM OR A DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURE. THEY LIVE IN HOMES.”

PAUL SMITH



Right: *The stunning Bridgewater Hall in Manchester is the venue for the conference*

We will also hear perspectives from Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, which matters because the pressures may be shared, but the ways of responding are not always the same. There is value in hearing how different parts of the UK are tackling familiar problems.

A NEW KIND OF CONFERENCE

In some ways, the very fact that this feels like a new kind of conference tells its own story. For all the progress in language around inclusion and accessibility, there are still too few spaces where design, refurbishment, asset management and home adaptations are discussed together. Yet for tenants, they are inseparable.

People do not live in a funding stream or a departmental structure. They live in homes.

If inclusive design is to mean anything lasting in social housing, it has to be about more than getting the first plan right. It has to be about designing for change. It has to ask whether homes can continue to support dignity, safety and independence as life moves on.

Home adaptations belong firmly in that story. Not as an afterthought, and not as a niche concern, but as one of the clearest ways of seeing whether housing is truly working for the people who live in it. **ID**



Explore the

THE HOME ADAPTATIONS IN SOCIAL HOUSING CONFERENCE on Wednesday 1st July at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester is a high-level conference that will evidence the scale of need in social housing and why adaptations must be treated as core housing business, bringing together housing providers, local authorities, occupational therapists and others involved in delivering home adaptations to look at the key issues together.

We will explore how adaptations are delivered in practice, how housing providers manage complex cases, and how organisations can work more effectively with Disabled Facilities Grants.

Alongside this, we will also look at the bigger



key issues together..



picture. How can new homes be designed so they work for people over the long term? How can refurbishment programmes improve accessibility rather than create future barriers? And how can housing providers plan their stock with changing tenant needs in mind?

The day is aimed at housing providers, local authorities, occupational therapists, asset managers, development teams and anyone involved in planning or delivering home adaptations in social housing.

Our aim is to create space for a practical and open conversation about what works, what does not, and how the sector can improve the way homes support people to live well.

Find out more at www.foundations.uk.com or scan the QR code



billy

RAISE THE ALARM!

Fire safety is essential in every building whether a house, place of business, care facility, or educational establishment, and legislation covers ways to reduce the spread of flames or smoke, and alarms – but when the occupant has reduced mobility, sight or hearing loss, or autism they may require additional planning for emergency situations.

We ask **Dee Tunc**, Freelance Consultant, **James Cox**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Fireco, and **Andy Speake**, National Technical Manager, Aico, about their experiences and what they recommend.

Tell us about your organisation/business and your role in it.

James: Fireco is a leading OEM of fire safety products that solve problems. Everything is invented, designed, manufactured, marketed, sold and despatched in-house. Our most famous product, Dorgard, is over 30yrs old and the global leader for acoustic fire door retainers.

We traditionally specialise in wireless door furniture which alongside Dorgard, includes our Freedor freeswing closer and DorMag magnetic retainers, but our Deafgard portable vibrating pillow pad and Digital Messaging Service (DMS) steer away from doors and towards keeping people safe in other ways.

Andy: Aico, an Ei Company, are the European market leader in home life safety, pioneering new technologies and offering high quality products, manufactured in Ireland. All Aico products meet UK standards and offer a variety of sensor types to guarantee protection for every home.

Aico's commitment extends beyond fire protection, as the company expanded its offering through its HomeLINK technology.

"IN THE CASE OF APARTMENT ENTRANCE DOORS, IT IS EXTREMELY COMMON FOR RESIDENTS TO DISENGAGE THE DOOR CLOSER BECAUSE IT BECOMES A SERIOUS STRUGGLE FOR THEM TO OPEN EACH DAY."

JAMES COX



This high-tech software leverages Internet of Things (IoT) capabilities to create Connected Homes, which are not only safer and healthier, but also more sustainable and efficient.

My role as National Technical Manager is overall responsibility of the technical team. This covers training, product support along with industry and standards involvement.

Dee: Currently I work part time for Purple Tuesday as an access auditing manager and over the past 12 months have carried out a mixture of audits for commercial settings, retail, external areas (parks/gardens) and residential buildings. As access auditing manager, I also mentor junior auditors.

I also operate as a sole trader providing health, safety and fire consultancy to businesses, mainly in my local area. The latter involves policy development, with legislation updates and bespoke training.

What sort of properties do you usually work with?

Dee: This is quite a spectrum! Commercial, retail, external (parks, infrastructure routes), residential, educational and religious properties. Currently I am working with a lot of residential clients assisting them in their preparation of PEEPs for people in residential settings.

James: Once you know a Fireco product you'll spot it everywhere. Depending on the product or service we offer, we work with every sector from education, hospitality, social housing, NHS, sports stadiums all the way up to the House of Lords.



Andy: Typically, Aico products are installed in domestic dwellings. This includes new build, existing and rented properties.

What do you supply/install that contributes to early detection of fire and/or increases escape/evacuation time in the home, and how does it work?

Andy: Aico designs, manufactures, and supplies domestic fire alarms including Smoke, Heat and several different multi-sensor alarms. In addition, this includes a whole range of supplementary accessories to ensure that vulnerable residents are alerted instantly. This includes strobe lights that provide a powerful, wide-angle flashing light that is visible even in bright daylight, control switches that allow for testing of the alarms at an accessible height without the need to reach for the ceiling, vibrating pillow pads, and connected solutions.

Aico, along with its parent company, Ei Electronics, have been designing and manufacturing domestic alarms for over 60 years and as a result, the technology within the products ensures the quickest and most accurate alert of a fire situation. The alarms are also designed to be robust against nuisance alarms which could otherwise be counterproductive to early detection.

The simple objective of domestic fire alarms is to accurately detect and alert occupants to the dangers of fire at the earliest opportunity. This could also include sending fire alarm signals externally to others such as neighbours, wardens and landlords.

A clear and thorough Fire Risk Assessment will assist in identifying any additional risk factors that may need to be addressed to assist with early detection and safe evacuation of a building.

Above: Fireco's Deafgard is an effective and portable solution

"NATIONWIDE ENFORCEMENT IS INCONSISTENT AND HAVING RECENTLY SPOKEN TO A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT SECTOR THE NEW REGULATIONS REGARDING PEEPS IS NOT BEING ADDRESSED!"

DEE TUNC



James: When something important happens and you need to know about it straight away, our Digital Messaging Service (DMS) will send you a notification via all of, or your selection of, SMS/ WhatsApp/email/voicemail notification. Its simplicity is what makes it so versatile.

Organisations across all sectors find it easy to apply it in such diverse and creative scenarios such as fire evacuation, security threats, evacuation instructions, all-clear notifications, date/time audit trails for other systems, and many more creative applications.

With regards to early detection, some local authorities use it for when the pre-alarm goes off. Normally the pre-alarm is there for key personnel to check whether there is actually a fire or not before the building goes into full evacuation.

Multi-storey buildings often have certain occupants relying on elevators to go between floors due to mobility issues, pregnancy etc. In this situation DMS can also notify them on the pre-alarm so that they can use the lifts to make their way to the lower floors in plenty of time, should the building subsequently go into full evacuation. The reason for this is that in an incident of fire, lifts will often not be available for safety reasons.

Universities and colleges also use it for hearing-impaired students to notify them of the fire alarm whilst they are around other areas of the campus.

Separate to that, our Deafgard is a portable device designed to alert those who cannot normally hear a fire alarm. You put the base on the bedside table and the pad under the pillow. When the fire alarm activates, it will vibrate robustly enough to awaken them. This is extremely popular in hotels and universities, but its portable

nature means that many users take it with them when they are to be staying elsewhere. Occupational Therapists specify them in social housing quite regularly.

What other systems work well alongside that which your company/organisation supplies?

James: Our fire door furniture will activate acoustically to pretty much any fire alarm whilst our hard-wired range will connect not only to the fire alarm but also AOV or sprinkler systems.

DMS can connect to anything that provides an output relay, meaning you could even connect it to a light switch and get a text message to tell you the light is on. You choose whatever the message needs to tell you.

Andy: There are several other key areas that work alongside the core fire detection offered through Aico alarms. Such systems include but are not limited to Carbon Monoxide detection, environmental monitoring, connected systems (IoT), Technology Enabled Care systems, and other integrations that allow systems to link into third party systems found around the home.

This could include ventilation, gas shut-off, strobes and high output sounders, sprinkler and misting systems, MVHR, Radon detection, Boiler monitoring and other areas.

What would you recommend to improve fire safety in a property where the resident is a) visually impaired, b) hearing impaired, c) autistic, d) has limited mobility, e) lives with dementia?

Andy: The most important action that will immediately improve the safety of



"A CLEAR AND THOROUGH FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT WILL ASSIST IN IDENTIFYING ANY ADDITIONAL RISK FACTORS THAT MAY NEED TO BE ADDRESSED TO ASSIST WITH EARLY DETECTION AND SAFE EVACUATION OF A BUILDING."

ANDY SPEAKE

occupants within a dwelling is to ensure there is a suitable number of alarms sited throughout the property, that the devices are sited correctly, and the correct sensor type is used. This will ensure that a sufficiently early enough warning is given to occupants and increased audibility is provided throughout the dwelling.

Additional factors that may need to be considered could include using deaf and hard of hearing kits which offer both a strobe and vibrating pad to assist with visual or hearing-impaired occupants.

Research has shown that occupants with autism can have adverse reactions to alarm tones so it's important to reduce the exposure to unnecessary alarm tones where possible. Ensuring the correct sensor type is used and that the alarms are correctly sited will assist in minimising the potential for nuisance alarms. Alarms could also be tested when the occupants are not at home, further reducing the potential for distress.

For occupants with reduced mobility and/or dementia, following a risk assessment, options such as connected solutions which send alarm signals off-site can assist. Connected solutions using the Aico HomeLINK technology can send notifications to any number of contacts providing detailed information on any alarm activations or the status of the devices. This would help to provide further assistance for occupants who may not be able to self-evacuate in the event of a fire.

Dee: To improve fire safety for all of the above categories I recommend the following:

- Install sprinklers, and other Automatic Fire Suppression Systems (AFSS), which can save lives and homes. They provide protection from fire damage and, most importantly, they give people, especially the most vulnerable, a greater chance of getting out if there is a fire.
- Escape routes are always kept unobstructed.
- Interlinked smoke/heat detectors with sounders so that alarm sounds throughout home simultaneously.
- A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is developed with the relevant residents and communicated effectively to all relevant people.
- Emergency lighting along escape route.
- Automatic shut off devices for cookers/heaters.

In addition, and more specifically for visually impaired residents, talking smoke alarms (voice alerts instead of just beeps) and/or tactile indicators on escape routes (raised dots, textured tape).

For hearing impaired residents, vibrating pad alarms under pillows/mattresses for night-time alerts, strobe-light smoke alarms with high-intensity flashes, and



Image by Roegger on Pixabay

visual doorbells/intercoms for emergency communication.

Autistic residents can be alerted by smoke alarms with adjustable volume or lower-frequency tones and visual fire-escape plans (symbols, colour-coded steps), with noise-reducing headphones placed near the bed or exit route.

Fire-safe bedding and nightwear, and evacuation aids (transfer boards, slide sheets, evacuation chairs if multi-storey), can help people with reduced mobility.

If some residents are living with dementia, smoke alarms with voice prompts (familiar voice if possible), stove-guard systems that cut power if cooking is left unattended, door sensors to alert carers if the person wanders at night, and automatic shut-off plugs for irons, heaters, etc.

James: Having already mentioned how some of our products can assist those with hearing impairment, it would be right to talk about Freedom and how this helps those with mobility issues.

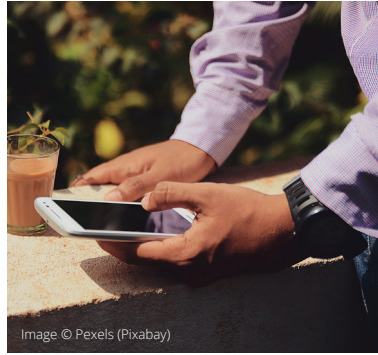
The reason a fire door feels so heavy to open is because the closer at the top is there to make sure the door will shut again. The perfect fire door has nothing on it, it's closed and never used. The reality is, it is used constantly. In the case of flat entrance doors, it is extremely common for residents to disengage the door closer because it becomes a serious struggle for them to open each day.

You cannot legislate against this human behaviour and instead need to understand the reasons why people are taken to such measures, and negate the need for such actions.

Our Freedom free-swing device makes the door light enough to push open with your finger, but once the fire alarm sounds, it returns to the function of a normal door closer. It only behaves as a fire door closer when there is a possibility of a fire - and that's when it counts. The truth is, you are protecting the rest of the building by containing the fire to the flat itself. Once the occupant escapes, then the door needs to close behind them in order to stop the spread of fire and smoke. The rest of the time, that person is able to go in and out of their home without the usual struggle, which is often overlooked for the significant burden it can be to many people.

Do you think current legislation is sufficient to protect disabled people in emergency situations such as a fire, what would you like to see changed or added?

Dee: Quite simply no, it is not sufficient! The new Fire Safety (Residential Evacuation Plans) (England) Regulations 2025, which comes into force April 2026, require Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) only in high-rise and



Above: Aico's HomeLINK can send alarm activation alerts

“EMERGENCY LIGHTING IS MOUNTED AT HEIGHT, HOWEVER, IN A FIRE SITUATION FILLING THE ROOM WITH SMOKE THE EMERGENCY LIGHTING UNITS ARE NOT PARTICULARLY USEFUL. SO, IS IT NOT MORE BENEFICIAL TO INSTALL THIS WAYFINDING SYSTEM AT GROUND LEVEL?”

DEE TUNC



higher-risk residential buildings and buildings between 11m-18m which have a simultaneous evacuation strategy. This leaves those in low rise flats, HMOs etc not covered. I advise my clients to consider all their properties for consideration of PEEPs.

The requirement to install AFSS is not mandatory, except in certain high-rise properties, and this can leave disabled people at a disadvantage. AFSS are effective in allowing longer evacuation times, especially for those with mobility issues.

Nationwide enforcement is inconsistent and having recently spoken to a lot of people in the housing management sector the new regulations regarding PEEPs is not being addressed!

One main area which I believe lacks sufficient legislation is the competence of staff involved in managing residential properties. Further legislation is required to stipulate competence of staff carrying out PEEPs and staff who have roles in evacuation procedures.

Andy: There have been several pieces of legislation and guidance recently updated on the subject of evacuation for disabled people and it's great to see this getting more attention. I'm also aware that the Fire and Rescue service are closely involved in the topics covering the above. As a manufacturer of home life safety solutions, Aico are keen to ensure that we can meet the requirements of occupants with complex needs through the innovative use of technology.

Anything to add?

Dee: Most UK buildings follow BS 5266, which traditionally assumes emergency lighting is mounted at height (ceilings or high walls). Emergency lighting is installed in buildings to provide illumination in the event of an emergency e.g. power cut, fire etc. However, in a fire situation when the smoke rises, filling the room with smoke the emergency lighting units are not particularly useful. So, is it not more beneficial to install this wayfinding system at ground level? Surely installing EL at ground floor level is the way forward. I have only come across this once in my 40 years of working in the built environment. 

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR FORUM PARTICIPANTS AT:

-  www.aico.co.uk
-  deetunc@gmail.com
-  www.fireco.uk

A PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

A wheelchair user and Habinteg Housing Association tenant has seen his career go from strength to strength since he graduated from Centre for Accessible Environment's (CAE) Pathways Academy in 2025. **Dominic Coleman** tells us how he has turned access volunteering into a career.

Pathways Academy is a free training programme designed to help disabled Londoners, aged 18 and above, kickstart a career in access and inclusive design. The award-winning programme is run by CAE, part of Habinteg, and is funded by City Bridge Foundation.

North London-based Dominic, 56, is the first Habinteg tenant to complete the programme and go on to run his own business.

Since graduating last year, Dominic has taken on paid accessibility consultancy work on a part-time basis. He balances this work with voluntary roles in the inclusion field.

"Pathways is an incredibly enjoyable programme that led me to the work I'm doing today," he said. "It's given me the confidence to launch my own business."

"THANKS TO PATHWAYS, I CAN PROVIDE ADVICE AROUND ACCESSIBILITY IN TECHNICAL TERMS, IN ADDITION TO MY LIVED EXPERIENCE KNOWLEDGE"

DOMINIC COLEMAN

Below: Pathways is a nine-month course with 22 days of training that covers a different topic each month

LIVED EXPERIENCE

Dominic is a longtime trustee of Regain Sports, a charity dedicated to improving the independence of people who have become tetraplegic through a sports injury. The charity previously supported Dominic following a diving accident at the age of 23 that left him tetraplegic.

His desire to help others is also why, for the past four years, Dominic has been assisting Transport for London's (TfL) construction advisory and innovation team.

This work has included assessing construction sites and street works from the wheelchair user perspective, as well as producing presentations, and attending workshops.

Dominic also has a regular spot on TfL's 'Disability caused by the temporary environment' forum, hosted by Michael Barratt MBE, where he shares his experiences.

Dominic applied for Pathways after a post about the programme on social media caught his eye.

"I found that Pathways could fit perfectly around my other work commitments," he explained. "It was easy to manage, and I really enjoyed the mix of online and in-person days.

"The training sessions were nicely informal, people felt comfortable in having conversations that were off topic, which led to some interesting discussions... no-one felt they couldn't contribute."

INFORMAL TRAINING

Pathways is a nine-month course with 22 days of training that covers a different topic each month including principles of inclusive design, access auditing, design and neurodiversity, accessible housing, plus more.





It also provides support with developing important communication skills.

Dominic says he enjoyed meeting the other students and trainers during the in-person days. He liked the relaxed style of the training sessions and learning about anti-discrimination legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 and Building Regulations for the built environment.

"The training was particularly helpful as it has directly supported me with my current work," he added. "Thanks to Pathways, I can provide advice around accessibility in technical terms, in addition to my lived experience knowledge.

"For example, I've learnt about the recommended street kerb height for wheelchair users. Being able to use this information to support my work helped increase my confidence hugely. The programme has been empowering, and I encourage others to apply, particularly those with similar injuries to me.

"So far, around five beneficiaries of Regain Sport have become Pathway graduates, and I hope this number will increase."

"IT'S GIVEN ME THE CONFIDENCE TO LAUNCH MY OWN BUSINESS"

DOMINIC COLEMAN

SUPPORTING OTHERS

Looking to the future, Dominic plans to work towards a National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC) accreditation. He is also creating a short course for Regain Sport that aims to be a stepping stone to an inclusive design course, such as Pathways.

"The goal is to provide disabled people with support and guidance around how they can use their skills and knowledge in accessibility effectively, and find paid employment opportunities," he said.

"If disabled people are helping organisations to become more inclusive through their lived experience, they should be paid for it as it's a valuable skill." ^{ID}

■ Visit www.cae.org.uk/pathways-academy to learn more about the programme, or email pathways@cae.org.uk.

ABOUT PATHWAYS ACADEMY

Pathways Academy is CAE's award winning training programme created in 2020 to give disabled people in London the confidence, skills and support needed to kick start a career in inclusive design and access. Since its start over 70% of trainees are working in inclusion and access related roles.

LEARNING WITH PATHWAYS ACADEMY

We know that disabled people face a number of complex barriers to employment, the Pathways Academy seeks to help trainees overcome those barriers by giving the technical knowledge you need to develop a career in inclusive design. On the course, trainees will receive 22 days of training over nine months.

The course covers a different topic each month including:

- Principles of Inclusive design
- Access Auditing
- Website Accessibility
- Design and Neurodiversity
- Accessible Housing
- Accessibility and Historic Environments
- Reading and Understanding Plans

Trainees also develop the all-important communications skills to help them use their new technical knowledge, through topics like presentation and training skills and how to write reports.

■ Visit www.cae.org.uk/pathwaysvideo or scan the QR Code to watch the video.



MAKING HISTORY

Inclusive Design Magazine is always excited to feature fantastic examples of inclusive and accessible design, and this beautiful house is impressive in so many ways! **Greg Stanfield**, Architectural Designer & Project Manager at Steven Docker Associates in Cheshire, tells us all about it.



WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE PROJECT?

It's the transformation of a historic period property in a rural setting in the North of England into a fully accessible, future-proof family home. The building was originally traditional in layout and character, with significant architectural heritage features, but it was not designed with accessibility in mind.

The property offered strong potential due to its generous internal proportions, structural adaptability, and surrounding space. Importantly, it allowed for near full wheelchair accessibility once reconfigured, which is rare in properties of this age and style.

A key advantage was that, aside from attic spaces, the home could be adapted to allow movement throughout all principal living areas without compromising architectural integrity.

"THE DESIGN APPROACH WAS FOCUSED ON TRANSFORMING A HISTORIC PROPERTY INTO A FULLY ACCESSIBLE, FUTURE PROOFED HOME"

GREG STANFIELD



Right: *The ramp has really added a feature to the front entrance*





"THE PROPERTY OFFERED STRONG POTENTIAL DUE TO ITS GENEROUS INTERNAL PROPORTIONS, STRUCTURAL ADAPTABILITY, AND SURROUNDING SPACE"

GREG STANFIELD

WHO IS THE CLIENT?

The home was designed for James, a young boy living with cerebral palsy, and his family. James has complex, evolving physical needs but also a highly active and engaged mind. He is a full time wheelchair user but also likes to have access to play opportunities on the floor and the option to use a walking frame, meaning flexibility of movement throughout the home was essential.

His mother, Gill, and his family were deeply committed to creating a home that did not limit him. Their aspiration was not simply accessibility, but independence, dignity, and freedom of movement, within a space that felt like a normal, vibrant family home.

The family had experienced a range of professional advice over the years and were determined to challenge conventional assumptions about what accessible housing could be. Their expectations were high, and crucially, so were James' own expectations for his life and environment.

WHAT WAS THE INITIAL BRIEF?

The original brief was broad but highly ambitious; identify and secure a property that could be adapted to meet James's current needs while also anticipating and accommodating his future requirements.

Early discussions considered multiple approaches, including:

- Acquisition of land for a bespoke new-build home
- Demolition and rebuild of an existing structure
- Significant adaptation of an existing property

However, as the search progressed, it became clear that a carefully selected existing property, if suitable, could offer both architectural character and adaptability without compromising long-term accessibility goals.



The design approach was focused on transforming a historic property into a fully accessible, future proofed home for a child with cerebral palsy that combined adaptive design, collaboration and a commitment to independence.

A major influence throughout was ensuring that accessibility was not visually dominant or institutional in feel. Instead, it needed to feel natural, embedded, and architecturally coherent.

A key design inspiration came from



KNOWHOW

Design inspiration

the surrounding landscape. Rather than treating views as incidental, the design actively framed them for full accessibility. This directly informed the creation of a purpose-built orangery with wheelchair-appropriate sightlines and direct environmental engagement.

Experience from prior accessible housing projects, including both adapted and new-build homes, reinforced the importance of early-stage integration. Retrofitting accessibility often leads to compromise; designing it in from the outset allows for far more elegant outcomes.

■ **Above:** *The purpose-built orangery allows the family to embrace the incredible views;*
Left: *The project demonstrates that even complex heritage properties can be transformed into fully accessible, future-proof homes*



MEET GREG

Greg is part of the design and project management team at Steven Docker Associates, where he works on projects from initial scheme design through to on-site construction, specialising in homes that meet the needs of clients with a range of disabilities. He has designed many bespoke homes, from adapted and extended existing dwellings to purpose-built new homes across the UK.

Greg has a Master's degree in Architecture: Advanced Environmental and Energy Studies and is registered as a Chartered Building Engineer. He has experience designing Passive Houses that incorporate Building Biology principles and is a full member of both CIAT and CIOB. In addition to his UK-based work, Greg has international experience with projects in Canada, Sweden, and New Zealand.

A core requirement was that accessibility should not be 'added on,' but fully integrated into the fabric of the home from the outset of design development.

WERE THERE ANY DIFFICULTIES YOU CAME UP AGAINST?

Property availability and suitability: Finding a property that combined architectural character with genuine accessibility potential proved highly complex. Many options required extensive extension work, which the family were keen to avoid in favour of fully integrated design solutions.

Planning and external constraints: Broader regional planning frameworks and development restrictions limited opportunities for new-build or large-scale

CASE STUDY

redevelopment, shifting focus toward adaptive reuse of existing structures.

Structural complexity: As a period building, the property required careful structural assessment to ensure that interventions such as lift installation, ramp integration, and internal reconfiguration could be achieved without compromising stability or heritage features.

Maintaining architectural integrity: A key design challenge was ensuring that accessibility features did not appear as afterthoughts. The family were particularly sensitive to preserving the character of the original building while still achieving full accessibility.

ANY DIFFICULTIES WITH PLANNING?

No, planning was relatively straightforward given the nature of the property.

"ACCESSIBILITY SHOULD NEVER BE TREATED AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT OR COMPROMISE, BUT AS AN INTEGRAL DRIVER OF DESIGN"

GREG STANFIELD

Below: Level thresholds enable wheelchair access to widened doorways for seamless movement



WHAT METHODS DID YOU USE?

The project made use of several advanced accessibility solutions, integrated with a highly tailored architectural approach:

- A discreet through-floor lift which runs from the ground-floor kitchen to outside the orangery on the first floor. The lift was carefully integrated to complement the home's design.
- Bespoke ramp design engineered to complement existing stonework and heritage detailing. The ramp enables James to enter the home through the front door and is more than just a functional feature, it also represents accessibility, dignity and equal access.
- Discreetly integrated ceiling mounted hoists ensure that day-to-day living is both practical and empowering for James.
- Level thresholds enable wheelchair access to widened doorways for seamless movement between rooms.
- One of the key adaptations was the design and construction of a purpose-built orangery. Surrounded by magnificent countryside, Gill was keen for James to be able to embrace the incredible views on offer. Understanding how unfair it would be for James not to be able to see the landscape, An orangery was designed that featured large windows set at a height suitable for a wheelchair user. This particular adaptation also allowed James to go right up to the window and maximise his experience of the environment.

WHAT PRODUCTS DID YOU SPECIFY?

A range of integrated accessibility and building systems were used, including:

- Through-floor lift
- Ceiling track hoist provisions
- Widened internal door systems for wheelchair access

DID THE PROJECT INCLUDE ANY LANDSCAPING OR CAR PARKING?

Yes. External works were designed to ensure smooth transition from arrival to entry, including a carefully designed ramp access to the principal entrance.





WERE ANY CHANGES MADE TO THE INITIAL DESIGN?

During the design phase, we were going to install an external lift close to the front door to allow James to access the property. However, on consultation with James, he preferred the ramp option, which would make it easier for him to access the property independently. This turned out to be a great choice from an aesthetics view too, as the ramp really added a feature to the front entrance.

During construction, we were going to amend the existing living room floor to create level access throughout. However, on demolition, it was found that this housed structural beams which could not be moved. This meant a re-design of the lift configuration to add an extra stop to this area, which actually worked out for the better.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THIS PROJECT?

I really enjoyed working with the family to create a forever home for them to live comfortably in, which allows James to be more independent now, as well as allow him to grow into being a teenager and then onto adulthood in the future too.

There isn't one feature of the home that I prefer over others, as it all works so well together. But I do like how we managed to make the hoists/lift/ramp functional for the

The team that helped make it happen

Specialist consultants:

Multidisciplinary team (MDT) including clinical and rehabilitation specialists, legal representatives, and case management professionals

Main contractor: Thomas & Bell Building Contractors Ltd

Specialist sub-contractors:

Peter Cowell Landscape Design (Landscapeers), Multicare Medical (specialist equipment), Matthew Marsden Furniture (fitted furniture)

Suppliers: STL Projects (Structural Engineers), Invalifts (platform lift)

Other consultants: Tom Docker and the Property Finding Team at SDA (Property Search and Acquisition lead), Gill (James' mother), Tim Walters (Serious Injury Solicitors/Fletchers – Instructing Solicitor), Debbie Snape (Occupational Therapist)

family, whilst being able to blend them in with the existing look of the house, making it not initially noticeable that this house is fully adapted.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO MENTION?

This project reflects the core principles that underpin every project at Steven Docker Associates: accessibility should never be treated as an afterthought or compromise, but as an integral driver of design. It is an opportunity to fundamentally rethink what a home can be, supporting independence, dignity, and long-term adaptability.

Collaboration is central to this approach. The close working relationship between the family, MDT professionals, legal representatives, and design team was fundamental to the project's success. Every decision was informed by a balance of lived experience, technical expertise, and a shared commitment to enabling independence.

Ultimately, the project demonstrates that even complex heritage properties can be transformed into fully accessible, future-proof homes without compromising character, architectural integrity, or the quality of everyday life. 

■ See more of Greg's projects at www.stevendocker.co.uk

A HOME FROM HOME

A package of specialist products from Altro has helped deliver a high-performance 'home from home' refurb at a leading dementia-care home in Middlesex.

Vickie Nickolls, Designer at Interior Therapy, tells us how it was achieved.

The Woodlands Residential Care Home in Ickenham is a family owned and run business providing dementia, respite, and day care in a comfortable and secure environment. When the team wanted to expand and upgrade its facilities, they knew careful planning and design would be crucial, as would working with a range of products designed for the specific challenges dementia care environments can bring.

Vickie Nickolls, Designer at Interior Therapy, worked closely with Woodlands to ensure all their needs were met.

"My brief was to create a calming environment that felt home from home, somewhere that felt like you could be sitting in your own living-room, and specifically

"ALTRO HAS BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY DESIGN, TO DEVELOP TOTAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE CARE HOME SECTOR"

Below: Altro Wood Comfort offers biophilic, homely aesthetics combined with 14dB noise reduction plus comfort underfoot

designed for residents with dementia," she explained.

The refurbishment project involved extending the existing facilities to create more space, adding a dedicated beauty salon and family reading room, as well as redecorating all the bedrooms, living areas, and en-suites. The home is divided up into distinct areas to make it as relaxed an environment as possible, with areas that are communal where the residents are able to mix and develop friendships.

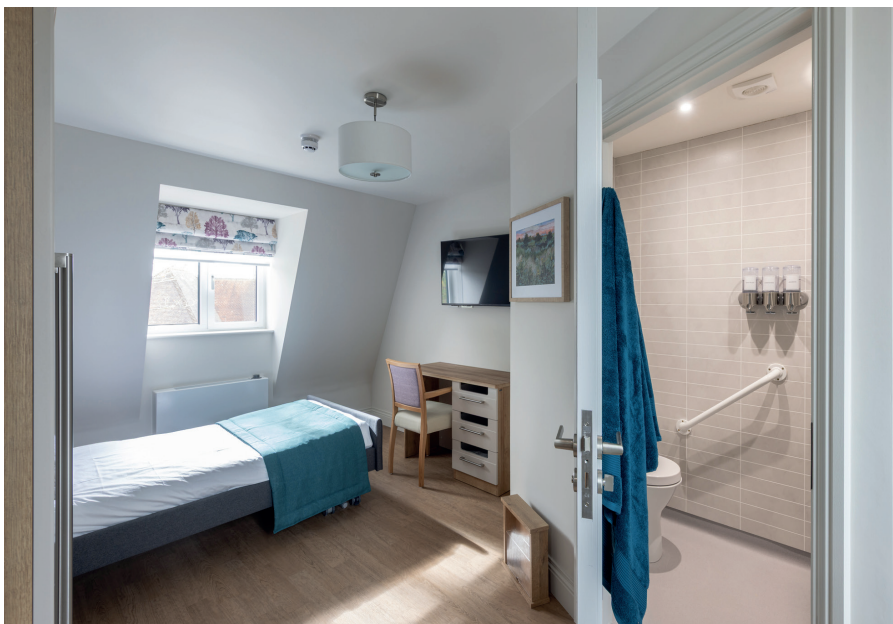
Vickie selected a package of products from Altro to use in the project, including Altro Wood Comfort acoustic slip resistant flooring in hallways and bedrooms, Altro Wood adhesive-free in the lounge and dining areas and Altro Pisces specialist safety flooring in en-suites, coupled with Altro Tegulis tile effect wall panels for a seamless finish.

Completing such a project in a busy care home environment presents very specific challenges which needed to be considered from the start.

"We needed to make sure there was as little disruption as possible for all of the residents living in the existing care home," Vickie told us. "This was achieved by planning and executing the project in various stages so that no impact was made on the day-to-day life of the residents, and no disruption to their care."

Altro has been at the forefront of dementia-friendly design, working with the University of Stirling's renowned Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) over many years to develop total solutions for the care home sector.

"The range of products on offer from Altro really helped as it gave me lots of choice when starting the design process," added Vickie. "The fact that some products were DSDC accredited was the deciding factor as this supported my designs on





Left: Vickie specified Altro Wood adhesive-free in the lounge and dining areas


"COMPLETING SUCH A PROJECT IN A BUSY CARE HOME ENVIRONMENT PRESENTS VERY SPECIFIC CHALLENGES WHICH NEEDED TO BE CONSIDERED FROM THE START"

grout lines and multiple colour and design palette options. It is easy to clean, robust and hygienic.

In the kitchens, Altro Stronghold specialist safety flooring was combined with Altro Whiterock White wall cladding for a tried and tested, easy to maintain, commercial kitchen safe and hygienic solution.

With the project complete, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

"The impact has been huge both for the residents and also the staff as we have created such a calming environment that feels home from home. The feeling you get when you walk in is exactly what we set out to achieve," says Vickie.

"Working with Altro was great. The team were super helpful and knowledgeable when I asked any questions, and the whole process was very easy and also enjoyable." 

what colours worked best and also with what style was best suited for a dementia-friendly environment. Also knowing the LRV for each choice was a key feature for me so that I could ensure that each room flowed and met legislative requirements.

"And of course, these Altro products appealed for the performance characteristics such as the safety, hygiene and durability, something that we needed to ensure we got correct throughout the whole care home."

Each of the products selected has qualities and characteristics particularly suited to the care home environment. For example, Altro Wood adhesive-free creates maximum impact with minimum downtime providing a safe, durable and decorative solution for busy spaces. It also allows you to avoid the need for noisy air extraction equipment, as with no adhesive, there are no adhesive odours. Altro Wood Comfort offers biophilic, homely aesthetics combined with 14dB noise reduction plus comfort underfoot, as well as Altro's one in a million slip-resistance guarantee.

Altro Pisces is an award-winning, domestic-look specialist flooring for a 'home from home', warm feel in wet environments; designed for shoe and bare foot use to keep you safe with common contaminants such as shampoo and conditioner. Altro Tegulis is a tile-effect wall panel with innovative etched



About Altro

Altro has been at the forefront of innovation for over 100 years. Today, working closely with architects, end customers, engineers, designers and contractors around the world, our insight and expertise help them transform everyday spaces into environments that can improve the wellbeing of everyone that uses them.

And by consistently turning creative thinking into practical, real-world solutions – that maintain the highest standards of safety and durability – Altro has become synonymous with quality.

We combine the best in contemporary style with the functionality required to improve the way we all live and work, wherever in the world that may be.

We are Altro. Designed for possibilities. Made for people.

Find out more about Altro's solutions for care home environments at www.altro.com/uk/sectors/health-and-care/care-homes, or scan the QR code.



Below: The en-suites feature Altro Pisces specialist safety flooring, coupled with Altro Tegulis tile effect wall panels for a seamless finish



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

The BABICM Annual Conference 2026 will celebrate 30 years of leadership in brain injury case management with 'What's That Coming Over the Hill?', taking place on 2nd & 3rd June 2026 at the ICC Birmingham.

This year's conference marks a significant milestone as BABICM, the British Association of Brain Injury Case Managers, celebrates 30 years of advancing excellence in brain injury case management.

Bringing together over 700 professionals, the event continues to be the leading conference in the field, offering a unique platform for knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and professional growth.

Across two dynamic and inspiring days, delegates will hear from a diverse line-up of clinicians, legal experts, researchers, and thought leaders.


The programme will explore key topics including neurorehabilitation, artificial intelligence, technological innovation, and ethical practice, alongside practical wellbeing sessions designed to support professionals working in demanding roles.

Blending forward-thinking insight with meaningful human connection, the conference promises to leave attendees informed, inspired, and re-energised for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

"THE PROGRAMME WILL EXPLORE KEY TOPICS, ALONGSIDE PRACTICAL WELLBEING SESSIONS"

Attendees will have the opportunity to:

- Showcase their organisation to a highly engaged and relevant audience
- Connect with industry leaders and peers
- Celebrate BABICM's landmark 30th Anniversary

With strong demand already, early booking is strongly encouraged to avoid disappointment. 

■ Tickets are available now at www.babicm.org/events

Below: Across two dynamic and inspiring days, delegates will hear from a diverse line-up



Who's who at BABICM

Anne Bishop (middle), CEO

Anne leads BABICM as our figurehead, working closely with the Board and Council to shape and deliver our strategic vision. She represents members externally, strengthens partnerships, and ensures good governance, financial health, and long-term sustainability of the organisation.

Janette Mason (right), COO

Janette oversees the smooth running of operations, events, and education programmes. She manages membership engagement, conferences, training, communications, and business development, ensuring our services are efficient, relevant, and of high value to members.

Michelle Radford (left), Membership Champion & Operations Administrator

Michelle is the first point of contact for members, providing exceptional support and ensuring membership services run smoothly. She manages records, finances, and events administration, while also championing the member experience and ensuring the organisation is responsive, accessible, and welcoming.



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DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION

Changes to the Motability scheme are taking effect; **Stuart Barrow**, Occupational Therapist, Founder and Managing Director of Promoting Independence Ltd. and OTAC (Occupational Therapy Adaptations Conference), offers his perspective.

As an occupational therapist, I have always viewed mobility not as a luxury, but as a cornerstone of independence, dignity and participation in everyday life. The recent changes to the Motability Scheme risk undermining that principle in ways that feel both short-sighted and disconnected from the realities many of the people I support face.

From July 2026, new leases on the scheme will become more expensive due to the introduction of VAT on advance payments and Insurance Premium Tax on leases.

These changes alone are expected to increase costs for many users, with estimates suggesting an average rise of around £400 over a standard lease. For individuals already managing the financial strain of disability, this is not a marginal inconvenience; it is a significant barrier.

But the issue is not just about cost. Alongside these financial changes, we are seeing a steady narrowing of choice. The removal of several higher end vehicle brands like Mercedes and BMW (except for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles) and certain body styles has been framed as a move away from "luxury."

Yet in practice, what policymakers may label as "non-essential" often reflects very real clinical needs. As occupational therapists, we assess how a person interacts with their environment, vehicle height, boot space, seating position, and adaptability are not aesthetic preferences, they are functional requirements.

Why are we saying a disabled person cannot have a nice car of their choosing, they are paying the advance payment themselves and if not disabled maybe they would buy a nice Mercedes or BMW.

Reducing the available vehicle range risks forcing individuals into options that are poorly suited to their needs. This can lead



"WHEN PEOPLE HAVE APPROPRIATE, RELIABLE TRANSPORT, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO WORK, VOLUNTEER, ENGAGE SOCIALLY, AND MAINTAIN THEIR HEALTH"

STUART BARROW

■ Visit www.otac.org.uk to find out more about Stuart's work.



to decreased independence, increased reliance on carers, and even heightened risk of injury. For someone with complex mobility needs, the "wrong" car is not just inconvenient, it can be unusable.

The tightening of scheme conditions goes further. Changes to mileage allowances, increased excess mileage charges, and limits on services such as tyre replacements all place additional pressure on users.

Many disabled people rely on their vehicles for far more than commuting. They are essential for attending medical appointments, maintaining social connections, and simply participating in community life. Penalising higher mileage fails to recognise this reality.

What concerns me most is the broader shift in narrative. The scheme is increasingly being framed through a lens of cost control and perceived excess, rather than as a vital enabler of participation. Yet the evidence from practice is clear: when people have appropriate, reliable transport, they are more likely to work, volunteer, engage socially, and maintain their health.

Restricting access does not reduce need, it simply shifts the burden elsewhere, often onto already stretched health and social care services.

Of course, sustainability matters. No scheme can operate without financial oversight. But sustainability should not come at the expense of those it is designed to support. There is a difference between refining a system and eroding its effectiveness.

From my perspective, these changes risk doing the latter. They may preserve the scheme on paper, but in practice they could reduce its value to the very people it exists for. Mobility is not an optional extra. It is fundamental to living well. Any policy that loses sight of that risks failing those who depend on it most. **D**

OTAC[®] 2026 Confirmed Events

OTAC
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Go to an **OTAC[®]** near you for expert seminars and exhibitors specialising in home adaptations and equipment.



OTAC[®] Peterborough
The Holiday Inn (West)
Thursday 9th July 2026



OTAC[®] Liverpool
Aintree Racecourse
Thursday 24th September 2026



OTAC[®] Cardiff
Vale Resort
Thursday 15th October 2026



OTAC[®] London
Kempton Park Racecourse
Thursday 12th November 2026

Lewis Reed
DIFFERENT BY DESIGN[®]

Talk to **Stuart** or the team at **Lewis Reed** who are at every 2026 OTAC[®] with any queries about the topic.



Scan the QR Code find out more!

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