

Designing with Care

Interior Design and Residential Child Care

Final Report by

Farm7

Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care

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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



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Executive Summary

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This exploratory study examined the attitudes to a range of design interventions in four residential care homes for children in South Lanarkshire. The project set out to identify the benefits and disadvantages to young people and staff of a change in approach to the design of interior spaces. It was undertaken by Farm7 (specialists in design research and consultancy) and the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC).
- 1.2 The main focus of the research was to evaluate design interventions aimed at removing 'institutional' approaches to design in the care environment and improving the experience of looked after children. This involved the commissioning of interior design consultants Graven Images in the development and design of South Lanarkshire's residential children's homes. Post-occupancy evaluation of the four residential homes was undertaken with the participation of both looked after children and staff.
- 1.3 It was envisaged that this study would contribute to the development of design guidance that will promote a more systematic approach to the design of care environments. This will allow social work and design professionals to draw on a design framework in order to significantly enhance the experience of looked after children and staff.

2 Literature Review

- 2.1 The design of our physical environment has been shown to affect our behaviour and impact on our well-being. Good design in health, education and work settings have been shown to have a range of positive effects. For example, the Scottish Executive views design as critical to realising aspirations for the school estate by creating the right environment to ensure students realise their potential. Perceptions of space affect people's attitudes and impact on their behaviour within particular spaces.
- 2.2 The design of care facilities has traditionally been driven by statutory and health and safety considerations, usually resulting in an 'institutional' look and feel. Children and young people in residential care have spoken tellingly about the impact of their environment on their experience of care. Although the links between the physical environment and therapeutic benefit have been known for some time, the literature on residential child care has not dealt with it in any great detail. The size of the children's homes has been the only aspect of the physical environment which a number of studies have linked to broader conclusions about the welfare of children and young people in care.

Standard 5 of the National Standards emphasises that children and young people should: stay in a welcoming, warm and comfortable environment that is safe, secure and accessible. The poor design of buildings is likely to lead to stigma, and loss of children's, and young people's self-esteem and self-respect. Design also has an impact on rights of privacy and personal space. The relationships between staff and children and young people can also be affected by the design of buildings and young people have frequently commented on the role of the office in distancing staff. Design impacts on opportunities for education and development of independent living skills, as well as physical safety.

- 2.3 Consultation with the users of buildings is an important aspect of the design process. Consultation can encourage ownership and may assist in ensuring that the design issues are articulated and considered during the design process. The importance of gathering the views of a range of users has been emphasised. Lack of consultation can lead to poor briefing decisions and design failures.
- 2.4 Design guidance can provide a valuable tool to ensure that the pertinent issues that mark the success of a children's home are adequately addressed. It can also help identify approaches that are problematic and do not work well. Design guidance should be a resource that is tailored to the specific needs of both the commissioning client and the designers. It can help in the preparation of a design brief, facilitate good communication, and the effective management of the design process. It should not be prescriptive, but provide a framework for the client to effectively define the considerations to be addressed and to adequately inform the designer during the creative process.

3 Research Methods

- 3.1 A variety of research methods was employed during this pilot study. Interviews were undertaken with children and young people in residential child care, residential child care staff, social work managers and design professionals. Relevant documentation relating to the approach adopted by South Lanarkshire Council was studied. A survey of design professionals and social work managers in local authorities across Scotland was carried out.
- 3.2 Information on the rationale for the change in approach to the design of care facilities, the process for implementation, issues encountered and the resulting benefits of this new system were gathered through face-to-face interviews with key staff involved in the design of care homes for children in South Lanarkshire.
- 3.3 A national survey of 32 Scottish local authorities was conducted to establish best practice relating to the design of children's homes among design and social work professionals. The questionnaire combined both open and closed questions and addressed four key issues: current best practice in the design

of children's homes; the level and impact of consultation throughout the design process; the requirement for design guidance; issues around site selection. A total of 22 local authorities submitted 38 completed questionnaires.

- 3.4** Forty-five residential child care staff members took part in one-to-one, group or telephone interviews; representing 60% of the staff working in the four residential care homes. The themes covered in interviews included: what worked and did not work in relation to the design features; the impact on feelings and working relationships of the design features; consultation; and recommendations for the future.
- 3.5** The participation of children and young people living in the four homes was a central part of the research. Two research approaches were employed: facilitated participatory workshops; and face-to-face interviews. A total of 22 out of a possible 29 young people participated in the workshops; twelve took part in interviews. Participatory workshops were activity-focused, highly visual and relatively informal and were facilitated by an experienced design educator. Each participant was given a workbook for recording their activities which they retained at the end of the project. Workshop 1 focused on drawing, cutting and pasting of preferred designs for an ideal house; workshop 2 on design features in the house, and involved taking digital images of spaces and objects that were liked and disliked; and workshop 3 explored in more detail the likes and dislikes based on the digital images. Face-to-face interviews allowed further information to be collected to augment the workshop information. The interview themes mirrored those of the staff interviews.
- 3.6** While direct comparisons between the homes was not possible due to a lack of common factors concerning the interior of each home, common themes have been identified. A case study was devised for each home highlighting information on the overall appearance of the house; the extent of design interventions and the reactions from young people and staff; and suggestions for the design of care homes for children and young people in the future. However, the material generated highlights the complexity of such evaluations. The design interventions are only partial and are constrained by other factors including architecture, health and safety, and broader organisational and management issues. In this context, broader themes have been identified and discussed in relation to their impact on the post-occupancy evaluations.

4 Findings

- 4.1 From the national survey, it was clear that no comprehensive knowledge base or guidance exists for the internal or external design of residential care homes for children. Both design and social work professionals rely on the client to articulate the design requirements of the project. To work effectively, this requires a design-literate client who understands design issues and requirements and can adequately prepare the design brief and provide information that will inform the design process and ensure a quality outcome of the project.

While most design and half of social work professionals considered reference sources to be adequate, this was mainly due to having a team with previous experience and engaging in consultation to determine requirements. The need, however, for comprehensive guidance and information on best practice was seen as desirable. An on-line guide was the first choice for the format of guidance by both designers and social work professionals. Meaningful consultation is recognised as an effective means of gathering relevant information to inform a design brief. A high level of consultation with residential staff was reported by both design and social work professionals. Consultation with children and young people was, in the main, undertaken by social work professionals. There is a need for design professionals to be more directly involved in the consultation process with children and young people. Consultation with the community was also varied.

Respondents considered that the main challenges in the design of residential care homes for children were those related to safety, including: fire regulations, escape routes and CCTV. The issue most frequently mentioned by social work staff was the difficulty in balancing the need for a homely environment with ensuring adequate provision for a residential care home and a workplace. Where a house is located is an important consideration in the success of a home.

- 4.2 South Lanarkshire Council identified the need to improve the quality of residential accommodation provided for looked after children and young people. Central to this was the recognition that existing residential homes did not provide a positive environment for children and young people: they were large; more than twenty years old; problematic to maintain; and with largely institutional interiors. Senior social work management recognised the need for a professional interior design approach and Graven Images were commissioned to provide this. Key elements that shaped the creative approach by Graven Images were the high level of aspiration of South Lanarkshire Council for providing quality interiors, encouraging ownership of space by looked after young people, and developing a palette of materials and textures that introduced character and created a particular ambience in interior spaces. The specification of quality products to indicate that the residents are cared about was central to Graven Images' creative approach. Graven Images' input in three of the houses featured in this study varied as

the homes were at different stages of development. The role of the interior designers has expanded to become more strategic and an integral part of design projects. They work closely with the client and in partnership with the architects at the outset of a project.

4.3 This exploratory study set out to explore the impact of various interior design interventions in the first four residential care homes for children in a phased development of residential child care in South Lanarkshire. Three of the four houses were new-build properties, the fourth a refurbished Victorian villa. The interior design consultants had varying degrees of input to three of the houses ranging from specifying interior furnishings for communal areas in one house to selecting interior furniture and decoration in all rooms in another house. One of the houses had no input from the consultants as the interior had been completed before they were commissioned.

4.3.1 *House A* is a new build property situated within a private housing estate. Graven Images had a wide remit for this particular house spanning the hallway, dining kitchen, sunroom, sitting rooms, bathrooms, studies, bedrooms and quiet room. Staff commented that on moving into the house, it looked good. However, once occupied, poor quality materials specified by the architect and lack of finish became apparent. All the young people liked the interiors of their bedrooms and generally liked the sitting room and dining kitchen. They were more divided about the bathrooms. Their key issue concerned the colour scheme and most commented that they would like more colour throughout the house. Staff tended to be more critical, considering that aspects of the design were not child-friendly.

House B is a two-storey new build property within a private housing estate. The interior of the house was completed before Graven Images were commissioned. Again, lack of robustness of materials specified by architects was commented upon by staff. Young people gave a mixed response on their liking of their bedrooms, the sitting room and the dining kitchen. Most did not like the bathrooms. Staff were more positive about the interior design than the young people.

House C is a refurbished, two-storey Victorian villa close to the town centre. This was one of the first houses to have input from Graven Images. The space and size of the rooms were commented upon positively. Young people liked the sitting room, bathrooms and bedrooms. They were more mixed about the dining kitchen. The overall impression from staff was that the house looked great even if it was not to their taste. Issues arose around design features which were intended to be personalised by young people but not implemented well by staff. Some staff also expressed concern that the house raised expectations beyond what could reasonably be achieved by young people.

House D is a new build property situated in an affluent residential area close to the town centre. Graven Images had a broad remit for the interior design

of the house. The architectural style of the house is notably different from surrounding properties and some staff considered it 'stuck out'. All the young people liked the dining kitchen, bedrooms and bathrooms but there was a more mixed response to the sitting room. Staff commented positively on the kitchen and bedrooms but the majority did not like the sitting room interior. A recurring comment from both young people and staff was that the colour scheme was dull, with the red wall in the kitchen prompting the only consistent positive response.

- 4.3.2 The key themes regarding the design of rooms identified in the research relate broadly to three categories: personalising space, aesthetics and functionality. A contrast in focus of response between young people and staff was apparent throughout the research. In particular, young people were more descriptive, commenting on aesthetics, while staff opinions tended to focus on functionality. What staff considered appropriate for a residential care home and what young people liked or chose to comment upon often differed. Some staff suggested that having a quality living environment did impact on young people's self-esteem and helped to raise their aspirations. Other staff considered the interior design of the houses to be expensive and impractical for young people in care. It should be noted that staff comments on cost were based on their perceptions of cost rather than their knowledge of actual cost.

Personalising space is important in taking ownership and thus respecting the environment; it is therefore an important determinant in the success of the design. Consultation is a useful way of engaging users (young people and staff), ensuring their needs are recognised and involving them in the process. Young people suggested they want to be involved in the design process, particularly in relation to their bedrooms. In relation to aesthetics, young people mainly commented on the colour scheme, the sofas and accessories such as plants. Staff tended to focus on functional aspects. The dining-kitchen was often mentioned as the hub of the house.

- 4.3.3 In addition to design themes outlined above, other general themes that affect design were evident across the four houses. Over-occupancy of the four houses often results in a communal space being used as a temporary bedroom. Reducing the amount of shared space in a house puts pressure on both staff and young people. Having an open access workspace or study elicited mixed reactions from staff. Some considered it to be a good idea and appropriate not to restrict access for young people as the house is their home. Others thought that the freedom to come and go resulted in too many distractions for staff and could compromise privacy. Managing the relocation is an important consideration for staff and young people settling in, and taking ownership of a new house.

Smaller homes were considered more friendly and homely and were considered to have a positive impact on relationships between young people and young people and staff; and among staff themselves.

- 4.4 We outline a draft framework for a design tool that can be used by commissioning organizations to devise a design brief and as a reference guide for design consultants. The items noted relate specifically to information gathered during this exploratory pilot study of four homes. The list is, therefore, not exhaustive and further points of reference will be relevant for different types of care units outside the four referred to in this exploratory pilot study. A comprehensive design tool will contain a broader framework highlighting issues and opportunities related to specific types of environment: for example, refurbishment of an existing property, or new buildings intended for long-term or short-term stay. The framework covers: site selection; architectural; exterior; layout; space - size, proportions and types of space; structural elements; interior lighting; interior spaces; interior features; and consultation. Each section begins with a contextual quotation from staff interviews.

5 Key Findings and Recommendations

- 5.1 It is apparent from this exploratory study of four residential care homes for children that, generally, what staff feel is appropriate to create a homely environment may not be what young people would choose. Young people tend to comment upon aesthetic qualities whereas staff tend to focus on functional aspects of space or features. Style and function are both important although prioritised differently by the two groups. It is concerning that this research found staff reflecting very low aspirations for the children and young people in their care. Research has shown how such low aspirations are related to poor outcomes of looked after children and young people. In the three houses where the interior design consultants had input, there was more comment on particular features in the house than the one interior that was selected by social work professionals. On the whole, the spaces designed by the professional interior designers were liked by young people, although in some cases they suggested changes to colour and pattern, or replacing particular items in the house.

Comments on interior design centred on the personalising of space, aesthetic considerations and functionality of features. Colour provoked most response from both young people and staff. Young people indicated a desire to be involved in consultation, particularly regarding the design of their bedrooms. Consultation with young people and staff allows key design requirements to be articulated and considered during the design process, and can inform the personalisation of space. However, the consultation process must be carefully managed to avoid raising expectations. Some young people are in care for a short period of time therefore a flexible approach to personalising space is necessary to easily accommodate new residents.

Both the architecture and interior design of a space can have an impact on relationships and can help or hinder social interaction. Some staff considered that quality furniture and fittings were aspirational and positively

impacted on young people's self-esteem. Others perceived the expenditure to be excessive and suggested that the furnishings chosen were beyond what young people could achieve on leaving care and so could have a negative effect. Such a lack of aspiration could further disadvantage children and young people. Staff perceptions and reactions to the initiative highlight a need to more fully engage staff in the design process. In fact, the professional design approach was shown, at times, to be less expensive than traditional interior furnishings.

The success of the design approach is dependent on other factors including whether the house is over-occupied. This has an effect on access to shared space and interferes with the functioning of the house. Other issues that impact on the effectiveness of design involve the type of workspace available to staff and accessibility to young people; and the attitudes of staff. How a space is designed can challenge core working practices.

No comprehensive design guidance or best practice information exists for the design of residential care homes for children, although this is regarded as desirable and beneficial. At present there is a reliance on the commissioning client to guide the design process and to identify key design issues. The result is a constant pioneering approach to design, which obstructs the creation of a body of knowledge that can be shared and therefore reduce the learning in each project. Design guidance should be comprehensive and include information on interiors, exteriors, site selection and costs.

5.2 The recommendations from this exploratory study are listed below.

There is a need to challenge accepted norms and to be more creative in dealing with regulatory and utilitarian requirements when designing a children's home.

Professional interior design input seems to stimulate more response from young people and staff, whether positive or negative.

Professional interior design expertise is not necessarily more expensive than traditional in-house approaches, but can lead to additional benefits relating to quality and appropriateness.

Design expertise should challenge embedded working practices and the institutional aspects of child care.

Consultation with the children and young people as well as staff is necessary. Consultation must have input from design professionals to ensure design requirements are properly captured and addressed. It is important that consultation with children and young people becomes central to the different stages of the design process.

Consultation must be appropriately managed to ensure that expectations are clearly defined and can be met while catering for a regularly changing population.

The difference in opinion between young people and staff can be captured through consultation.

The relatively low aspirations of some staff for young people in care should be challenged. One option would be the more effective engagement of staff in the design process, with particular emphasis on how a professional design approach can provide tools to enhance their role and the experience of young people in care.

Effective management of the relocation to a new house could benefit from an assigned project manager who would be responsible for managing the move, involving young people and staff in planning, timetabling and purchasing of necessary goods to establish good culture and practice, and to ensure that snagging issues were addressed and finishing was to the quality expected before occupancy.

Post-occupancy evaluation is necessary to determine whether the objectives for the house are met. This will tend to be longer-term and will involve tracking young people after they have left care.

Design guidance for children's homes is desirable and perceived to be beneficial by design professionals and social work professionals.

Examples of best practice in the design of children's homes are required.

More detailed research is required to develop a framework for design guidance that can be used by social work professionals and designers.

More detailed research needs to be done on what makes an educationally stimulating environment.

This small-scale study of the interior design of residential care homes for children provides a starting point for the development of a more systematic evidence-based approach to the improvement of the quality of residential accommodation for children and young people. Hopefully, this will mean that more and more often children and young people will have positive experiences of residential care.

1 Introduction

This exploratory study examined the attitudes to a range of design interventions in four residential care homes for children in South Lanarkshire. The project set out to identify the benefits and disadvantages to young people and staff of a change in approach to the design of interior spaces. This collaborative research project was undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team from Farm7 (specialists in design research and consultancy) and the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC).

The main focus of the research was to appraise a design intervention in residential child care initiated by the Executive Director of Social Work of South Lanarkshire Council. This approach set out to de-institutionalise the care environment and improve the experience of looked after children through quality design of the interior environment of children's residential care homes. This involved the commissioning of interior design consultants Graven Images in the development and design of South Lanarkshire's residential children's homes. Post-occupancy evaluation of the four residential homes was undertaken with the participation of both looked after children and staff. As well as exploring attitudes to the new interior design approach, the project set out to determine the impact of design on the relationships and experience of children and staff in the four residential homes. In addition, a national survey of local authorities in Scotland was conducted to establish the use of relevant guidance during the architectural and interior design process of children's homes and to determine best practice.

It was envisaged that this study would contribute to the development of design guidance that will promote a more systematic approach to the design of care environments. This will allow social work and design professionals to draw on a design framework in order to significantly enhance the experience of looked after children and staff.

In this report, we explore the limited literature relating to design in residential child care and related fields. We outline the research and describe the methods of collecting data, particularly in relation to the children and young people involved in the study. The discussion of the national survey of local authorities highlights the need for design guidance. We then set out the approach taken by South Lanarkshire Council and the interior design consultants. Section 4 sets out the findings of the post-occupancy evaluation, drawing on the interviews and workshops with children and young people and staff. This is set out both in terms of case studies of each house and general themes and issues across the four houses. On the basis of this material, a framework for the design of residential care homes for children has been developed. Although we acknowledge that this small-scale exploratory study cannot hope to address all issues, it is expected that this can be developed by the team and taken forward through further research and input from design

professionals, social work and residential care professionals, and, importantly, through further consultation with looked after children and young people.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that when a child is deprived of his or her family environment, he or she 'shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State (Article 20), and the recovery of victims of any form of neglect or abuse 'shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child (Article 39). Similarly, the Scottish Executive, in 'Getting it Right for Every Child' states that children need to be safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected and responsible, and included. The vision for children's services sees them as 'high quality' and that they 'clearly demonstrate through their buildings, décor, web pages, systems, processes and staff responses that 'we're here to help'...' They should encourage ambition, promote and secure children's safety, and take responsibility for action to improve children's lives (Scottish Executive, 2005). Both the United Nations Convention and 'Getting it Right for Every Child' stress the participation of children in decisions about their lives. We would argue that effective design, involving consultation with children and young people, communities and professionals, is an essential element in this vision for children's services.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Design of Environments

The design of our physical environment has been shown to affect our behaviour and impact on our well-being. The design of health environments can reduce the length of stay of patients and promote well-being and reduce clinical errors (The NHS Confederation, 2003, 2004). Effective school design can influence student behaviour, reduce truancy and bad behaviour and increase educational attainment. In the workplace, studies have shown that appropriately designed environments can lead to reduced staff turnover and absenteeism and improve communication, productivity and the more effective sharing of knowledge (Myerson & Turner, 1998; Department of Health and The Design Council, 2003; Allen, Bell, Graham, Hardy & Swaffer, 2004).

The Scottish Executive views design as critical to realising aspirations for the school estate, in particular by creating the right environment to: "...inspire children, young people and communities," (Scottish Executive, 2003, p3) and ensure students realise their potential. A recent series of publications, 'Building Our Future: Scotland's School Estate' provides guidance on school design to ensure the vision for education is effectively realised. No such research or guidance exists for the design of care environments and its impact on the experience of those who live and work there, such as looked after children and staff.

Perceptions of the space are thought to be influenced by the qualities of architecture, design, the wider environment, and the attitudes individuals hold about environments and features (Ritterfield & Cupchick, 1996). Attitudes towards these qualities reflect cultural, social and psychological characteristics (Cohen, 2005), which, in turn, affect individuals' interactions with their surroundings (Wilson & MacKenzie, 2000). The expectations people hold in relation to environments affect behaviour in that setting (Bell, Fisher & Loomis, 1978; Wilson & Mackenzie, 2000). For example, individuals behave differently in school compared to youth club settings. Environmental psychologists point out that although our surroundings affect behaviour, it is also the case that, through interacting with the environment, new environments can be produced which in turn lead to new behaviours (Proshansky, Ittleson & Rivlin, 1976). New environments can be large scale (a new building) or quite small, for example, changing the furniture in a room. A combination of good design and ethos within the environment can affect behaviour:

"Behaviour issues that are common to many schools provide an example. Good design can encourage positive behaviour patterns. These positive behaviour patterns must, however, be reinforced through changes in the culture and ethos of the institution..." (Seymour et al, 2001, p19).

2.2 Design of Children's Care Homes

The design of care facilities has traditionally been driven by statutory and health and safety considerations usually resulting in an 'institutional' look and feel. The results of these restrictive design considerations, coupled with limited design guidance and the lack of consultation with children and staff during the design process, have been recognised as contributing to the inadequate design of spaces, to the reinforcement of the stigma of such facilities to residents and the wider community, and to low morale among staff. Children and young people in residential care have spoken tellingly about the impact of their environment in relation to their experience of care (Boyce & Stevens, 2004).

Although the links between the physical environment and therapeutic benefit have been known for some time (Moos, 1974), the literature on residential child care has not dealt with it in any great detail. In Sinclair and Gibbs' (1998) study of 48 children's homes, they remarked on the contrast in appearance of different homes:

"These pen portraits illustrate the very different immediate impressions which the appearance of children's homes can make on those who visit them. They vary in the type of neighbourhood, the physical appearance of the building itself, the standard of internal decoration and the degree to which the homes fit in with the neighbourhood or stand out as an institution," (Sinclair & Gibbs, 1998, p79).

Interviewers considered the external appearance of over one-third of the homes, and the internal appearance of over one-quarter, to be 'run down'. Nearly half of the homes were described as 'clearly institutional' and only five homes were 'ordinary / homely'. Berridge and Brodie (1998) found that relatively few of the twelve homes in their study were institutionally stigmatising through their external or internal appearance, although 'some vestiges of the institution remained' (Berridge & Brodie, 1998, p88). The size of the children's homes, however, has been the only aspect of the physical environment which these studies linked to their broader conclusions about the impact of design on children's welfare.

Successful residential care homes for children have been associated with a number of elements including:

- providing an environment which is pleasant and allows for privacy
- friendly staff who are prepared to listen
- interesting activities
- residents who are friendly and do not bully or lead astray other children in the residential home.

(Home Office, 2004, p2).

Brown, Bullock, Hobson and Little (1998) found that good homes correlated with positive relationships between staff and young people but did not correlate with the condition of buildings. They did, however, emphasise that the condition of buildings was an important consideration in relation to children's experience in the care home.

The interrelation of design elements and staff characteristics has also been emphasised in a school context, for example:

“The physical design of space cannot, by itself, create a successful open learning situation. If practitioners do not have a clear understanding of their position, the physical space, in actuality, can inhibit or interfere with the teachers’ goals,” (Prohansky & Wolfe, 1974, in Krasner, 1980, p132).

In healthcare, research conducted by the University of Sheffield and the NHS Trust revealed that, in parallel to good design, the experience of patients is also affected by well-managed and maintained facilities (Lawson, Phiri & Wells-Thorpe, 2003).

Kahan (1994) and the Scottish Executive (2002) make a number of similar recommendations regarding the physical environment of children’s homes. The accommodation should be attractive, suitable for its purpose (including offering sufficient space for study and individual and group activities), free from hazards, offer privacy, facilities for study and leisure activities. Children and young people should have a sense of control, for example, by being allowed to personalise space and report problems. In addition, the Scottish Executive (2002) stated that the building should blend with surrounding buildings and that the grounds and building should look good and give a positive image to people. Standard 5 of the National Standards emphasises that children and young people should: “...stay in a welcoming, warm and comfortable environment that is safe, secure and accessible,” (Scottish Executive, 2002). Davison (1995) writes that: “...children and young people have the right to live in an environment which is homely, comfortable and individually rewarding,” (Davison, 1995, p128).

The design of children’s homes impacts on a range of issues that are crucial to children’s well-being. Kahan (1994) highlights that living in unpleasant, poorly maintained, cold or badly decorated surroundings:

“... will signal [to children and young people] that those with responsibility have little respect for them as individuals. This is likely to lead to loss of self respect in themselves as well as a loss of respect for those in authority. This, in turn, may have consequences for behaviour and discipline,” (Kahan, 1994, p78).

The design of buildings and rooms also has an impact on the rights of privacy and personal space (Davison, 1995). People have differing needs in relation to solitude/isolation, and privacy with family or friends, and space should be provided to meet these needs (Demirbas & Demirkan, 2000). Personal space has a protective function against physical or emotional threats (Bell et al, 1978). Research shows that overcrowding has been associated with withdrawal, reduced likelihood of discussing personal topics, reduced levels of interaction, less helping behaviour, and reduced performance of difficult tasks (Bell et al, 1978). This highlights the need to avoid overcrowding and to provide sufficient space for social contact (Demirbas & Demirkan, 2000).

Davison commented that personalising space is also important for taking ownership of spaces. Having input in the way in which the space is organised and presented is key: not just space but what is in it, access, types of books, and encouragement by staff.

“Young people need to lay claim to their own personal areas. They should be able to display posters, pictures and documents which reflect their interests and hobbies,” (Davison, 1995, p146).

The relationships between staff and children and young people can also be affected by the design of buildings and young people have frequently commented on the role of the office in distancing staff.

“Attempts to keep people out of ‘the office’ were consequently fraught with difficulty. In one home (E), where the atmosphere was especially crisis-ridden, staff were extremely protective of their space and used the office essentially as a refuge from the resident group. This was deeply resented and young people continually sought, by fair means or foul, to break through this barrier,” (Berridge & Brodie, 1998, p90).

Design can also have an impact on other aspects of young people’s lives such as education and physical safety. The care homes of looked after children should provide an ‘educationally rich environment’ with, for example, quiet space for homework (Berridge and Brodie, 1998; Kahan, 1994). Young people also need access to the kitchen and washing machines in order to learn about and develop their independent living skills.

Physical safety needs relate to health and safety issues where a balance should be struck between legislative requirements and the institutional or ‘homely’ feel of an establishment (Kahan, 1994). The safety of children and young people in relation to control is also crucial, for example, in the use of physical restraint.

“The question of the physical layout of buildings is crucial. For instance incidents may tend to occur in confined spaces, such as corridors, or in rooms where there are hard or abrasive floors or solid furnishings such as chairs or tables,” (Leadbetter, 1995, p46).

Seymour et al (2001) emphasised that, despite the difficulty of establishing the impact of environments, they are considerably important for everyday life.

“Whilst it might be hard to prove scientifically, we all know that the environments we live and work in affect us. A beautiful space can inspire and motivate, an ugly one can depress – it becomes a place we avoid,” (Seymour et al, 2001, p4).

2.3 Consultation

Consultation with the users of buildings is an important aspect of the design process. It can enhance the brief and better inform the design process. Consultation is thought to be beneficial because: "...total involvement from the beginning will encourage ownership and may assist in ensuring that the tasks are carried out properly," (Davison, 1995, p147).

A study of care homes for children in Sweden suggested that more input was required from children on their environment:

"Children's influence on their environment is far too small," (University of Vaxjo, 2004, p1).

"The most important is the dialogue between the child and wise listening adults, taking into consideration the local conditions," (University of Vaxjo, 2004, p4).

Others emphasise the importance of gathering the views of a range of users of the environment:

"There is a very real need for those who are involved with building sheltered housing to consult the users; the residents, their relatives, their carers," (Robson, Nicholson & Barker, 1997, p20).

Failure to consult with residents and staff can lead to poor design:

"Home managers are not often appointed at the briefing stage, and residents, their relatives or care assistants are rarely consulted which is a pity as building users can be valuable members of briefing teams. Nursing and residential homes are designed to tight budgets and space is at a premium, but they are a relatively new building type and it is rare to visit one which does not suffer from design failures attributable to poor briefing decisions," (Torrington, 1996, p2).

2.4 Design Guidance

Design guidance can provide a valuable tool to ensure that the pertinent issues that mark the success of a children's home are adequately addressed. It can also help identify approaches that are problematic and do not work well. This is particularly important for the design of children's homes where examples of best practice are not easily identified and the body of knowledge on the subject area is not comprehensive or easily accessible. Design guidance should be a resource that is tailored to the specific needs of both the commissioning client and the designers. It can help in the preparation of a design brief, facilitate good communication and the effective management of the design process. It should not be prescriptive, but provide a framework for the client to effectively define the considerations to be addressed and to adequately inform the designer during the creative process.

Few examples of design guidance currently available include reference to interior design. One exception is the Dementia Services Development Centre based at the University of Stirling, which has developed a series of publications aimed at informing design professionals about the issues faced by dementia sufferers and staff. The design tool highlights some key interior design considerations although, in parts, it is prescriptive in its advice (Pollock, 2003).

Another exception, in the educational field, is the School Works Toolkit that was developed in response to the UK Government's programme to raise education standards (Seymour et al, 2001). The Toolkit is a publication that describes key stages involved in implementing a participatory process for the design of a school. Although the focus is primarily on architecture, issues relating to the interior space are also mentioned. School Works is currently in the process of developing a post-occupancy evaluation tool for secondary schools that addresses physical design aspects, such as lighting and heating, and issues relating to feelings of safety and security. They are also developing case studies to show and share best practice. This model is a useful starting point for establishing comprehensive design guidance for residential care homes for children.

3 Research Methods

3.1 Introduction

A variety of research methods was employed during this pilot study. Primary research techniques generated data through interviews with children and young people in residential child care, residential child care staff, and key stakeholders in South Lanarkshire Council, including design professionals and social work managers. A Scotland-wide survey of design professionals and social work professionals involved in the design of residential care homes for children was conducted. Secondary research involved the collation of existing information through on-line searches and literature reviews. The specific research approaches taken and the data generated are summarised below.

An introductory meeting was held with the managers of the four homes that were to be included in the research, regional managers and key design team members in South Lanarkshire Council to introduce the project, gain feedback from staff and answer any queries they had regarding the research. The research team visited each of the houses to meet with the children and young people to introduce the research, inform them of the workshops and to seek their participation. Handouts summarising the research, workshops and interviews were also provided.

The managers of the care homes involved were given information sheets and consent forms to distribute to all staff, children and young people. The researchers liaised with the managers to arrange suitable dates and times for the workshops and interviews with the young people and interviews with staff. Young people and staff were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that all information would be treated confidentially.

The research approach and materials used for the participation of staff and children were approved by the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee.

3.1.1 Secondary Research

Secondary research involved a review of existing literature concerned with the design of residential care homes for children and relevant design literature.

In addition, relevant documentation relating to the approach adopted by South Lanarkshire Council for the four residential care homes for children featured in this pilot study was referred to for background information. This contextual information combined with a series of interviews with key members of South Lanarkshire Council and Graven Images provided background information presented in Section 4.2.

3.1.2 Primary Research

Information for this pilot study was generated through a variety of data collection methods. There were four main strands to the primary research:

- Project Background – information from key staff of South Lanarkshire Council and Graven Images;
- Survey of design and social work professionals in Local Authorities in Scotland;
- Post-occupancy information on homes from staff in the four selected houses;
- Post-occupancy information on homes from looked after children in the four selected houses.

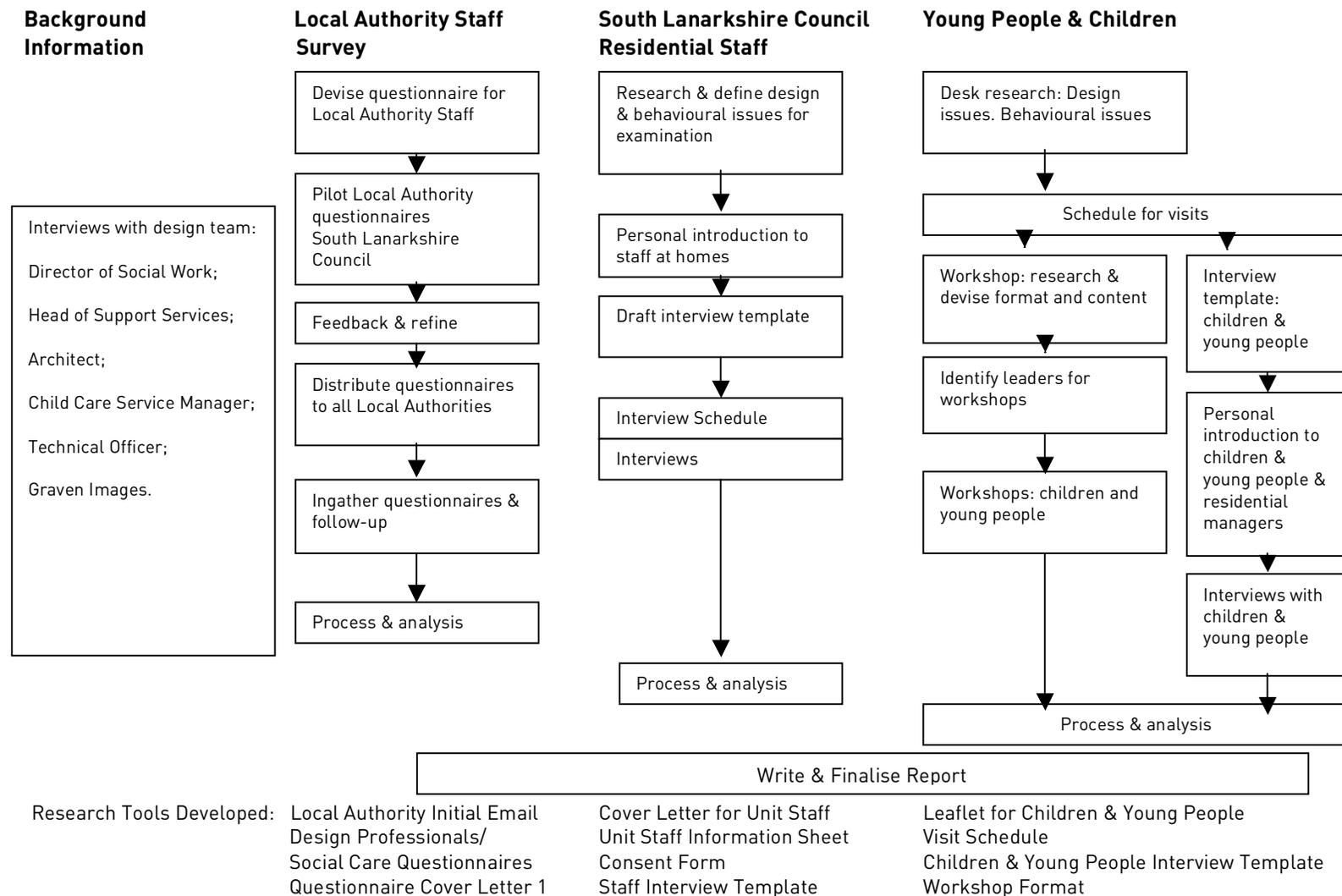
The research strands and research tools are summarised in Diagram 1 and covered in more detail below.

3.2 Project Background and Context

Information on the rationale for the change in approach to the design of care facilities, the process for implementation, issues encountered and overcome and the resulting benefits of this new system were gathered through face-to-face interviews with key staff involved in the design of care homes for children in South Lanarkshire.

Individual interviews were also held with senior staff representing design, social work and maintenance departments. The lead design consultant at Graven Images was also interviewed.

Diagram 1: Overview of Primary Research Approach and Research Tools Developed



3.3 Survey of Scottish Local Authorities

A national survey of 32 Scottish local authorities was conducted to establish best practice relating to the design of children's homes among design and social work professionals. A structured questionnaire was devised and piloted with design professionals in South Lanarkshire Council. The questionnaire combined both open and closed questions and addressed four key issues:

- Current best practice in the design of children's homes;
- The level and impact of consultation throughout the design process;
- The requirement for design guidance;
- Issues around site selection.

The finalised questionnaire and a covering email were then sent to key contacts in each of the remaining 31 local authorities. These contacts were requested to provide relevant contact details for personnel to whom the questionnaire should be forwarded or, alternatively, to disseminate the questionnaire to relevant personnel directly. Twenty-six out of 31 of the organisations responded with a total of 22 local authorities submitting 38 completed questionnaires.

Where closed questions were asked, quantitative data were generated and analysed via the SPSS programme for statistical analysis.

Open questions allowed respondents to provide a wide variety of unprompted answers. These responses were categorised according to the pertinent themes arising to illustrate the consistency and diversity of opinion. The categorisation of the data was validated within the research team.

3.4 Post-occupancy Evaluation with Staff

The impact of the design approaches in the four residential care homes in South Lanarkshire was determined through a combination of visits to the homes, interviews with residential staff, and participatory workshops and face-to-face interviews with children and young people resident in the homes. This post-occupancy review allowed information to be gathered on the response to key design features and the impact of design approaches.

A total of 31 one-to-one interviews was conducted with staff. Where individual interviews were not practical, group interviews were held. On one occasion a personal meeting was not possible and the interview was conducted by telephone. Interviews were conducted with the managers of the homes, residential care staff, and social care assistants, including both day and night shift workers. There was a high level of participation from staff representing 60% of all residential staff. The number of participants and type of input are shown below in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Type and Number of Interviews

House / Staff Titles	No. of staff in each House	Total staff who participated	No. of one-to-one Interviews	No. of group interviews	No. of telephone interviews
House A: 1 depute, 7 residential workers, 2 social care assistants	20	10	4	2	1
House B: 1 manager, 1 depute, 10 residential workers, 2 social care assistants	17	14	10	1	0
House C: 1 manager, 1 depute, 4 residential workers, 2 social care assistants	18	8	6	1	0
House D: 1 manager, 1 depute, 10 residential workers, 1 social care assistant	20	13	11	1	0

Semi-structured interviews contained a series of open questions to allow unprompted responses. The predefined questions helped to guide the interview and ensure a degree of consistency in relation to the four main themes of the research: the design features in the homes; the impact of the design features on behaviour; consultation; and advice and future recommendations for designers. These themes are consistent with those explored with children and young people who are resident in the homes. The main questions addressed by the themes are outlined below.

- Design Features:
 - general comments on exterior, interior design approaches
 - what has worked, what has not worked and why

- **Feeling and Impact of Design Features:**
 - changes in how they feel about the working environment
 - changes in how roles are performed
 - relationships within the house
 - changes in behaviour or attitudes among staff, residents, community
- **Consultation:**
 - involvement in consultation regarding design
 - value of consultation
- **Advice and Future Recommendations.**

3.5 Post-occupancy Evaluation with Children and Young People

The participation of children and young people living in the four homes was a central part of the research. User-focussed research is critical to understanding how a space should or does work for those who use it, in this case, looked after young people.

A total of 22 out of a possible 29 young people participated in the workshops. Fewer took part in the interviews: 12 out of 29. If preferred by young people, group interviews were held. This was the case for two young people.

Table 3.2 shows the number of young people resident in the house, those who participated in the workshops, and those who took part in face-to-face interviews.

Table 3.2: Children and Young People Who Participated

House	Total no. of young people resident	No. of young people involved in workshops	No. of young people interviewed
House A	7	7	4
House B	7	6	2
House C	7	4	4
House D	8	5	2

Two research approaches were employed to allow looked after children to participate in the research and for their voices to be heard. These were:

- Facilitated participatory workshops
- Face-to-face interviews.

3.5.1 Facilitated Participatory Workshops

It was considered appropriate to try to involve young people in the research project in a visual and more engaging way than purely conventional face-to-face interviews.

Participatory workshops have developed as an approach to facilitate the involvement of children and young people in the research process and to allow a range of methods to be used in researching the experience of children and young people (Hill, 1996; Punch, 2002). These methods: "...can serve as constructivist tools to assist research participants to describe and analyse their experience and give meaning to them. Participatory methods are those that facilitate the process of knowledge production, as opposed to knowledge gathering, as is the case with methods such as individual interviews, surveys or checklists," (Veale, 2005, p254).

Participatory workshops that were activity-focused, highly visual and relatively informal were devised in collaboration with an experienced design educator and facilitator. Two staff members from Who Cares? Scotland provided feedback on the proposed activities, and offered guidance on advocacy issues and children's rights.

The objective of the workshops was to generate interest in the research among the residents and to use various activity-focused techniques to gather their thoughts and opinions on the design interventions in their home while ensuring that, as far as possible, age or ability would not be barriers to participation.

The result was a series of three participatory workshops held in each house over the course of one month. The workshops were voluntary and young people were informed that they could participate in all or part of the workshops and that they were free to stop at any time. Young people were informed at the outset of the project that the purpose of the workshops was not to change what was in their houses but to improve the design of future care homes for children.

The workshops were activity-based and each participant was given a workbook for recording their activities, which they kept at the end of the project. During the introductory staff meeting, it was agreed that residential staff should not be involved in the workshops as this might influence the participation of some young people. The format of the workshops was as follows:

- Workshop 1: Introduction: Drawing, cutting and pasting of preferred designs for an ideal house.
- Workshop 2: Focus on Design Features within the House: Taking digital images of spaces and objects liked and disliked.
- Workshop 3: Describing What You Like and What You Don't: Detailed written descriptions of preferred and disliked items in the main rooms in the house using the digital images generated from Workshop 2 as a prompt. Residents were also asked to give an overall rating for the four main rooms in the house; kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, and sitting room.

The duration of the workshops was around one hour each session. This seemed to work well. Shorter sessions would not have been sufficient to conduct the activities and with longer sessions it might have been difficult to maintain the attention of participants.

The small size of groups also worked well. Low numbers of participants allowed the facilitator and researcher(s) to build rapport with the young people and for individual assistance to be given when required. This was necessary with some of the younger children and with those who had learning difficulties.

The use of digital cameras and the activity-based exercises were well received. Each child was presented with a workbook that they used each week and that they kept at the end of the workshop sessions. Young people took ownership of the workbooks and were keen to show staff their inserts, drawings and tasks completed. One participant continued to use the workbook between sessions. Each young person's workbook was photocopied and the information arranged to allow comparisons and similarities to be determined.

Older children, particularly those over 15 years tended not to participate. With very young children – around 6 to 8-year olds – it was difficult to maintain interest for an hour during each session unless working with them on a one-to-one basis, and they tended to dip in and out of the activities when not playing with their friends. The format seemed to work best with 10 to 15-year olds. As expected, this would suggest that different types of activities are required to engage the different age groups.

Table 3.3 illustrates the age range of those who took part and those who did not.

Table 3.3: Age of Children and Young People in the Four Houses

Age	Took Part	Did Not Take Part
Under 10 yrs old	3	0
10-15 yrs old	18	3
Over 15 yrs old	1	4

A number of issues did arise in relation to the workshops. For example, the dynamics within the group could affect the level of individual participation. In some cases, peer pressure could inhibit or dissuade the engagement of other residents. Intervening in a situation like this is difficult, particularly in the absence of staff. Although ground rules had been drawn up for the workshops, it was suggested by staff that these would not be appropriate. In retrospect, it might have been better to set down the ground rules with children and young people.

Some staff appeared more supportive of the workshops than others and this affected the process of running the workshops. Workshop dates and times were agreed with staff in advance, however, on a couple of occasions the staff on duty had no knowledge of the confirmed arrangements. This resulted in the workshops team arriving at inappropriate times, including during mealtimes, and residential staff being unprepared for the activity. It is important that staff and researchers work together to ensure such gaps in communication do not arise.

The workshop facilitator commented on distinct differences between conducting workshops in somebody's home and working with groups of young people in other environments. In particular, the level of control over participation in activities was

less than in an educational environment where young people are not allowed to disengage or leave the room at will. To overcome such issues, the presence of a member of staff might have helped however, it was agreed at the outset that staff should not be present as this might influence the behaviour and contribution of some of the children. A compromise might be that residential staff are available and can be seen while not actively involved in the activities. This was the case in one home and seemed to work well.

3.5.2 Face-to-Face Interviews

Personal interviews allowed further information to be collected in a confidential manner to augment that gathered during the workshops. The interview template used with young people consisted of a series of open-ended questions. The questions were organised around key themes of the research consistent with those explored with staff. They included: the design features they had identified (liking or disliking) in the home through the workshops; the impact of the design features; consultation; and advice and future recommendations for designers. The main questions addressed by the themes are outlined below:

- Design Features:
comment on the three features you identified in each room, or alternatives if preferred.
- Feeling and Impact of Design Features:
the atmosphere in the house
does the design of the house affect how you feel about it?
- Consultation:
involvement in consultation regarding design
value of consultation
- Advice and Future Recommendations for Designers.

To mark the end of the input, young people and staff from each house were invited on a guided tour of The Lighthouse: Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City. All participants in workshops and interviews were presented with a £10 gift voucher to reward them for their time and contribution.

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis

While direct comparisons between the homes was not possible due to a lack of common factors concerning the interior of each home, common themes have been identified. The degree of input from Graven Images, the design consultants, varied significantly from no input to interior design aspects of communal rooms in one home and extended to the interior design of most of the rooms in two of the homes. Architecturally the houses differed: one of the four homes was a refurbished Victorian villa and the remaining three were new-build properties.

Material from the workshops and interviews with staff and children and young people have been presented against the design interventions of the design consultants. A case study was devised for each home highlighting information on the overall appearance of the house; the extent of design interventions and the reactions from resident young people and staff; and suggestions for the design of care homes for young people in the future. The case studies represent children and staff perspectives and provide an evaluation of the design features against the intended results for each home.

However, the material also highlights the complexity of such evaluations. The design interventions are, for the most part, only partial and are constrained by other factors including architecture, health and safety, and broader organisational and management issues. In this context, broader themes have been identified and discussed in relation to their impact on the post-occupancy evaluations.

Information from interviews with young people and staff indicated key issues that should be included in a design tool or guidance. While the information contained in this section (Section 4.4) is limited to comments arising in relation to four houses, it is anticipated that this provides a preliminary framework for devising a fully comprehensive strategic design brief.

4 Findings

The project findings are outlined below according to:

- Local Authority Survey
- South Lanarkshire Council Design Approach
- Post-Occupancy Evaluation
- Design Tool Framework.

4.1 Local Authority Survey

A Scotland-wide survey of local authorities was conducted to establish current professional best practice with regard to the design of residential care homes for children. The objectives of the survey were to determine:

- The type and effectiveness of reference sources used to guide design interventions;
- The level and effectiveness of consultation with key stakeholders: residents, staff and community, in the design of care homes for children;
- The requirement for design guidance and the preferred format of this tool and perceived benefits;
- Issues regarding site selection.

Twenty-two local authorities responded to the survey but only eight respondents were design professionals: Senior Architect (2); Architect (4); Architectural Technician (1); Architectural Assistant (1). The majority of respondents (30) worked in social work. Job titles indicated that respondents ranged in seniority from Director to Senior Residential Worker. Nine respondents were service managers and seven were unit managers. Seven out of eight designers and 22 out of 30 social work professionals had direct experience in the design of children's homes. The other nine respondents answered on the basis of their experience of residential care and on a hypothetical basis.

All of the design professionals had experience in architecture and most in interior design (6); fewer had experience in landscape design (3) and lighting (4). Most of the social work professionals had involvement in interior design (20) and over two-thirds had experience in architecture (17), landscape (17) and lighting (17).

4.1.1 Best Practice: Reference Sources

Respondents were asked to identify reference sources they use when designing residential care homes for children and to what extent they used those sources on a day-to-day basis.

It was clear that no comprehensive knowledge base or guidance exists for the internal or external design of residential care homes for children.

Table 4.1 shows to what extent the reference sources are used on a day-to-day basis. The data indicate that both design and social work professionals rely, to a

high degree, on access to the client during the design process. Access to in-house information on previous design and to in-house professionals is also made frequently.

Table 4.1: The Extent to Which Reference Sources are Utilised on a Day-to-day Basis

Reference Sources used on a day-to-day basis	Great Extent		Some Extent	
	Designer	Social work	Designer	Social work
Client	6 of 7	15 of 22	1 of 7	7 of 22
In-house information on previous designs	2 of 7	14 of 22	4 of 7	8 of 22
In-house professionals	2 of 7	14 of 22	4 of 7	8 of 22
Design Journals	1 of 7	1 of 22	4 of 7	2 of 22

In accessing in-house professionals, designers tend to approach architects and other building professionals, for example, quantity surveyors and engineers. Social work staff identified a wider range of professionals: architects, planners and property services, as well as residential staff and managers and social work staff.

Five out of seven design professionals do refer to design journals from time to time. Where specified, all but one of the journals are architecture-related (Building Design x 2, Architects Journal x 2, RIBA Journal, Architectural Review, Design Guide 2000 (published by Scottish Executive) and the Care Commission).

The data indicate that both design and non-design professionals rely on the client to articulate the design requirements of the project. To work effectively, this requires a design-literate client who understands design issues and requirements and can adequately prepare the design brief and provide quality information that will inform the design process and the outcome of the project. This dependency on the client and, to a lesser extent, in-house professionals, is driven by personal experience that may vary widely among individuals and ultimately affect the standard of the finished home.

4.1.2 Best Practice: Professional Development

Participants were asked if the reference sources available offered sufficient support to perform and develop in their role. The responses are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Reference Sources Provide Sufficient Support to Perform and Develop Professionally

Sufficient Support from Reference Sources	Yes	No
Designers with experience of design in child care	5 of 7	2 of 7
Social workers with experience of design in child care	11 of 22	8 of 22

Most design professionals suggested that sufficient support is offered by existing reference sources. One respondent did comment that up-to-date reference guides were essential and although general guides are available through the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) Practice Service schemes and HMSO publications:

“...the industry lacks a co-ordinated series of guides for architects produced by local authorities or other private bodies which can be treated as an industry standard.”

Another commented that with regard to a particular project no existing research was made available by the client and that the brief was generic with no specific user-focussed information. They were asked to design “...as normal a house as possible,” consistent with building regulations. This indicates a general acknowledgement and commitment to a more domestic style. It appears, however, that no guidance was provided on the specific issues relating to residential care homes for children and young people; not least consideration from the user perspective and the necessity to provide a homely, welcoming and safe environment for children and young people balanced with the appropriate provision for care staff and other specific requirements.

A respondent with experience in designing a secure unit for children suggested there is a continual re-learning in the design process. They commented:

“There is a ‘pioneering’ element each time, regarding secure units, as there are no definite guidelines which will guarantee specification and compliance for subsequent licensing. Considerable co-ordination is therefore essential [from] the Executive.”

The absence of comprehensive guidance would suggest a ‘pioneering’ aspect to the design of care homes in general. This continual discovery and relearning wastes time and resources and the process could be significantly improved through comprehensive design guidance.

The non-design professionals who considered reference sources to be adequate suggested that this was mainly due to their having a team with previous experience and engaging in consultation to determine requirements; however, the need for comprehensive guidance and information on best practice was also raised as being

desirable as was post-occupancy evaluation and the opportunity to extend one's knowledge base.

Those who commented that resources were insufficient suggested that there was limited information and knowledge available regarding the design of residential care homes for children; that design professionals need to change their emphasis from the institutional and public environment to more domestic design for interiors and exteriors. Others conveyed dissatisfaction with projects where the brief was not specific enough to design a more domestic environment, and where the client was unclear about what they wanted from the project.

The need for information on best practice and comprehensive guidance on what works and what does not was mentioned by design professionals. Examples of best practice are urgently needed. The information currently available is limited and post-occupancy evaluation of premises is not systematically conducted, therefore, there is no objective appraisal of whether the building has met its aims and no opportunities to gather information for future projects or to build on the learning to date.

4.1.3 Consultation

Meaningful consultation is recognised as an effective means of gathering relevant information to inform a design brief. In particular, it allows the views, concerns and experience of the users of the space to be acknowledged and articulated, and therefore appropriately addressed in the design solution. It is most effective at the outset of a project allowing all design issues to be articulated. Respondents were asked about the level of consultation before, during and on completion of projects. They were also asked about consultation with user groups: staff, young people and the neighbouring community.

All design professionals and the majority of social work professionals with experience of design in residential child care (24 of 29) visited the site for the home before and after completion.

A high level of consultation was undertaken with residential staff. All design professionals consulted with staff at the outset of a project, with slightly less consultation during the design process and only four of the seven requested feedback on completion. For non-design professionals, high levels of consultation were evident during the process and following completion.

Table 4.3: Levels of Consultation with Professionals with Experience of Child care Design

	Designers	Social Work
Consult with residential staff before the design process begins	7 of 7	18 of 22
Consult with residential staff during the design process	6 of 7	20 of 22
Request feedback from residential staff after completion	4 of 7	19 of 22

Consultation with children and young people was, in the main, undertaken by social work professionals. Only one design professional had engaged in consultation with young people at key stages throughout the duration of the project and requested feedback.

Table 4.4: Number of Designers and Social Work Professionals with Experience of Child Care Design who Consulted with Young People

	Designers	Social Work
Consult with children in care before the design process begins	1 of 7	13 of 22
Consult with children in care during the design process	1 of 7	16 of 22
Request feedback from children in care after completion	1 of 7	15 of 22

Design professionals commented that consultation was usually with residential staff and that consultation with the neighbouring community and young people was generally undertaken by social work professionals. It was apparent that young people’s views tended to be represented to design professionals through social work and residential staff. One design respondent commented:

“In principle we consult with all users of buildings, and that would include children in a children’s unit; in a secure unit we have found that the unit staff are very pro-active in representing the children’s views, and moderating them for security/practicality in this very specialised environment. We would also try to consult the children but there are limitations on this process in this context.”

There is a need for design professionals to be more directly involved in the consultation process with children and young people. One design professional

commented on the restricted access designers have to end-users and on a lack of post-occupancy feedback:

“My remit has been to design to a detailed brief provided by our Department of Social Work clients. Occasionally on such projects there have been opportunities to work with the staff appointed to run the facility but never with the children. The brief usually specifies the accommodation to be provided with accompanying areas. It often includes room relationships, internal finishes, ironmongery as well as security arrangements and decoration. Unfortunately the architect has little opportunity to learn whether the facility when complete is successful in providing a ‘home’ for children staying there.”

Table 4.5: Number of Designers and Social Work Professionals with Experience of Child care Design who Consulted with the Surrounding Community

	Designers	Social Work
Consult with the surrounding community before design begins	3 of 7	11 of 22
Maintain contact with the surrounding community during implementation	2 of 7	17 of 22
Request feedback from the surrounding community after completion	6 of 7	8 of 22

Among social work professionals, consultation with stakeholder groups varied. Consultation with staff, young people, community and elected members was undertaken. It is important to note that the form of consultation can vary. One respondent commented:

“The format of consultation can be varied from individual meetings, joint meetings, small working groups, public meetings, questionnaires and the development of a project group which includes key stakeholders, including service users.”

Some commented that more consultation was needed with children (4), staff (3) and, in one case, external consultants. One respondent commented that there was no expectation to consult with stakeholders, suggesting a lack of appreciation of the role of consultation:

“I undertook most of the above tasks as part of my general work and to help me prepare for the consultation meetings so I could evidence my comments for example from workers and clients. There was no expectation for me to consult at all.”

The impact of meaningful consultation can be significant and affect the likely success of a project. One respondent commented:

“My experience is all stakeholders must be involved throughout the process. Key to this is local community. I experienced a number of projects that folded or never got off the ground due to lack of goodwill from immediate neighbours who then had local politicians fight their case. I never experienced a ‘win’ once this process had started, hence my advocacy for full inclusion from the start.”

Table 4.6: Professionals Experienced in Child Care Design who considered there was Sufficient Consultation During the Design Process

	Designers	Social work
There is sufficient consultation/communication during the process of designing children’s units.	4 of 7	13 of 22

It is evident that there is a lack of consistency in consultation at the various stages of the design process. Design professionals tend to be more likely to engage in consultation before the design process begins. This is as expected, as consultation is part of the process that will help identify pertinent issues and concerns that form part of the design brief and therefore ensure they are appropriately addressed in the design solution. Social work professionals tend to consult with staff and residents during the process and after completion. Community consultation was most frequent before the design process began and during the project, with fewer requesting feedback.

4.1.4 Need for Design Guidance

Accessible, practical, and comprehensive guidance on the design of residential care homes for children is considered desirable over and above existing reference sources. It is worth noting that while general professional guides relating to architecture do exist (via RIAS and RIBA), no such guidance or tools are available for child care homes specifically or for the design of the interior spaces. Indeed, it is usually the case that architects or other professionals with no specialist knowledge of interior design are charged with this task. A member of the research team attending a conference heard one architect designing care homes for people with dementia remark:

“We don’t use interior designers for care homes. We have a shopping basket of possible furniture, flooring, etc., and choose from that. Although, I wouldn’t have them in my own home.”

Without input from experienced designers, the interior for care facilities tends to be driven by health and safety regulations and inflexible procurement processes that significantly reduce options available. All of the design professionals and 22 of the social work professionals (80%) commented that a design guide would be very beneficial. The remaining social work professionals stated that it would be fairly beneficial. It is foreseen that design guidance would complement, rather than be a substitute for, the varying forms of design guidance previously mentioned.

Participants were asked to rank three preferred formats for design guidance. The following table shows the relative ranking of the five formats presented.

Table 4.7: Preferred Format of Design Guidance

	Designers			Social Work Professionals		
	1 st Choice	2 nd Choice	3 rd Choice	1 st Choice	2 nd Choice	3 rd Choice
Design Catalogue / Brochure	3 of 8	2 of 8	2 of 8	6 of 30	10 of 30	4 of 30
On-line Guide	5 of 8	0	0	7 of 30	4 of 30	4 of 30
3D Software	0	1 of 8	1 of 8	6 of 30	5 of 30	5 of 30
Checklist	1 of 8	3 of 8	2 of 8	7 of 30	5 of 30	8 of 30
Seminars / Workshops	0	3 of 8	3 of 8	4 of 30	8 of 30	7 of 30

*Note: some of the figures in this table do not tally as responses are excluded where respondents did not complete the questionnaire as instructed. For example, some did not rank preferences where others showed equal ranking for preferences.

An on-line guide was the first choice for the format of guidance by both designers and social work professionals. Respondents commented that on-line guidance would be easy and quick to use and accessible to all team members. A design catalogue was considered easy to use and access by both design and social work professionals. Designers suggested that it should contain pictorial information. As with on-line guidance, social work professionals (and one designer) suggested that this tool could be used by the project team members to guide discussions around issues and explore design choices. With both the design catalogue and on-line guide, it was stated that information needs to be up-to-date, suggesting frequent review of design guidance and tools.

Social work professionals considered 3D software to be beneficial for testing options and to visualise the finished design. It was also suggested that this would allow young people to be more involved in the process. One designer was less supportive, commenting that 3D software would quickly go out of date and that it would also require training to operate it.

To a lesser extent, both designers and social work professionals mentioned that a checklist would be useful for ensuring all necessary criteria are addressed and that seminars and workshops are useful for sharing experiences.

A variety of perceived benefits of design guidance were identified. Eighteen respondents felt they would provide knowledge and guidance. Ten social work professionals felt they could stimulate thinking and provide additional options. A

small number of respondents felt they would help the design process (4), ensure input from young people (3), or reduce the likelihood of mistakes (1). One design professional commented:

“Design guides should and can provide up-to-date and comprehensive direction for architects when commissioned on specific projects. Their source is best from an impartial and/or publicly funded body, backed and endorsed by local authorities and specialist organisations. National recognition and acceptance helps with authenticity.”

Two designers suggested that design guidance would be particularly beneficial for those with limited experience in the design of children’s homes. This was summarised by one respondent who commented that:

“Architects will not specialise in this type of work [residential care homes for children]. There simply isn’t a great enough demand. Guides would keep designers up to date with changes to statutory requirements, etc.”

Another respondent commented:

“It [design guidance] would give us the opportunity to start from a person-centred perspective in designing living space for some of the most vulnerable kids. It could cut through bureaucracy/debate between different professionals and offer maximum achievable standards which could be applied consistently.”

One respondent suggested that guidance would circumvent avoidable mistakes and improve design solutions:

“Due to the nature of planning a purpose-built children’s unit, guidance about suitable plans and options would eliminate the possibility of similar mistakes being made over and over again. There is wealth of knowledge available and having it formulated into a structured guide would ensure that the information is available to everyone.”

Design guidance was also considered important for decision-making during the design process and could help instil confidence in the choices made:

“Information about design solutions to common problems. Design advice to avoid institutional look whilst being robust enough. Give confidence in decision-making. Suggest alternatives not previously considered. Help with achieving best value.”

4.1.5 Content of Design Guide

The suggested content for design guidance was extensive and included architectural features, interior requirements, outdoor areas and costs. Designers and social work professionals most frequently mentioned layout and space standards, although the relationships between the rooms, how the space is used and statutory requirements were also mentioned by both groups. Social work professionals suggested that information on innovative options and ideas, cost considerations and case studies of existing units would be helpful.

4.1.6 Design Challenges Relating to Regulation and Statutory Requirements

Respondents were asked to comment on the main challenges they face in the design of children's homes relating to building regulations and statutory requirements. The most commonly cited challenges were dealing with aspects of safety, including, fire regulations, escape routes and CCTV. This was mentioned by both designers and social work professionals. The issue most frequently mentioned by social work staff was the difficulty in balancing the need for a homely environment with ensuring adequate provision for a residential care home and a workplace. A residential care home has different requirements from a domestic home and, in particular, must provide accommodation for family or contact areas and sufficient space for individual privacy that are not necessarily design considerations for domestic dwellings. Balancing the need for supervision and privacy of young people and cost considerations were also mentioned as challenges in designing appropriate space.

When asked how these challenges were overcome, it is not surprising that a wide variety of approaches was suggested. Some respondents focussed on specific issues while others addressed several issues or were more holistic in their recommendations. Both designers and social work professionals most often suggested discussions with experts, including DDA, Building Control, Fire Officer and the Care Commission. Designers also commented that constant liaison with the client, team members and other consultants was important throughout the design process. Maintaining a domestic or homely approach was a motivation for both designers and social work professionals. Some respondents commented on the need to achieve a homely environment while ensuring the space operated as a workspace and as an educationally rich environment. Reaching a balance between creative and functional design approaches was recognised as important. Designers mentioned appraisal of the brief and awareness of building standards and other legislation to be part of their approach.

4.1.7 Site Issues

Where a house is located is an important consideration in the success of a home. Respondents were asked what criteria they use in selecting a site for a residential care home for children. Design professionals most frequently cited proximity to schools and other local amenities and facilities including shops, transportation, health centres and sports facilities. These criteria were also frequently mentioned by social work professionals. Many social work professionals also commented that residential care homes for children should be in a residential area where there is

the opportunity to be part of the local community and that the house should 'blend in' or look 'like a house' rather than an 'institution'. Safety aspects are also important including not being close to railways, pylons or major roads. The character of the locale is also vital – it should not be in an area of social deprivation, where drugs or other social issues are prevalent or an area known for anti-social behaviour where children and young people may become victims or be enticed into such activities. The house should not be isolated but should have appropriate space around it to allow privacy for staff to manage difficult situations that might arise.

With regard to particular community issues or difficulties that need to be considered in relation to site selection, a broad range of comments was provided. Design professionals and social work professionals both highlighted the fact that local residents can be nervous about the placement of a house in their neighbourhood and often anticipate trouble. There is a perception that child care homes will encourage groups of youths to loiter in the area, that there will be an increase in drugs and crime rates and that house prices will be detrimentally affected. There is therefore a need to reassure locals that the house will not have a detrimental effect on the community and that any issues that might arise will be effectively dealt with. It is critical that there is integration into the local community, that a dialogue raises awareness of the issues faced by accommodated young people, and that approval and support for the house is secured.

When asked to consider how these issues might be overcome, the involvement of the local community through consultation, regular liaison and communication was considered necessary. An explanation is necessary of the issues facing young people in care, how the house will work and be managed and some of the issues that might be encountered, without alarming the community or raising expectations. The support of particular community representatives was considered crucial, including councillors and community police. Researching the area and conducting feasibility studies regarding suitability are also vital and can help determine the likelihood of the house being accepted and integrated into the fabric of the community.

Respondents were invited to provide any additional information they felt was pertinent to the design of residential care homes for children. The most commonly cited issues were that the home should have a warm, welcoming, friendly and safe environment with a domestic feel and move away from the traditional institutional look and feel of many existing houses. Space was also considered vital. Young people need to have adequate space within the house, in their bedrooms, in social areas and outside the house in the garden. Staff requirements were also mentioned, in particular provision of appropriate space for staff supervision and the balance between creating a welcoming home for young people and a workplace for staff.

Accessing a body of knowledge on the design of residential care homes for children was referred to by several respondents and included visiting existing children's homes, accessing information on key developments in Scotland and the need for a range of publications similar to those available for the design of spaces accommodating dementia sufferers. A comprehensive response was provided by one respondent:

“Children are placed in homes for a wide variety of reasons and from wide-ranging backgrounds. As such this is, to say the least, a challenging client/user group. Add to this the changing nature of ‘children and families’ structures currently ongoing and increasing inter-agency work, the brief has to respond to change. One consequence is that buildings themselves must have a degree of in-built flexibility to meet that ongoing change. The ideal children’s home should be so well integrated into the local environment that it is not detectable as a children’s home, but should have a warm and welcoming atmosphere, be comfortable and have a high standard of design and fittings. Overt security features and institutional expression should be avoided; this should be a major design objective. The design of comfortable social areas is particularly relevant, as is providing a domestic backdrop for introducing some children to aspects of family life which they may not have had proper experience of previously. This applies to the design of dining and living areas in particular. In homes which are also Secure Units these aspects are just as, or more, important but the additional aspects of motivating education within the building, keeping heavy security as ‘low key’ as possible, securing service access, robustness of construction and prevention of self-harm, the preference for natural ventilation but secure windows, the need to have appropriate isolation from overlooking of/ by neighbouring properties etc., and many other parameters, lead to a much more specialised brief, requiring a separate design guide.”

4.1.8 Summary

While general guidance on architectural design is available, no specific guidance for the exterior or interior design of residential care homes for children exists. A strong reliance on the client and in-house professionals to inform and guide the design process results in varying design solutions and a constant relearning or pioneering approach to design.

Levels of consultation with residents, staff and the local community varied significantly. Design professionals tend to rely on the social work professionals to conduct consultation with residents and the local community. The role of consultation as a means of gathering information on user-focussed perspectives was given varying importance. It is suggested that design guidance should provide information on the format and the content for consultation with the various stakeholders to ensure the most appropriate design solution.

Site selection is important to the success of a residential child care home. Access to local amenities such as schools, transport, shops and leisure facilities are vital. It is important that the locale is not one of social deprivation or with high levels of anti-social behaviour. Community integration, both physically in terms of the building and socially with the residents and staff, is also sought for success. Consultation is a key activity for achieving integration.

Respondents considered design guidance would be beneficial. Comprehensive, up-to-date guidance is essential to enhance the design of residential care homes for children. To achieve the balance between a homely, welcoming and safe environment for residents, appropriate facilities for a residential care home and an appropriate workplace requires an informed approach to design that would be greatly facilitated by design guidance.

Suggested formats for design guidance included on-line guidance, design brochure, and a checklist for easy access by all design team members. The content required is extensive and covers architectural and interior design, outdoor areas and costs.

4.2 South Lanarkshire Council Design Approach

South Lanarkshire Council 'Best Value Review Residential Action Plan' identified the need to improve the quality of residential accommodation provided for looked after children and young people. Central to this was the recognition that the existing residential homes did not provide a positive environment for children and young people: they were large, accommodating up to twenty young people; more than twenty years old; problematic to maintain; and with largely institutional interiors. Following a national trend towards smaller residential care homes for children, which research has shown to be related to better outcomes for children and young people (Department of Health, 1998), South Lanarkshire Council introduced a phased development of new residential care homes for children, with four individually designed houses being opened in the first phase (South Lanarkshire Council, 2002). As part of these developments to improve the quality of residential accommodation, and to accommodate children in more 'homely environments', South Lanarkshire identified the need to employ professional interior design consultants to address the issue of the institutional character of residential care homes for children.

4.2.1 Strategic Design Aspirations

The strategy adopted by South Lanarkshire Council is to provide more homely, less institutional environments facilitated through raising the standard of interior design. The Executive Director commented that at the core of the vision is to:

“...raise aspirations and horizons of looked after young people, who often in their earlier life, and sadly in later life, have little experience of quality. Yet, they live in a world of young people where design is all.”

He commented further that perceptions of young people's experience of quality was raised by a speaker at a SIRCC conference who had spent much of his early life in care. The speaker said that, in his later years in care, one thing he knew he wanted and never got was quality. The Executive Director was sympathetic to this and commented that:

“There is an assumption that because these young people are looked after that they are not concerned with aesthetics, and that quality and design are not important to them. I think this is a very dangerous stereotype.”

Senior management recognised that to achieve the vision required a professional design approach from interior specialists. Initially, a colour psychologist was commissioned to select colours that would create a calming rather than a hostile environment in homes. However, senior managers felt that the colour scheme selected was itself institutional. One commented that: “...they are calming colours but they weren't striking in any particular way, they were just bland and everything you walked into had a bland, nonentity feel about it.”

Additionally, the interior design of residential care homes for children was previously the responsibility of in-house architects or members of residential staff

and management. It was felt that these in-house design approaches tended to be driven by health and safety and technical requirements rather than aesthetics and did not reflect a domestic interior. A senior manager explained:

“Many of the products chosen by in-house architects can be industrial, for example, lighting and carpets. The type of carpet that tended to be used was a carpet tile that you would find in an office. This made bedrooms look like offices. If you use a carpet tile you will not get the feel of a home environment. If you ask staff whether they would have carpet tiles in their own homes they say no. So why have them in a children’s home. But it is difficult to get people to change their thinking.”

While it is recognised that there is a requirement to comply with statutory regulations, the challenge is to do so in a way that does not reinforce institutional features. Fire extinguishers, for example, do not have to be hooked onto the wall or sitting in a plastic tray on an open landing or at a front door. It is possible for them to be located in a cupboard as long as staff and children and young people know where to access them and can do so easily. This constant tension to balance regulatory requirements with providing a homely environment is recognised by all professionals involved in the initiative.

Meeting the aspirations to deinstitutionalise the care environment also requires a change in management approach and working practice, which can also be facilitated by the design of a building. Traditional views of staff are being challenged and new ways of working introduced. The role of design as an agent of change in working culture is well known, particularly in commercial interiors. The Executive Director of Social Work suggested that creating a homely environment required staff to stop carrying bunches of keys, sticking signs on walls and to change terminology including using ‘study’ instead of ‘office’. These represent institutional behaviour and would not be expected to occur in a domestic home.

These, then, were some of the considerations that were key to commissioning interior design consultants and taking a more thoughtful and creative approach to designing care homes. The Executive Director of Social Work commented that:

“My approach is that interior design is not about taste. Taste is a very personal thing, it should not be about what I want our units to look like, but a professional approach to design that generates a particular feel or variety of uses. I think this role of interior design is not generally understood.”

A tender document was circulated to five design consultants. This included a brief to devise a creative approach to key rooms in House C featured in this project. Graven Images, a cross-disciplinary design consultancy working in interior, graphic and exhibition design, won the tender for interior design of care environments.

4.2.2 The Interior Design Consultant’s Approach

Graven Images presented a design approach with the working title ‘Wee Brother House’, a play on the Big Brother TV series that appealed to many young people.

“We thought that Big Brother provided an interesting model for a group of young people living together in a domestic but non-family environment. The Big Brother house is a high-style, high brand approach to living and is familiar and attractive to brand-savvy teenagers. We felt that ‘Wee Brother’ indicated a more caring and humorous approach to the same thing. There is a high-status association with appearing on Big Brother rather than low status or stigma of living in a care home. The ‘Wee Brother’ approach allows us to create confident and cool responses rather than those of previous generations.”

Graven Images were appointed for their creative design approach, as well as their work in different fields internationally. It was recognised that this breadth of experience was beneficial as the consultancy could draw on experience of other interior environments and apply this to the care setting.

The design consultancy sought to balance the strategic objectives of South Lanarkshire Council while considering the needs of the end-user: the looked after young people. The lead designer, with limited time from briefing to presenting the creative concept, used personal reference sources, including his experience as a child, advice from his own children and a friend who worked in child care. The ‘Wee Brother’ concept considered a day in the life of a looked after young person. The designers suggested that, in many respects, their day is similar to that of many young people who are not in care: “They get up in the morning, have breakfast, go to school, come home and do their homework. At the weekend they play.” Even where particular issues are evident, like not attending school, that can be the case with young people who are not in care.

Consultation in relation to the redevelopment of residential care homes had been carried out with children and young people prior to Graven Images’ involvement. Due to the advanced stage in development of the three houses for which the design consultants were commissioned, direct consultation was not possible, although, in some cases, feedback was sought from children and young people for proposed interior features.

It was acknowledged, however, that:

“It makes sense to have the young people involved in the process, although this can be a complex process in terms of distilling the information. Having input from young people is important and we can feed into that process and make sense of some of the issues.”

Key elements that shaped the creative approach by Graven Images were the high level of aspiration of South Lanarkshire Council for providing quality interiors, encouraging ownership of space by looked after young people and developing a palette of materials and textures that introduced character and created a particular ambience in interior spaces.

The design consultant noted that for young people in care, often the only personal belongings in their bedrooms are owned by them. To enhance the sense of

ownership throughout House C, for example, various approaches were introduced. This included providing each individual child and young person with a personal 'Fat Boy' giant bean bag to allow them to sit where they wanted in any room in the home. The light fittings in the lounge and kitchen were also selected to encourage possession and ownership of space. The intention was that young people in the house could attach their own images or writing to the light fitting. The installation of quality fittings and a palette of materials and textures were selected as an alternative to relying on colour to create a particular atmosphere.

The specification of quality products was central to Graven Images' creative approach. The lack of design guidance was noted by the lead designer who commented:

"...what does exist tends to be very prescriptive. Guidance should be fluid, not too formulaic, something that allows people to make choices. Some of the reference material for interiors for dementia sufferers makes some good points, but the level of aspiration is very low."

As a result, there is a continual learning process, necessitated in part by the lack of any practical design guidance. However, a considered and caring approach can still be implemented. One of the design consultants commented:

"I believe that you can tell when a designer has really made an effort, using real skills to deliver something good or special. In care homes, the message that this gives is that somebody out there cares and respects the people who live there."

Graven Images' input in three of the houses featured in this study varied as the houses were at different stages of development. In House C the main focus was the communal areas whereas in House A the remit included bedrooms. The interior of House B was already completed at the time of commissioning. The lead designer commented that architecture of a building is a major component in driving the design approach followed by the types of spaces required internally, for example, quiet rooms, studies and lounges. The size of the building and proportions of the rooms in House C, a refurbished Victorian villa, allowed the placement of large items including sofas and a long snaking wall shelf. A different approach is required for new build properties where rooms tend to be much smaller. A senior manager within South Lanarkshire Council commented that as these four houses were developed in parallel, it was more difficult to implement changes from lessons learned.

Importantly, then, in Phase II of the redevelopment of residential child care the interior designers are now involved from the start of the process and can therefore influence architectural decisions which will have an impact on the interior environment. A senior manager commented:

"Where we are now at is an approach that says every building, whether it is a children's unit or not, starts with a blank sheet of paper and you start with a

partnership between the architect and the interior designer, so that it is not an afterthought.”

One example of this concerns the dining kitchen. This is a central feature of all new houses and much time has been devoted to this area as it is recognised as the hub of the house and is an important room in all of the homes. An important change introduced by the designers is having one large dining table, and the size of the dining table is now a key component in the size of dining kitchens specified to architects. The floor plate for this room must accommodate a table that can comfortably seat up to twelve people.

The role of the interior design team has expanded from the selection of furniture to a more strategic and comprehensive input at the outset of a project. The Executive Director commented on the fundamental role of interior design in creating a nurturing and stimulating environment:

“Interior design is not just about picking carpets, it’s about the totality of the inside of the building.”

It is important to note that there is little variance in cost between the interior design approach taken by the design consultants and traditional procurement routes within the social work department. In some cases, the latter was shown to be more expensive. This fact challenges the opinions of some staff who perceived the costs of the professionally designed environments to be costly and extravagant. Indeed, the Executive Director commented:

“We’ve had a long battle with staff to say that good design doesn’t need to cost more. It requires more creativity but it doesn’t cost more.”

As well as interior design features, the design consultants have a wide remit ranging from room layouts and the collocation of rooms to the placement of windows. They have become an integral part of the design team for residential care homes in South Lanarkshire.

4.3 Post-occupancy Evaluation

This exploratory study set out to explore the impact of various interior design interventions in four residential care homes for children in South Lanarkshire. These were the first four houses in a phased development of residential child care. In particular, the objective was to move away from large, institutional residential units to smaller houses with a more homely environment. As part of this process, interior design consultants, Graven Images, were commissioned to address the interior design of the houses.

Three of the four houses were new-build properties, the fourth a refurbished Victorian villa. The interior design consultants had varying degrees of input to three of the houses ranging from specifying interior furnishings for communal areas in one house to selecting interior furniture and decoration in all rooms in another house. One of the four houses had no input from the design consultants as the interior had been completed before they were commissioned. A brief overview of the houses is presented below and more detailed information is contained in the following case studies.

House A is a two-storey new build property situated within a private housing estate. It has seven bedrooms, two public rooms, a dining kitchen and sunroom. Graven Images had a wide remit for this particular house spanning key interior elements in the sitting rooms, dining kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms, studies, sunroom, quiet room and hallway.

House B is a two-storey new build property built by a private developer and designed in similar architectural style to surrounding houses on the estate. Only its size differentiates it from a typical domestic residence. The interior design of the house was completed before Graven Images were commissioned. The house has been included in the research to explore some of the key differences evident in the design approach of interior professionals.

House C is a refurbished, detached, two-storey Victorian villa. This was the first children's unit to have input from Graven Images. The interior features in the hallway, bedrooms and upstairs study had already been finalised through the conventional interior selection process. However, it was considered that improvements were necessary, particularly within the communal spaces, to make the house seem more homely and less like a workplace. Graven Images were commissioned to specify key interior elements of the sitting room, dining kitchen and bathrooms. The designers did not have free rein as some of the interior features in these spaces were fixed, for example the kitchen units and the carpet in the sitting room.

House D is a new build property situated in an affluent area with easy access to a town centre and five minutes walk from the train station. It is a two-storey detached property and is set just back from the main road. Graven Images had a broad remit for the interior design of the space including furniture and furnishings for the sitting room, dining kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms, quiet room, studies and utility room.

Case studies of the individual houses are provided below. The general themes emerging from the post-occupancy evaluation are outlined in Section 4.3.2. These sections include excerpts from the workbooks that young people developed in the participatory workshops, images of the houses and quotations from young people and staff. Where appropriate, the number of young people or staff who represented a particular view is shown in parenthesis.

4.3.1 Case Study: House A

Background Information

House A is a new build property situated within a private housing estate. The house has seven bedrooms, two public rooms, a dining kitchen and a sunroom. Architecturally, the house is in similar style to the surrounding properties. Internally, rooms are of a similar scale to standard domestic properties by private developers. The site has good access to local amenities and transport links.

Graven Images, the interior design consultants, had a wide remit for this particular house spanning the hallway, dining kitchen, sunroom, sitting rooms, bathrooms, studies, bedrooms and quiet room.

The staff and young people were relocated from various units that accommodated both short and long-term residents.



Architecture and Exterior of the House

The house is of the same architectural style as others in the estate and does not, therefore, stand out other than in size. It is located at the far end of the development, which affords some privacy as there is a golf course to the back of the property and a walk way to the side. The latter is used to access a run-down housing estate and people using the path can be disruptive and at times have thrown items at the house. The kitchen window was broken on one occasion.

The only access to the house is through the main development and some staff commented that this could make young people and staff feel vulnerable to community issues (3).

On visiting the house it was apparent that young people had made friends with neighbouring children.

There is a small garden to the rear of the property. Some conversion of the space was planned to make it a more functional area that could be used by the young people. To the front of the house is a small landscaped area and two large parking bays.

There is a small garden to the rear of the property. Some conversion of the space was planned to make it a more functional area that could be used by the young people. To the front of the house is a small landscaped area and two large parking bays.

Staff commented that on moving into the house, it looked good (4). However, once occupied, it became apparent that the interior architecture of the house included poor quality materials and that certain aspects had not been properly finished (3).

“I liked it when I saw it and it was brand new. Then you walk in....”

“The cracks started to appear.”

Staff commented that the standard building materials used in the house are not robust enough for the wear and tear and physical abuse they were subjected to (2). Having been made aware of this recurring issue in new build properties, South Lanarkshire Council now specifies more durable materials for walls and doors. This is important for reducing maintenance and the associated costs.

Two members of staff said the house felt homely. However, some of the furnishings were considered to be unsuitable for younger children and generally not child-friendly (4). One staff member noted a lack of control of the interior lighting and some issues around maintenance. The number of snagging problems combined with the hurried relocation to the house (when it was unfinished) may account for some of the negative comments about this house as the settling period had been protracted.

One of the main points raised by staff who were interviewed is that the house is not child-friendly. The layout and some furnishings within the house were considered to be dangerous and not suited to younger children.

Interior Design: Young People and Staff's Perspectives

This case study focuses on feedback from young people and staff regarding four main parts of the house that had input from the design consultants: the sitting rooms, dining kitchen, bedrooms and the bathrooms.

Sitting Rooms

Graven Images selected the interior furniture for the two sitting rooms. This included sofas, tables, flooring, curtains, colour scheme and storage.

All but one of the young people said that they liked the sitting room and that it was comfortable and made them feel happy and 'snazzy'. Four out of the five who commented on the sofas liked them because they were big and comfortable. Two of them also liked the cushions commenting that they were light and trendy. Only one young person disliked the shape and the colour of the sofa.

Wooden Parquet flooring is used in both sitting rooms. The flooring was not sealed when it was installed and as a result has become dirty and worn in appearance after a relatively short period of time. Three young people

mentioned that they did not like the flooring because it was scratched and dirty and that it did not 'look cool'.

Only one young person commented that they did not like the tables in the sitting room but did not give a reason.

Other features that young people commented on included the colour scheme, which they thought was dull (3). A number of them commented that they liked accessories such as the vases (4), plants (3) and lamps (3).



In contrast, staff commented that the sitting room was uncomfortable (1) and not personal enough (1). They also suggested that the furniture was not child-friendly (2), that the sofas in the sitting rooms were too big for the young people (2) which contributed to them not being comfortable in the space and that the tables were too large with sharp edges, which was particularly unsuitable for younger children (2).

One staff member compared the room to a doctor's surgery as the furniture and colour scheme in both sitting rooms was the same. Another member of staff said that they liked the furnishings but that they had been



selected without young people in mind.

"They [children] don't take into account that it costs thousands to kit out these bedrooms, they're not interested. It's the same with the living room; they would rather have a three-piece suite and a fire and a telly and a lamp. They're not into all this...the money they spent on this furniture because I think the kids don't feel it's home. They would rather have their own things; it's not what they're used to. It's more like a show house; aye, it looks great but it's not child-friendly; it doesn't look homely enough."

One member of staff suggested that the sitting rooms should have pictures or paintings on the wall, perhaps that the young people created, in order to personalise the space.

Dining Kitchen

The dining kitchen is an open plan area with a sunroom and utility room leading off of it. Graven Images

selected the interior furniture for this room. This included wooden flooring, blinds, colour scheme, tiles, table and chairs.

Young people generally liked the dining kitchen, with some of them referring to it as nice (1), bright (1), airy (1), snazzy (1) and making them feel chilled (1). Few specific features in the room were mentioned. Two out of three young people commented that they liked the mobile island unit because it looked okay and had a tiled top. One young person commented that they disliked many interior design elements including the floor, table and chairs.

Two young people commented that they liked the plants in the room.



Staff considered of the location of the cooker in the dining kitchen to be dangerous as young people have to pass by it if they are going to the utility room (4). Currently, there are plans to change the architect's original kitchen layout.

In general, the dining kitchen was identified by staff as the room where

young people tended to congregate (3).

One staff member thought the kitchen was cosy and liked the lighting and cupboards. Other staff suggested that the cupboards were inadequate for the size of the house and the storage requirements (2). It was also suggested that larger fridges and more cupboard space were needed for food storage (3).



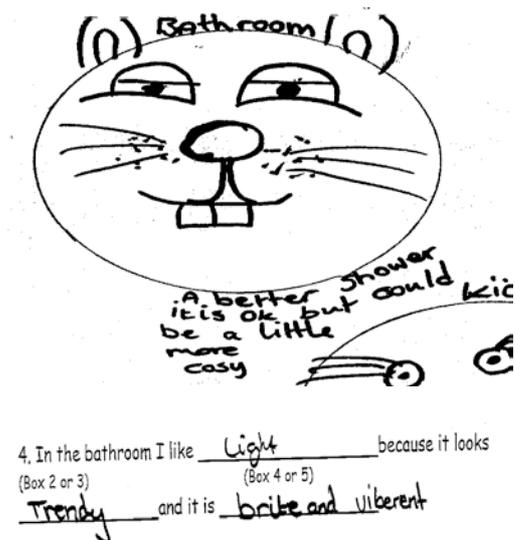
Bathrooms

Graven Images' interior approaches in the bathrooms included the tiling, flooring and paint.

Young people were divided as to whether or not they liked the bathrooms. Some referred to them as stylish (1) and cool (1), others drab (1) and dull (1).

The shower and light in the bathrooms were most frequently commented on by young people. The bath, mirror and plant were each referred to as features liked by two young people.

One young person liked the tiles. One of two who commented did not like the flooring, stating that it was plain and dull. One young person referred to the taps as similar to those you would find in a health centre.



“The bathrooms are very, you know...they’re tiled and they’ve got the latest showers and bath and everything like that. They’re easy kept, easy cleaned. I don’t have any complaint there.”

Bedrooms

The interior design features selected by Graven Images included wardrobes and storage units, mirrors, bedding and curtains.

All of the young people liked their bedrooms. Some thought it looked stylish, modern and bright, and that it made them feel calm, happy and relaxed.

The main design features that young people liked in their rooms were the lighting (6), posters and artwork (4), and the colour of their bedding (2). One young person commented on the coloured wall panel with sockets for brackets that support shelving. The brackets can be moved around the panel creating different shelf patterns. While one member of staff queried the function of this, the young person liked it because it was flexible.

The colour scheme was commented upon by several young people. Two out of three did not like the colour scheme in the bedroom and described it as dull, not cool, and depressing. Two who commented did not like the carpets in their rooms because they were not colourful.



6. In the bedroom I don't like Shoe holder because
(Box 2 or 3) (Box 4 or 5)
it looks too ugly and it is dangerous.

“A couple of days ago, you know the shoe racks [in bedrooms], we had a boy cut his eye, just next to his eye.”

Staff commented that the furniture in the bedrooms was too heavy for young people to move around easily (4), making the layout of the rooms inflexible (2). One member of staff commented negatively that the furniture was uniform throughout the bedrooms and so there was not a lot of differentiation between them.

One staff member thought that some design features had not been considered with regard to the age of the young people who would be living in the house. The height of the wardrobes and shoe racks were mentioned in this respect. The doors were also mentioned as being too heavy, particularly the bedroom doors for some of the younger children (2). This was confirmed by one young person who stated that they did not

like the wardrobe, shoe rack or unit, and that the door was too heavy.

Summary of the Interior Design of the House

For the young people, the colour scheme seemed to be a key issue. Four of those interviewed commented that they would like more colourful walls and three suggested more colourful carpets. In relation to the sitting room, one young person commented on the lack of colour:

“It’s a boring colour scheme: grey, brown, black, beige...The only colour in the room is the fire extinguisher and the plants.”

They commented further that this affected how they felt about living in the house:

“The house is depressing to live in because of the colour scheme. I would prefer different shapes, not just square. It’s depressing to walk into after school.”

On balance however, the other young people interviewed stated that the house was okay.

One staff member commented that the house had a particularly difficult dynamic due to the residents. Another member of staff commented that the house had a homely feel and that this has benefited relationships.

“It’s building up relationships and working on the relationships and that’s what the staff have gained just now and they have got good relationships with the kids here. I think because it’s more homely, it’s a more normal feeling.”

That the house was not finished when the young people arrived has affected the potential success of the home. In addition, staff suggested that the lack of notice and preparation for the relocation had a negative impact (4), and created an unhappy atmosphere from the start. In particular, where young people were separated from those they were living with in the previous house. The sudden move and severing of these ties was considered upsetting for young people and referred to by one member of staff as being like a bereavement.

Doors were still being fitted when the residents moved in and the TVs were not properly installed. For almost a year young people did not have TV reception in the sitting room. Staff suggested that this has contributed to the young people not using the rooms in the evening (2).

Advice to Designers

Two of the young people interviewed commented that they liked the size of the house.

One young person had strong views on design issues, requesting a change of colour scheme, different coloured sofas, a gas cooker and a larger fridge freezer.

One young person requested shelves for the sitting rooms and pictures on the walls. A fireplace with a real coal fire was also mentioned although this young person also commented that it would not be possible due to safety regulations.

One young person said that the only things they would keep in the house were the TVs.

Staff did not like the colour scheme (5), describing it as dreary, horrible and lacking warmth. Two members of staff considered the house to be homely; two did not. One staff member suggested that a fireplace would make the sitting room more homely, although recognised that this was unlikely due to fire regulations.

Another staff member preferred softer shapes, as opposed to the square edges of some of the furniture.

Staff advocated that designers engage in more consultation, both with young people (3) and with residential workers (1) who can advise on what works and what does not.

One staff member felt that the young people did not have respect for their environment as they had not been involved in selecting any of the furniture or furnishings:

“They certainly didn’t have any respect for that stuff that was here before we came.”

Another commented that items that have been purchased since the young people moved in have not been damaged or vandalised in any way. This is a specific reference to a pair of ornamental cats that were bought by staff to give a more homely atmosphere.

Other general issues raised by staff concerned the lack of storage (7) in the house, unsuitable lighting (2) in the hallway upstairs and a problem with maintenance in the house (3).

4.3.2 Case Study: House B

Background Information

This house is a two-storey new build property built by a private developer and designed in similar architectural style to surrounding houses on the estate. Only its size differentiates it from a typical domestic residence. The house is situated on the edge of a housing estate close to a local secondary school and with good transport links. The unit has been open for over a year.



The interior of the house was completed before interior design consultants, Graven Images, were commissioned by South Lanarkshire Council. However, it is one of the first new build properties within the South

Lanarkshire portfolio to adhere to the new strategy for smaller residential units for children that are less institutional and more homely. It has been included in the research as a comparison and to explore some of the key differences that are evident in other houses where a professional design team are responsible for the interiors.

The interior design of the house, including the selection of furniture and furnishings was the responsibility of senior care staff and senior staff at the home, none of whom are professional interior designers.

The house has seven bedrooms, one of which can be used as a twin room, should there be siblings in the house. The staff and young people were re-housed from two homes each accommodating four young people.

Architecture and Exterior of the House

“I was gobsmacked when I came. What a beautiful place. The furnishings, garden, surrounding area. I went to do shifts in other units and was shocked at the standards kids had to live in. This is the first care home I’ve worked in so to see other older units was a shock.”

Half of the twelve staff interviewed stated that they liked the size of the house, although one, who had worked in both larger and smaller units, felt the house was too big. One staff member commented on the need to balance a domestic feel with the functional requirements of a children’s unit:

“You’ve got two opposing needs and wishes and wants; you need and you want to minimise how far out we stand out from our neighbours but

you've also got to run as a children's unit bound by regulations, and I think we've achieved it as well as possibly expected."

Five staff members commented that having bedrooms upstairs and downstairs made it difficult to monitor young people. This was exacerbated by the double fire doors that acted as soundproofing.

Two staff stated that they felt the house was an improvement on the previous units they had worked in. One staff member commented that it was a more pleasant working environment.

A key feature was that each young person had their own room, giving them their own space and privacy.

The lack of robustness of the materials in the building was raised by three staff. They felt some of the materials used, such as plasterboard on the walls, were unable to withstand abuse from young people, thereby having a maintenance and cost implication.

The stairwell was commented on by two staff who thought that it looked unattractive and clinical. There was a concern that there was no fire exit upstairs and, having recently experienced a fire in the house, one member of staff expressed genuine fears for the safety of the young people should a fire occur again.

When asked about the garden, seven out of twelve respondents gave a negative response. Two staff members described it as being like a senior citizen's garden, two as a waste of money and one staff member said it was a big disappointment as it did not serve the needs of the young people. Only one staff member commented favourably on the garden, saying that they thought it was an asset.

Specific comments relating to the interior design of the house are summarised below.

Interior Design: Young People and Staff's Perspectives

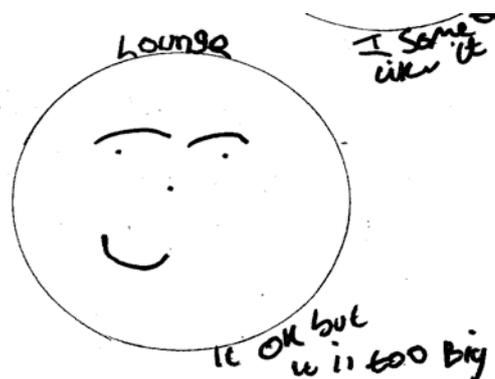
This case study focuses on feedback from young people and staff regarding four main parts of the house: the sitting room, the dining kitchen, the bedrooms, and bathrooms.

Sitting Room

Young people were divided on whether or not they liked the sitting room. Of the four who commented, two liked the room and thought it was stylish, comfortable and made them feel relaxed, one thought it was okay although too big and made them feel bored, and one thought it was old-fashioned and boring and made them frustrated.



Three out of five young people thought that the room was too big, while staff liked the size of the sitting room. Four members of staff commented positively about the sitting room, stating, among other things, that it was well designed and had good space.



5. In the living room I don't like pictures because
(Box 2 or 3) it looks old and it is dull.
(Box 4 or 5)

"The living room itself is fine; it's perfectly adequate, it's designed well. The layout's good and the furnishings in it are absolutely appropriate."

Specific interior features mentioned in the sitting room include the sofa, which three out of four young people liked because it was comfortable. One

staff member commented that the loose cushions on the sofa got used as missiles by the young people. One young person confirmed this and commented that they liked the sitting room because:

"It's big. It's good for having pillow fights."

One young person did not like the sofa because they sank into it, which made them fall asleep.

Most other features, including curtains, sideboard, pictures on the wall and colour scheme were disliked by the young people. Two out of four of the young people who commented disliked the pictures that were up on the sitting room wall, describing them as dull, boring and for old fogies. One young person liked the pictures of the residents and staff that were on the wall. These were photographs of the young people in fancy dress and on holiday. The photographs were small in size and few in number.

Dining Kitchen

Young people did not comment to any great extent on the dining kitchen. One young person liked it and two thought it was okay. Two young people thought that the table was not large enough for everyone to sit around it. One young person thought that the table was ugly and another commented that the furniture in the room was dull and hideous. One young person felt that the dining table was too big, in contrast with the views of

staff. One young person liked the colour scheme in the dining kitchen.

The majority of staff (7) thought that the dining kitchen worked well. They said that there was enough room to work and still be able to chat with the young people. Staff mentioned that the young people congregated in the kitchen and that it was the hub of the house. In the summer the patio doors can be opened out onto the garden.

Two members of staff commented that the dining table was a good size, that young people could sit around it comfortably and that it brought people together. One member of staff liked the colour scheme in the room.



The quality of finish in the dining kitchen was described as excessively poor by one staff member. They mentioned that things [not specified] were constantly being broken or damaged and that while these items might be suitable for a domestic house, they were unsuitable for a children's unit due to the increased wear and tear.

Bathrooms

Five young people commented that they did not like the bathrooms: four suggested that they were too small and felt crowded, another that it had equipment for a disabled person. One young person thought the room looked dull. Only one young person said that they liked the bathrooms because the one they were referring to was handy for her room and that it made her feel relaxed.



Bathrooms were seldom mentioned by staff, with only one staff member commenting that they were fine.

Bedrooms

The young people gave a mixed response to their bedrooms. Three of them thought that their room was comfortable and cosy. Of the two who did not like their bedrooms, one thought it was too big, the other too small. Two young people commented that they did not like their beds because they were small and uncomfortable.

Other features that individual young people liked about their bedrooms included the colour scheme (3), beanbag (1), the view (1) and the posters (2) they had on their walls. Dislikes included the carpet (2), chairs (1), and drawers (1). One young person commented that it was possible to see into his room from outside.



3. In the bedroom I like the view because it looks
(Box 2 or 3) on it and it is settling
everything (Box 4 or 5)

“All the bedrooms are a good size and everybody enjoys their bedroom.”

Overall, staff commented positively on the bedrooms (6).

Main criticisms were that the bedrooms should be more personal to make them more homely (1). Another suggested that the beds were too low down for the young people. One suggested that the dressing tables in each of the bedrooms were not appropriate for some of the residents, in particular a 17-year-old male resident.

Summary of the Interior Design of the House

The main comments from staff related to architectural features of the house and the move to a larger unit.

Staff (3) commented that it was beneficial for young people to have their own room: a personal and private space. One down side identified was that young people could stay in their room should they want to and, therefore, be isolated.

Six staff commented that relationships among young people and between young people and staff had improved as, among other things, they were not on top of each other and had much more space than they had previously, that it was a less stressful environment, and that staff had more time with the young people.

Conversely, three staff felt that relationships had deteriorated. Reasons offered were that the bigger unit hampered relations as it was more difficult to organise trips and activities for the young people with larger numbers. They also suggested that the increase in numbers had diluted relations between staff and young people.

In terms of the interior design, one staff member commented that the process was inefficient with too many people involved in making decisions about colour schemes and purchasing of furniture:

“This is the only one of the new houses that the designer hasn’t been extensively involved in. For all there were too many people involved in purchasing the furniture and choosing the colour schemes and having an idea how the finished product should look, all the people that were responsible for it were regular people that lived in regular houses who had a vision of this space looking similar to the private space that is their house.”

One member of staff suggested that those involved in furnishing the home did the best they could at the time and that they learned from the process:

“I don’t know if it could [be improved] to be honest...It’s a bit of an unknown quantity and some people have a clearer vision than others about how things will be or what would work. I think opportunities are there but now that they have some houses open then I would hope that they would look at them. I have to stress that the advantages far, far outweigh any negative aspects

but hope that any comments are taken on board.”

Advice to Designers

Young people asked for beanbags in their bedrooms, bigger bathrooms with blinds on the windows, carpets throughout the house, a change of colour scheme and to replace the art on the walls.

One young person advised that the walls were too thin and thus privacy was compromised.

One member of staff advised that more storage space was required, that the building should be more robust (3), an adequate heating system be installed (3), and that a garden be provided that is suitable for young people to play (7).

Staff (5) also recommended that young people be consulted in order to make the house more homely and personal.

One staff member advised that the process of moving to a new house should be project managed by a key contact, who would liaise with staff and young people to ensure a smooth transition from one unit to another and to deal with any snagging issues.

4.3.3 Case Study: House C

Background Information

This house is a refurbished, two-storey Victorian villa situated 10 minutes from a town centre. The house is detached and is set just off a main road with limited parking to the front and side of the building. It has been occupied since November 2003.

This was one of the first units in South Lanarkshire to have input from Graven Images, the interior design consultants. The interior features in the hallway, bedrooms and upstairs study had already been finalised through the conventional interior selection process. However, it was considered that improvements were necessary, particularly within the communal spaces, to make the house seem more homely and less like a workplace. Graven Images specified interior elements of the sitting room, dining kitchen and bathrooms. The designers did not have free rein as some of the interior features in these spaces were fixed, for example the kitchen units and the carpet in the sitting room.

The staff and young people were relocated from a combination of larger and smaller units. These ranged from traditional-style units accommodating up to 17 young people to smaller units housing four young people. House C has six bedrooms that can accommodate up



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to seven young people, should there be siblings in the house, and is indicative of the general trend towards smaller, more domestic scale homes.

Architecture and Exterior of the House

“Initial impression is wow, what a beautiful building.”

“It fits in, so much so, that three people have stopped me at the gate when I’ve gone out and they had no idea what the building was. They thought this was just a house and it’s a family that’s moved in.”

Five staff considered that, architecturally, the house blended in with the other buildings in the locale, which is often important for acceptance by and integration into the local community. However, one staff member did comment that the non-domestic lighting outside the house distinguished it from other properties, drawing attention to the fact that it is a care home.

“Everything is absolutely fine except for the ridiculous lighting we have outside that just lights us up from dusk ‘til dawn, to say we’re here. It looks like a council car park.”

One drawback of the site of the house noted by a member of staff is that due to its close proximity to the road, curious passers-by often look into the kitchen or sitting room situated at the front of the house, which feels like sitting: “...in a goldfish bowl”.

In contrast to other houses, the garden area did not receive much comment although one member of staff complained that there was no room for children to play at the front of the house. Parking was considered inadequate. However, one of the telltale signs of a children’s residential home is the number of cars parked outside.

Unlike new build properties that are designed on a more contemporary domestic scale, the space available in this converted Victorian villa is considered a main feature of the house.

Both staff (6) and young people (2) enjoyed the space, and the size of the rooms and high ceilings were particular features that were mentioned (despite the inconvenience involved in changing a light bulb or testing the smoke alarms).

Two staff members mentioned the lack of space in the house, remarking that there was not enough communal space or space for storage.

The quality of building materials is superior to those used in new builds. The robust materials make the house better equipped to handle wear and tear than in the new houses. This is important in terms of maintenance as looked after young people can be prone to kicking and punching walls and doors. Less robust materials require more frequent repair thereby incurring more maintenance costs.

Staff (5) commented positively on the provision of individual bedrooms for young people and said that they were spacious.

Four members of staff remarked that the house was beautiful.

Interior Design: Young People and Staff’s Perspectives

This case study focuses on feedback from young people and staff regarding three main parts of the house with input from the design consultants: the sitting room, dining kitchen, and bathrooms.

Sitting Room

Graven Images selected the furniture and furnishings, curtains, wallpaper and paint and other features such as fabric panels on one of the walls, lighting, mirrors and bookshelf.



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All young people liked the sitting room stating that it was modern and made them feel happy, chilled, busy, and that they enjoyed the space.

All young people liked the sofa, though one staff member commented negatively on its cost.

Two staff commented that the room looked great and that the furnishings in the room were of high quality. One staff member suggested that the

room looked sterile and 'not-lived in' as it was always tidy.

The specific design features that generated the most comment were the mirror, the light shade and light boxes on the wall. A large wooden-framed mirror is set high on the wall to reflect light into the room.

"And I wouldn't like to guess how much the couches were."

Although liked by both staff and young people, four staff members commented that the mirror is not practical as it is too high for young people to see themselves in. Two members of staff added that this resulted in young people standing on the sofas in order to see themselves in the mirror.



2. In the living room I like couch because it looks
(Box 2 or 3) soft and it is patterned.
(Box 4 or 5)

The chandelier light shade and the wall-mounted light box were chosen by the designers as they offered the opportunity to personalise the space, an important factor in creating a homely environment.

The light shade comprises metal rods with paper messages attached to the end. The intention was that young people would be able to replace these with messages, poems and drawings of their own. One young person thought this was a good idea until the personalised messages were removed:

“It [the light shade] was a beast [great] because I had hundreds of mentions up on it but they [staff] took them down.”

One staff member thought that the contrast between the original features of the ceiling and the modern light looked odd:

“Some of the décor ideas are just totally out of whack. Have you seen the light in the sitting room against the ceiling that’s there? You’ve got something out of the 25th century on something that’s from the 18th century. It’s just not right.”

The light boxes in the sitting room and the dining kitchen were mentioned by several young people (5). One young person thought they would work better if the slides in the light boxes were of the house or of residents themselves.

One member of staff mentioned the light box and stated that the slides were being destroyed because the pictures in them were not of the young people or personal to them.

The Bookworm bookshelf was liked by two out of the three young people who commented on it. The size and snaking shape were appealing. Two members of staff also commented favourably on the Bookworm.

One member of staff did express concern about maintaining the standard of fabrics and furnishings. The cost of furnishings such as the light shade, sofa, and Hessian wall covering were commented upon (2).

The Hessian wall covering was mentioned by a member of maintenance staff as they thought it might be difficult to replace if damaged. To date, the wallpaper remains intact and there has been no need for repair.

Other furnishings such as the TV unit (1), curtains (1), and fabric panels (2) were also referred to, to a lesser extent.

The colour scheme in the sitting room was not mentioned by staff or young people.

Two of the four young people commented that they liked to have plants in the room.

Dining Kitchen

Graven Images were responsible for specifying the dining table and chairs, floor and wall tiles, flooring, and the lighting.

Some young people (2) and staff (5) liked the dining kitchen. Young people liked the size and that it was “smart” and “cool”. They suggested it was a room that made them happy and where you could talk to staff.

One of them commented that the room made them feel annoyed and that he disliked the things in it, although he liked the dining table.

Of the staff who liked the dining kitchen (5), two commented that it looked good but was not very practical.



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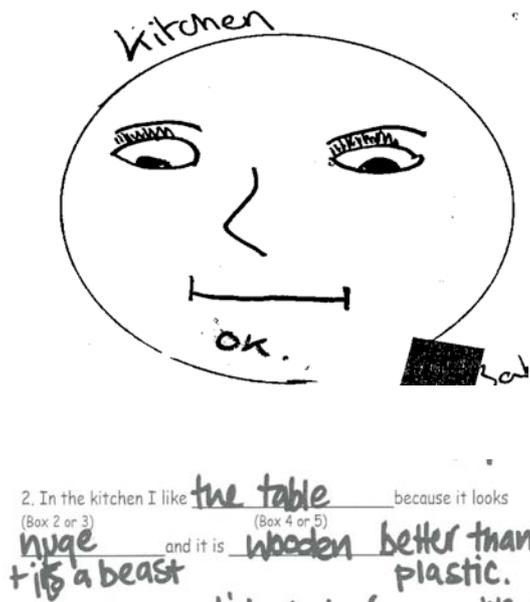
Staff (3) noted that the room was well laid out and looked fantastic. A practical issue mentioned by several staff was that work surfaces were too shallow and that the gap between worktops and the bottom of wall units needs to be higher to use certain cooking equipment. These features were outside the remit of the design consultants.

The main points raised concerned the dining table and lighting. The table is larger than standard dining tables and was specially commissioned to comfortably accommodate all residents and staff, and was intended to create a ‘family’ atmosphere. One of the features of the table is a series of drawers running along each side that young people can use to store books, homework and personal items.

Young people liked the size of the table (2) and that it was wooden rather than plastic (1). Two stated that it was a “beast” [great].

One staff member remarked that the table worked really well and another said that it was often used by young people.

The light shade and the light box raised negative comments from three out of four of the young people. Personalising these items, as was intended by the designers when they specified them for the dining kitchen and sitting room, might create a different reaction.



“The kitchen works well in terms of being the hub of the house because it’s got that huge table and that’s where most people congregate.”

Bathrooms

Graven Images introduced materials and fittings that are not standard in care homes. High quality sinks, showers, baths and accessories were specified. Contemporary tiling was used on the floor and on the walls. The images below (not taken by the research team) show the difference in approach.

Before Graven Images' Modifications



After Graven Images' Modifications



© Renzo Mazzolini Photography 2005

Young people had their favourite bathrooms and tended to comment on their preference for a bath (1) or shower (3), and the colour scheme. Two young people said they liked the size of the bathrooms, and commented that they made them feel calm and chilled. One young person commented that due to a lack of natural light, one of the bathrooms was spooky.

Other Rooms

Several of the rooms in this house had already been finalised and had no design input from the design consultants. Staff and young people commented on some of these spaces.

Two of the young people commented on the pink colour scheme in the hall, saying it was “a disgrace”.

In the hallway, one staff member commented that the colour of the walls and the bordered carpet were more fitting to a hotel than a house, thereby giving an immediate impression that this is not a ‘home’.

All but one of the young people liked their bedrooms although one young person commented that their room was smaller than the others and that there was no view.

Staff acknowledged the large size of the bedrooms (5) but noted various disadvantages. One commented that they had an empty feel to them; another suggested that they looked sparse and could be improved with more furniture; and another was concerned with the lack of storage.

Summary of the Interior Design of the House

The overall impression from staff at House C was that the house looked great even if it was not to their own taste (5). There were differences of opinion regarding how appropriate the interior environment was for young people and the cost of items was raised.

“It’s just not right; there’s no homely feeling about the sitting room because everything’s been so expensive and so carefully placed by a design team who, with the very best intentions, are looking for really good furniture for young people. What they really needed to do was major research into what it’s like to be a teenager these days and live in group settings.”

The suggestions that the house was something of a ‘show-house’ was noted by staff who thought the house did not look lived in (2).

Others however, suggested that the modern design approach had a positive effect on the young people, saying that they respected their environment and that it had a positive effect on their self-esteem (2).

“The young people in this unit, I would say, have a great respect for their living environment, although there’s staff here who would not necessarily agree with that.”

“I think, actually having somewhere that looks normal, that is well furnished, that just looks like a normal house has such impact on their self-esteem and how they feel about their living environment. It’s definitely an improvement on other units, other units who have not yet went through the change.”

Some staff members expressed concern that the house raised expectations beyond what could reasonably be achieved by young people or staff (2).

One staff member commented that one young person was too embarrassed to bring their mother into the house because she could not compete with the standard of the interior environment.

There is a balance that needs to be reached between providing a quality living environment and raising aspirations, and not intimidating young people.

Advice to Designers

Staff suggested that more storage is necessary both for administrative purposes and for young people's personal belongings (4).

Consultation with staff and young people was suggested (4), particularly to identify elements that work and those that do not. Suggestions included comments about the functional aspects of the kitchen worktops and another bath. One member of staff commented, the design of the interior environment that staff select might be very different from what young people would like, and young people often might not be able to articulate what

they would like – this is the role of the design consultants:

“The redesign of the lounge: we had some furnishings that we were planning on getting. Graven Images came in and did a fantastic design which, maybe because I'm a bit older, I wasn't really warming to it very quickly. But, as I see it develop...adults wouldn't have chosen this; this is the stuff that children would have wanted. Whether they would have chosen it or not I don't know but they like it, it's unusual. I've never seen anything like it.”

4.3.4 Case Study: House D

Background Information

This house is a new build property situated in an affluent residential area with easy access to the town centre and five minutes walk from the train station. It is a two-storey detached property and is set just back from the main road. A small garden between the house and pavement provides limited privacy from passers by. The house has been occupied since 2004.



Graven Images had a broad remit for the interior design of the space including furniture and furnishings for the sitting room, dining kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms, quiet room, studies and utility room.

The young people and staff had been relocated from larger, traditional-style units accommodating up to 18 young people. The house has seven bedrooms that can accommodate up to eight young people should there be a sibling group in the house.

Architecture and Exterior of the House

The architectural style of the house is notably different from the surrounding properties, which are, in the main, Victorian sandstone villas and modern housing. Seven of the staff interviewed thought that the unit looked good. Two commented that it 'stuck out'.

The pebble dash exterior in particular was highlighted by a member of staff who commented that as the building was being constructed staff and young people were excited about the property until the exterior finish was applied:

“[When they applied] the beautiful sandstone facing boards, we thought oooh, this is going to be absolutely gorgeous. Then when they put on the pebble dash one of the kids said, “Aye, it’s a fucking children’s unit.””

The lack of space for young people to play was commented on by several staff. Although the house has a large garden area to the back, four members of staff considered it to be unsuitable for the needs of young people. Their reasons included that there was nowhere for children to play and that it was dangerous to play football due to the proximity of the house to the garden. However, discussions have taken place regarding a possible extension to the

house and a more appropriate redesign of the garden area.

Three members of staff commented that the interior layout of the house was poor. Having bedrooms over two floors combined with the heavy fire doors presented problems for staff in terms of monitoring (10). Three staff also commented that the house was dark and did not get sufficient sunlight and that the air flow within the space was poor (3). The dining kitchen was a notable exception (9) and was described as bright and airy.

Specific comments relating to the interior design of the house are summarised below.

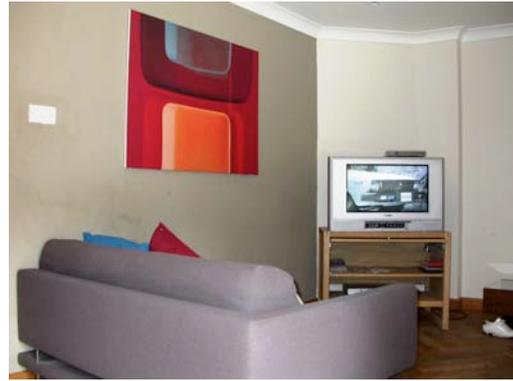
Interior Design: Young People and Staff's Perspectives

This case study focuses on feedback from young people and staff regarding four main parts of the house with input from the design consultants: the sitting rooms, the dining kitchen, the bedrooms, and bathrooms.

Sitting Room

Graven Images selected the seating, tables, flooring, blinds and colour scheme for the sitting room.

Two young people commented on the colour scheme being dull, even for those who liked the room. One staff member considered the sitting room to be a pleasant room to be in on a nice day.



The colour scheme in the sitting room was described as dull and unfriendly by two members of staff. They also commented that the matt finish made it difficult to clean the walls, resulting in them looking grubby. Staff did recognise that the architecture of the house (in terms of the positioning of the rooms and a lack of windows) was a major contributor to the sitting room feeling dull as there was little natural light.



The majority of staff (7) did not like the sitting room interior. Much of the furniture was considered to be impractical. The fabric on sofas and chairs was easily marked and looked shabby and dirty after just one year. The low storage units and coffee table were thought to be impractical as

they were too low down and children could not use them for homework and would even step on them.

Three out of four young people liked the room and thought that it looked funky, was comfortable and made them feel relaxed, while one thought it was like being “in jail”. Two out of four young people who commented liked the sofas saying they were cool. Of the two who did not like them, one remarked that they were plain and dull and that the colour was boring.

Two young people did not like the swivel chair; one because of the aesthetics: dull colour; the other because of its function: it was uncomfortable. One young person liked the chair but did not explain why.

The flooring prompted few responses and a mixed reply from one young person who stated that he liked that it was wooden, but later said he did not like it. Staff (2) commented that the wooden flooring in the sitting room looked dirty. The flooring had not been sealed.

Other features mentioned individually by young people were the lamps and tables, all of which they liked.

Dining Kitchen

Graven Images were responsible for the furniture and colour scheme in the dining kitchen.



All of the young people who participated liked the dining kitchen and suggested it made them feel happy, that it was a funky room and one young person mentioned that he liked it because it made him feel posh.

The room seemed to work well. Nine staff interviewed commented positively on the dining kitchen. One staff member stated that it was the hub of the house. Staff liked the dining kitchen because they could chat with young people while they worked (2), and there was sufficient space not to feel overcrowded.

One staff member suggested that an additional kitchen on a smaller scale would be useful for young people to develop independent living skills under supervision to prepare them for leaving care.



Staff did not comment to any great extent on specific furnishings in the dining kitchen. Two staff members remarked that the new kitchen table was a good size and one staff member thought the sharp edges on the sideboard were dangerous. Four members of staff commented that the red wall was a welcome flash of colour in the house.

6. In the kitchen I don't like dining table because
(Box 2 or 3) (Box 4 or 5)
 it looks boring and it is _____.

“It does feel homely. I think the fact that they’ve got a kitchen area where they all can sit and have their dinner.”

In the dining kitchen young people frequently mentioned the table, chairs, and cupboards. Two out of three of those who commented did not like the table stating that it was too plain and boring. One young person thought that it looked good and liked the size of it. Two out of three young people did not like the chairs and described them as hard, uncomfortable and not stylish.

Two out of four young people liked the cupboards although two others did not like the glass panelled cupboard stating that it did not match the rest of the kitchen units. Two out of three young people mentioned that they did not like the red wall because it looked odd, while another young person felt it looked funky and had an impact.

Bedrooms

The bedroom interiors selected by Graven Images included: colour scheme, carpet, a variety of furniture, and, in some bedrooms, fitted wardrobes.



4. In the bedroom I like light shades because it looks
(Box 2 or 3) (Box 4 or 5)
cool and it is pink + fashionable

“They [bedrooms] are a lot better than what we had previously. They’re nice and bright.”

All of the young people who contributed to the project liked their bedrooms and referred to their room as groovy, cool and making them feel at home.

Staff (4) remarked that, for most young people, their bedrooms had plenty of room and were nice and bright. One staff member liked that the bedroom doors had locks as this enabled young people freedom to come and go knowing that their possessions would be safe, although staff could gain access if required.

Among young people the most commonly mentioned item was the bed with three out of four stating it was comfortable. Two out of three liked the wardrobe due to its size and the fact that it was built in. Two members of staff suggested that the furniture was too heavy and not child-friendly. Two staff mentioned the cantilever unit in the young people's bedrooms, describing it as not robust enough and a health and safety hazard due to the sharp edges.

Two young people mentioned that they would like to change the wall colour in their bedrooms.

Other features that young people liked in their rooms were the chair as it was comfortable to sit on, the carpet which was comfortable to walk on, and the wall panel.

Two members of staff indicated that the window blinds did not offer

enough privacy and that curtains had now been hung in the bedrooms.

Bathrooms

The bathroom interiors selected by Graven Images included: blinds, paint, and shelving in one upstairs bathroom.



All of the young people liked the bathrooms, commenting that they were big, bright and colourful and that they felt calm and comfortable in them. The three young people who mentioned the shower liked it because it was modern and powerful. Two out of three young people who commented liked the bath and the sink.

Staff did not make particular comment on the bathrooms except that the upstairs toilet was in an odd-sized room and that this space could be better utilised. One staff member commented that the space in the bathrooms in general was good.

Other features of the bathroom that individual young people liked were the mirror, tiles and toilet.

Summary of the Interior Design of the House

A recurring comment on the interior of the house related to the colour scheme. Young people (5) and staff (5) felt that it was dull, with the red wall in the kitchen prompting the only consistent positive response.

In general, commentary about design aspects of the house centred on architectural rather than the interior design.

Some staff (4) did mention that relationships with young people had improved. The reasons for this were a combination of moving to a smaller unit and having more time available to spend with young people.

The design of the house was acknowledged as having importance to young people's experience of care. One staff member suggested that:

"We need to take on board that they are very demanding children and we need to help these kids as much as we possibly can and do the very best we can by them and it's not just us, it's the building that contributes to that too. Probably more than we actually realise."

Another member of staff suggested that young people do care about their accommodation:

"The kids do take some pride in the building."

Advice to Designers

When asked what recommendations they would make to the designers of future care homes for children, five staff focussed on architectural issues rather than interior aspects.

One member of staff suggested that bedrooms be located on one floor for ease of monitoring. Three thought that an independent flat in the house would allow older young people to develop independent living skills and help prepare them for leaving care.

Many staff (5) felt that there should be more consultation both with staff and young people. One staff member felt this might generate a wider variety of ideas for the interior while another felt it would produce a result that was better value for money.

Three staff members recommended that the house be finished before the young people move in and that the relocation process be better organised to minimise disruption for the young people.

One staff member said that more windows were needed to provide natural daylight, as the house was gloomy. Another suggested that exterior doors be opened from outside as well as inside. This house has five potential exits downstairs; however, once the doors are shut they cannot be opened from the outside.

4.4 Emerging Themes from the Post-occupancy Evaluation

4.4.1 Introduction

This section identifies the key themes relating to design emerging from the post-occupancy evaluation of the four children's homes. The themes are arranged under three broad headings:

1. Design Issues
2. General Issues that Affect Design
3. Relationships

4.4.2 Design Issues

The key themes regarding the design of rooms identified in the research relate broadly to three categories: personalising space, aesthetics and functionality.

A contrast in focus of response between young people and staff was apparent throughout the research. In particular, young people were more descriptive commenting on aesthetics, while staff opinions tended to focus on functionality. The dichotomy of style versus function is represented throughout by the views and opinions of the young people and staff. In addition, the design aspirations of staff were notably lower than those of the young people who welcomed and accepted the modern design approach.

Some suggestions by staff were very different to comments by children and young people. This was true of personalising bedrooms and the suitability of furniture in the sitting room in particular. What staff considered appropriate for a residential care home and what young people liked or chose to comment upon often differed. Several staff commented that furniture in the houses was impractical for young people while others thought it helped raise aspirations. Some staff suggested that having a quality living environment did impact on young people's self-esteem and helped to raise their aspirations. One staff member commented:

"The young people in this house, I would say, have a great respect for their living environment, although there're staff here who would not necessarily agree with that. But my experience, coming from other houses, is that they might have damaged items when they were annoyed or upset but, at the end of day, I see these young people filling the dishwasher. I see these young people doing bits and pieces that they wouldn't necessarily normally do... I think, just actually having somewhere that looks normal, that is well furnished, that just looks like a normal house has such an impact on their self-esteem and how they feel about their living environment. It's definitely

an improvement on other houses, other houses that have not yet gone through the change.”

Another suggested that:

“I think some of them appreciate it more because they’ve never really had such a nice house to live in.”

Other staff considered the interior design of the houses to be expensive and impractical for young people in care. In the main, comments centred around the quality of furniture: some staff considered the furnishings to be impractical because they are beyond what young people have experience of and what they would possibly be able to attain in later life. In one case, one young person was embarrassed to bring their parent to the house. One staff member commented:

“I don’t think the furniture is totally practical for young people that are coming into care. The majority of them come from backgrounds that it’s not Habitat furniture or whatever and I think they’ve spent a huge expense to put furniture in here that is totally not suitable for the kids.”

It should be noted that staff comments on cost were not based on fact but perception of cost or on retail rather than professional procurement routes. As mentioned previously, there was little difference in the cost of the interior furnishings of the houses where professional design consultants were involved. Of the five houses for which budgetary information on interior design was available, two were slightly less expensive than when the interiors were chosen by senior social work staff.

During an interview with Camila Batmangheldj, Founder of Kids Company, she suggested that while furniture and fittings should be chosen to maximise safety, that they should not be standardised, be of a variety of styles, and of high quality.

Other differences between staff opinions included the colour scheme throughout the house. Some staff considered colours neutral and calming while others suggested they were drab and dull. In House A, many staff commented that the furniture was too heavy, had sharp edges and was not child-friendly. However, staff also suggested that furniture had to be more robust to be able to cope with occasional misuse.

Communal Areas

Personalising Space

Personalising space is important in taking ownership and thus respecting the environment. It is therefore an important determinant in the success of the design.

In one house, the interior design consultants selected light shades in the sitting room and dining kitchen to allow young people to personalise the space and create a sense of ownership over communal rooms. The light shades are designed to allow the attachment of personal drawings and writing. Similarly, light boxes used in the sitting room and dining kitchen in the same house were installed to allow young people to display their own personal slides. Young people commented that they liked the light shade when it contained their own work but disliked it once their own material had been removed. The light boxes did not contain slides of the young people and therefore there was no personal connection with the images displayed. Two young people referred to them as boring and pointless.

Staff commented that, with regard to the light shade, practical issues take priority. Young people had wanted to attach inserts that included abusive writing or content that was offensive to other residents and so the practice was stopped. The attitude of staff has, therefore, prohibited the use of these elements as tools to personalise space. Another approach would be for staff to lay down ground rules for what is acceptable in terms of young people's messages. However, to date the light shades and the light boxes are not fulfilling their intended function as the young people have no connection with the images displayed.

Sitting Room

In general, young people liked how the sitting rooms looked, describing them as snazzy, nice and funky.

Aesthetics

When asked what they liked and disliked about the interior design, the main items that received comment were the colour scheme, the sofas and accessories such as plants. Many young people liked the sofas in the houses where the interior consultants had selected furnishings. Those who disliked them commented mainly on changing the colour and pattern. Staff suggested that the colour schemes in the houses were not warm and inviting, were depressing and not child-friendly.

Several young people, in two houses, referred to the plants and flowers. In one house, the following exchange ensued:

- Interviewee 1: It's [plant] dead. We've had that for...can you not tell?
Interviewee 2: It's a beast [good].
Interviewee 1: See when we first got it, it used to be a beast but it's dead.
Interviewee 2: It's still a beast man.
Interviewer: How about the others?
Interviewee 1: They're all dead as well. Every plant in here is dying. It's not a place to stay for a plant. I like plants but I don't have time for them.

One member of staff in this house, however, thought that young people were not interested in plants and commented:

"There's been a lot of money spent on plants but the kids don't want plants."

Other room accessories mentioned included pictures in one house that were described as: "...old fogies' pictures." In another house, fabric wall panels were described as: "...bits of sofa on the walls."

Items that were personal to the young people in the living room were few. However, personal photographs in one of the sitting rooms brought this response:

"Like them (photographs) because they are of us."

Some young people described features that were clean or dirty. In one house, the unsightly appearance of the scratched wooden floor in the sitting room was commented on by staff as well as one young person who wrote in their workbook:

7. In the living room I don't like the floor because
(Box 2 or 3) (Box 4 or 5)
it looks Dirty and it is stupid.

One young person, when asked generally about what makes them not like a place in an early workshop, responded:

What makes you sick of the sight of it?
Dirty, Black, morit,

Indeed, during the interview with Camila Batmangheldjh, she suggested that high standards of cleanliness are vital and that the atmosphere within a children's home is often calmer as a result.

Young people frequently mentioned the electrical equipment in the sitting rooms and in their bedrooms. The aesthetics of the items were important in communal rooms and young people commented that they liked certain items because they were modern and cool and that TVs had good quality pictures.

Functionality

Staff tended to comment on functional aspects of the sitting room. The wall-mounted mirror in one house was commented on by several staff who suggested it was impractical as young people had to stand on the sofa to see themselves in it. Several staff suggested that the sitting room furniture was, in general, inappropriate for a children's home. This included comments suggesting sofas were too big, and that the light shade and light box mentioned previously were not practical.

Staff commented that certain items like tiles or walls were difficult to clean and that the wooden flooring in the sitting room, mentioned previously, did not look clean because it had not been sealed and was badly marked.

Dining Kitchen

On the whole, both young people and staff liked the dining kitchens. At times the room was referred to as the hub of the house and a place where young people and staff talk and interact.

Aesthetics

Features mentioned by young people ranged from liking the style and material of cupboards to disliking the colour of the cooker. There was little consistency in the frequency with which features were mentioned. One exception was a red wall in the dining area of one house that elicited comments from both young people and staff. One young person thought it had impact; another thought it looked odd. This was the only aesthetic quality commented on by staff. As with young people, reactions were mixed: some staff thought it was colourful and worked well, another did not like it.

Functionality

Staff in three of the houses suggested that the dining kitchen was a room used by both young people and staff and that staff could work while being able to engage with young people.

Functional aspects of the dining kitchen seemed of less importance to young people than to staff. One young person mentioned that the kitchen table in one house was not large enough for everyone to sit at and that the cooker was difficult to operate. Both of these points were also raised by staff in the house. In the other houses, the kitchen table was mentioned as ideal and good for sitting talking to young people.

In one house, the layout of the kitchen was described as dangerous and not designed with young people in mind. In another, the narrow depth of worktops was considered impractical. In three of the houses kitchen storage was considered insufficient.

“The size of the kitchen is a fair size but I feel they could do with more, maybe double the width of the units and worktops and maybe doing away with the double doors, and putting the worktops right round. Even taking away the big pull out cupboard and putting a bigger fridge and a freezer in there because we’re only working with two smaller fridges just now. I like the big dining table and chairs, it’s really nice.”

Bedroom

Most young people liked their rooms and commented on the look of the room: it looks colourful, it is spacious, looks stylish, big, cosy; and how comfortable it made them feel: it makes me feel chilled, happy, relaxed, at home.

Personalising Space

In the four houses that feature in this study, none of the bedrooms was designed for specific individuals, although some consultation was undertaken. This did not seem to affect young people’s sense of ownership over this personal space and, in response to questions about their room, some referred to “my room”. When specifically asked, they suggested that they would like to be involved in the interior design process for their bedrooms.

In relation to items within the bedrooms, young people tended to focus on technological items such as TVs, CD players and videos describing them as cool, compact and trendy. Comments around personal choice were more prevalent than aesthetic considerations as young people stated that with AV equipment in their

room they could watch what they want and listen to their music when they want. One young person commented on their soft toys and some mentioned liking their personal posters, photographs and artwork:

“I like it [bedroom] because of my graffiti tag that I made and my football posters and that’s it.”

On the whole, staff commented that bedrooms worked well. However, some suggested that they should be more personal and that there should be more variety. Young people did not make any specific reference to making their bedrooms more personal, although they did want to be more involved in the design process in general.

Aesthetics

In the main, young people commented on the colour of the room. This included the colour scheme of the room itself and individual items including the bed, and the carpet. The latter was generally disliked because the colour was dull. Few mentioned specific items of furniture or accessories.

Only two young people commented negatively about the colour scheme in their rooms. However, staff suggested that young people did not like the colours in their rooms, describing them as dreary and horrible.

Functionality

In terms of functionality, young people most often commented on their bed, several suggesting it was uncomfortable or too small.

Staff described some items of furniture as too heavy, not robust enough or difficult to clean. Demographic considerations were mentioned in two houses. In one, which had no design input from the interior design consultants, this related to the suitability of the furniture:

“In the bedrooms, all of them had dressing tables. What 17-year-old boy has a dressing table in their room?”

In another house, heavy bedroom doors were mentioned as difficult for younger children to open:

“I don’t think it’s been designed with the young people in mind, the very young people. Another bit to that is kids’ bedroom doors; if you’ve got somebody maybe seven and eight [years old] you’ve got difficulty opening them.”

Bathroom

Aesthetics

Young people focussed on the colour of the bathroom and several commented on the brightness and size of the space. Individual comments ranged from liking the shape of the sink to disliking the toilet because it was plastic.

Functionality

One young person did not like the bathroom because it had disabled adaptations, which made them feel “crowded”. Other practical considerations related to the showers. Some liked them because they were powerful, modern or adjustable to avoid getting their hair wet. Others commented that their showers were too small, that the water took too long to heat up, or that they preferred a bath.

Staff comments on bathrooms were few and were specific to functional qualities: that there was only one bath, that the toilet did not flush properly and, in one house, that the bathroom fixtures were of poor quality. It is important to note that staff use a designated toilet and are, perhaps, less able to comment on functional aspects of all of the bathrooms.

External Communal Areas

In three of the four houses, the garden area was referred to as unused, unsuitable for young people and two members of staff described one garden as being more suited to senior citizens. Young people did not comment on the garden.

The sunroom in two houses was mentioned by staff. In one house several staff commented positively that the room was ideal and that it worked well as a communal space when it was available and not used as a bedroom. The young person who occupied this makeshift bedroom commented:

1. I ^(Box 1) hate the bedroom because it looks ^(Box 2) big
it is a ^(Box 4) dull room to be in and it makes me feel ^(Box 5) boored.

In another house, one member of staff complained that the sunroom did not get any sun.

Problems with the heating system in two houses were mentioned. One member of staff commented that the house was too warm, and that coupled with a lack of ventilation, young people are:

“Picking up all the coughs, colds and bugs that are kept in this artificial environment.”

Materials

At times, the specific materials used in the houses were mentioned by young people and staff. In structural terms, staff commented that materials such as plasterboard for walls and standard doors in the three new build houses were not robust enough.

Staff in one house suggested that the use of glass panelling internally was good for observation and that it helped to monitor young people. On the other hand, some staff argued that this compromised privacy in the workspaces.

Several young people mentioned that they liked the furniture and fittings that were made of wood. These included the mirror in one sitting room, the shelf in one of the bathrooms, and the flooring in various rooms. One young person commented:

2. In the kitchen I like the table because it looks
(Box 2 or 3) (Box 4 or 5)
huge and it is wooden better than
fits a beast plastic.

Consultation

When asked, young people expressed an interest in and believed they should be involved in some form of consultation in the design of the interior, particularly in relation to their bedrooms. Staff also suggested that young people should have involvement in the decoration of their bedrooms.

One young person said:

“I’d ask for this living room to get painted the colours of the Jamaican flag, so every wall would be a Jamaican flag. I would ask my room to get painted with that Jamaican thing, that’d be better because I think they would let that.”

Some young people expressed disappointment that having given their opinions previously, their views were not taken on board:

Interviewer: Anything else about the bedroom then?

Interviewee 3: I don’t like the curtains we got. We got asked for curtains but we never got them, the curtains we wanted.

Interviewer: So did you pick curtains out and then never got them?

Interviewee 3: We never got the colour we wanted.

Interviewer: Who asked you what you wanted?

Interviewee 3: I don’t remember.

Interviewer: Was it people from here?

Interviewee 3: I can’t remember but we got asked what colour we wanted and I picked pink but I didn’t get it.

Interviewer: What do you think about that?

Interviewee 3: I’m not happy about it because what’s the point of asking us when we don’t get the colours we wanted.

Interviewer: Were you asked to give any input into the way the house was decorated?

Interviewee 4: Aye but it never happened. We chose all the colours for the rooms and all that and then the person that was making it work left. That’s all we know.

Interviewer: So all the suggestions you put forward didn’t go anywhere?

Interviewee 4: No, and the colours of our rooms were totally wrong again.

Interviewer: If you were asked to put your input in again do you think that would be a good thing or a bad thing?

Interviewee 4: It could be good and it could be bad.

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee 4: It could be good because we get to choose what we want in our rooms but it could be bad if the person leaves again.

4.4.3 General Issues that Affect Design

In addition to design themes outlined above, other general themes that affect design were evident. The issues identified are universal across the four houses in this pilot study and impinge on the effective operation of a house. They are, therefore, significant considerations for the design of a house to meet its objectives and work effectively.

Over-occupancy

Over-occupancy of houses often results in a communal space being used as a temporary bedroom. Reducing the amount of shared space in a house puts pressure on staff and young people. In particular, it limits the space that young people can use for social activities and quiet time, outside of their bedrooms. It can also lead to clashes between young people of different ages if, for example, older young people wish to listen to music or watch a television programme or DVD that is inappropriate for younger children in the house. For staff, the loss of communal space reduces the incidence of ad hoc meetings with young people and restricts areas where they can meet and talk. Over-occupancy can also lead to problems regarding lack of provision of suitable space for family contact. One member of staff suggested that because most looked after young people are traumatised in some way, there is a pressing need not to exceed optimal numbers for the house to be manageable and function well.

Workspace

Having an open access workspace or study elicited mixed reactions from staff. Some considered it to be a good idea and appropriate not to restrict access for young people as the house is their home. Others thought that the freedom to come and go resulted in too many distractions for staff and could compromise privacy. Glass panelling used in the design of the workspace or study can cause embarrassment for young people as friends and other visitors can easily see that it is a working space, which immediately differentiates the house from a typical domestic dwelling.

The visibility of the workspace or study is also an issue for consideration: should it be located close to the front door and easily seen, or discretely located near the back of the house? Challenging existing working practices and suggesting alternative approaches to the need for designated workspaces are also necessary.

Managing the Relocation

Managing the relocation is an important consideration for staff and young people settling in and taking ownership of a new house. Other factors that can help ensure a successful move are that houses should be fully furnished and all equipment functioning before entry.

There is a need effectively to manage the relocation of young people from one house to another. For some of the young people, the move to the new house was unsettling. The leaving party was held months in advance of the move, which was then delayed. The relocation took place with very short notice and for some was

considered like a bereavement as the young people and staff had been together for years. Visits to the new site could help with familiarisation, nurture ownership and allow young people to get used to the new house and therefore ease the settling-in process. Transition arrangements are being considered in Phase II of the development programme.

Educational Resources

Creating an educationally stimulating environment is a key objective in the development of the new homes. One young person commented that there were no books of interest to them in the house and suggested that maps would be good. They added that they have to use the library for books, but that it closes early. One young person commented that they did not like the PC in one of the houses as it was broken. In one house, a member of staff mentioned that the only computer with internet access was in an office which was generally locked and that on-line access was monitored. In the quiet room of one house, where a PC with internet access was to be installed, the room was being used as a temporary bedroom.

A number of staff commented on educational requirements in the house. The use of quiet rooms or studies as temporary bedrooms results in a loss of amenity to young people for studying or splitting off from other group members. It was suggested that high tables are more suitable than low tables for doing homework and studying. If the kitchen table is being used by young people for homework or study, this restricts the use of the room by others. Two staff members commented that due to a lack of appropriate space, some young people have resorted to doing homework in their bedrooms, which is not ideal.

4.4.4 Relationships

The research explored the effect of the design approaches on relationships within the houses. Staff and children were asked for their thoughts on how behaviour and relationships had been affected by the design of the houses. The data generated is categorised according to the type of relationship.

Relationships between Young People

The size of the house was considered to have an impact on young people's behaviour and relationships within the house. Smaller houses were considered more homely and allowed for developing independent living skills where young people could help out with domestic chores such as washing and cooking. In large houses, the industrial kitchen was not accessible to young people due to health and safety regulations.

The relative size of houses was considered to affect relationships. In one case, young people were relocated from a four-resident house to a larger eight-resident house. Staff noted that the children were not as close or protective towards each other as they had been in the smaller house, although they were not fighting as much. One member of staff thought that young people's attitudes had deteriorated as they were more constrained in a smaller house where there was less space or freedom to use space than before.

The size and amount of space in a house is therefore an important design consideration for good relations within the house. Staff commented that the size of the house combined with the number of young people who are resident can elicit different behaviour, particularly as peer pressure has a significant impact. Overcrowding can exacerbate issues and negatively impact on behaviour. It also affects access to facilities such as toilets where young people have to queue to use the bathroom in the morning, putting a strain on relations.

Providing each young person with their own bedroom was regarded as beneficial. The designation of personal space was considered to have a positive impact on behaviour: young people seemed happier and this helped to improve relationships between them.

Some staff commented that in larger houses, younger children are more likely to copy older children as they are less sheltered and have more exposure to different types of behaviour. However, some staff commented that it is easier to segregate residents in larger houses, particularly where there are age differences. This can help curb the 'Top Dog' syndrome. Smaller houses, on the other hand, can encourage a 'follow the leader' attitude. The move to a smaller house has had a significant effect on the behaviour of one child who was previously destructive, but has moderated since the relocation.

"Maybe it's because it's a smaller building and there're less young people here that he has to impress. Peer group pressure can be a terrible thing for these young people."

Relationships between Young People and Staff

Smaller houses are considered more homely and less institutional than larger houses, and have a more relaxed atmosphere, which allows for a better relationship to be nurtured between staff and young people. Relations between staff and young people are key to giving the house a homely feel. One of the benefits of larger spaces is that it is easier to chat on the hoof and find out how young people are coping in an informal way. New approaches to retaining ad hoc interactions within a smaller space are important.

Communal areas such as dining kitchens work well for informal chats and finding out what is going on with young people. This socialisation has an important function in identifying changes in behaviour and in getting a feel for what is happening in the lives of young people based on how well they are eating, how they are participating in discussions and socialising generally. Some staff who worked in very small houses (four-bedroom) suggested that this allowed for more one-to-one time with young people and more personal attention, making the situation more natural. Over-occupancy means less time with young people generally, which can be detrimental to relationships, affect behaviour, and negatively impact on educational activities and, therefore, achievement.

The location of a house can affect relationships between staff and young people. This can be an issue where staff are trying to calm or quieten young people so that neighbours or passers-by are not disturbed. If the house is detached and has privacy, staff are able to let the young people express themselves and focus on what they are saying rather than how they are saying it.

Relationships among Staff

The relocation to smaller houses has coincided with a change in the management structure within South Lanarkshire Council. Staff have had to adjust to new ways of working with a flatter management structure resulting in more responsibility, more accountability and more day-to-day input. For many staff this has led to greater job satisfaction. Others have found the adjustment more challenging and, in some cases, the move to the new house may have become a focus for dissatisfaction about the organisational restructuring.

Staff considered that they work better as a team in smaller houses and that this has improved relations between them. The working environment also has an impact. One member of staff commented that the new house is a more pleasant environment to work in and that:

“...I think the move, personally speaking, has had a positive effect on me. I don't think I would have stuck the job out much longer if I'd been working over at the old house.”

Summary

Many design and non-design issues can impact on the effective functioning of a children's residential unit. Devising a homely rather than an institutional environment relies on a caring design approach with quality products as well as the effective management of many operational factors including staff working practices, over-occupancy and managing the relocation to a new unit.

It is concerning that in the course of this exploratory study some staff have made statements that reflect very low aspirations for the children and young people in their care. The central focus of the South Lanarkshire approach has been to provide high quality residential care and the design initiative has been an important aspect of this. It is essential that residential staff are equally committed to this approach. Indeed, the research has clearly demonstrated that children and young people do notice and care about their environment; and will comment on whether it is cool and trendy or old-fashioned and dirty.

Young people also want to be involved in the design process. Consultation is central to this, however, there is a need to be clear about the remit of consultation and the level of involvement. Children and young people may only stay in residential care for a short period of time and there are practical limitations on the extent to which their wishes can be taken on board. A creative and flexible approach is required to the personalisation of space.

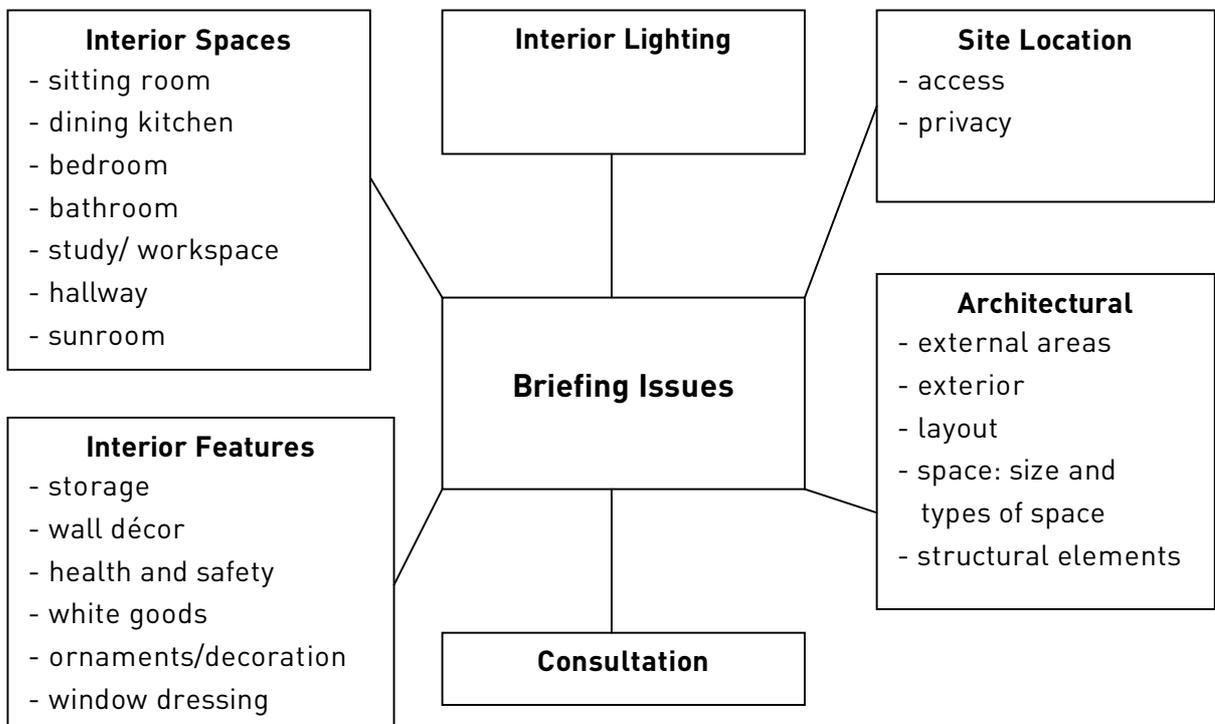
4.5 Design Briefing Framework

The following is a draft outline of a framework for a design tool that can be used by commissioning organizations to devise a design brief and as a reference guide for design consultants. The framework requires further development as items noted relate specifically to information gathered during this exploratory pilot study of four homes. The list is, therefore, not exhaustive and further points of reference will be relevant for different types of residential units outside the four referred to in this exploratory pilot study.

A comprehensive design tool will contain a broader framework highlighting issues and opportunities related to specific types of environment: for example, refurbishment of an existing property, or new buildings intended for long-term or short-term stay.

The information however, does represent a collective body of knowledge outlining some key areas for consideration in the design process based on experience of staff and children in the four homes featured in this exploratory pilot study. Each section is complemented by a relevant quotation from staff interviewed. Diagram 2 illustrates the key considerations that comprise the main contents of the draft design briefing framework.

Diagram 2: Draft Design Briefing Framework



4.5.1 Site Selection

“We’re also too near the road because we’ve got one [young person] and they absolutely adore music. They absolutely love it and they sing at the top of their voice and sometimes the wee soul sounds like he’s being murdered so we have to say to them can you keep your voice down a wee bit because the windows are open.”

Access

Consider:

- Access to local amenities including shops, schools, community centres, doctors, dentists and public transport.
- Avoiding areas of social deprivation or where there is a high level of crime or drug use where young people might become victims or become involved in activities.

Privacy

Consider:

- Distance for privacy and confidentiality, particularly when incidents are likely to occur.
- Distance from the pavement and passers-by.
- Access routes through an estate for access to and from the house.

4.5.2 Architectural

External Areas

“Give them a bit of space to play in, which they haven’t done here which I think is criminal. The ones who organised this and designed it failed miserably in their duty, failed miserably.”

Consider:

- Garden areas suitable and safe for children to play.
- Trees can provide some privacy.
- Exterior lighting should be domestic not industrial.

4.5.3 Exterior

“As the building was going up, we watched it being built and we thought, ‘this is really nice’, and then the facing, the beautiful sandstone facing boards, we thought, ‘this is going to be absolutely gorgeous’, then the pebbledash went on and one of the kids said, ‘Aye, it’s a fucking children’s unit’.”

Consider:

- The architectural style size of the home and surrounding properties to help the house to ‘blend in’ visually.
- Houses are usually larger than domestic dwellings, but the front elevation can be such that it is not visually dominant.
- Pebbledash on the exterior of a building can look institutional – more cultural and contextually appropriate finishes should be considered.

4.5.4 Layout

“Have you been to House C? It’s a tremendous unit. It’s light, it’s bright, it’s airy, it’s got an incredibly positive feel about it, simply because there’s so much light about it...”

Consider:

- There may be additional management and safety considerations (for example, monitoring and access to emergency exits) where young people are located over two levels. This requires further investigation.
- Quality of light and access to natural daylight.
- Quality of air and good ventilation.
- Too many exits can make it difficult to monitor who is coming and going in the house.

4.5.5 Space: size, proportions and types of space

“Houses need good sized bedrooms, especially as children get bigger.”

Consider:

- Hidden corners, nooks and crannies can be spaces used for bullying or unwanted behaviour.
- Clear sight lines aid observation and monitoring.
- The need for more rooms than in a standard domestic house to provide sufficient space for communal and private activities.
- Rooms need to be large enough to accommodate people and activities.
- More than one sitting room is necessary to provide for quiet space / break out space. This additional space is also important for individual privacy, isolating children during incidents and family contact.

- Individual bedrooms help create a better atmosphere in the house, which can impact on behaviour.
- Domestic-scale kitchen can be useful for residents to develop independent living skills.
- Sunrooms should be situated where they will receive sunlight.
- High ceilings cause problems with changing light bulbs, testing fire alarms and smoke detectors.

4.5.6 Structural Elements

“The interior walls are of a thin plaster board and we will have people punch the wall. We’ve had problems with the heavy doors being swung back and the handles going into the walls.”

Consider:

- Robustness of materials: they must be harder wearing than standard products used in domestic homes: for example standard plasterboard walls and doors that can be easily damaged by punching or kicking.
- Opening depth of windows: consider the possibility that they may be used inappropriately to exit or enter the house.
- Placement of windows can aid or inhibit unauthorised access to the house.
- Internal double doors can affect monitoring as it is difficult to hear noises in other rooms or on different floors.
- Weight, or movement of doors, particularly for ease of use by younger children.
- Fire doors can make people feel secure and safe, however, they can also appear institutional.
- Heavier rone pipes are more likely to withstand damage.
- Where the house is close to the pavement, having no letter box can be beneficial as no unwanted items can be posted through it.

4.5.7 Interior Lighting

“Everything I’ve been taught in residential and with SIRCC, structured environment, you know, to try and get the atmosphere for kids...we can’t do it. We can’t even put they lights off.”

Consider:

- Controllable lighting that allows staff and residents to create different atmospheres in rooms, for example, to calm the house before bed time.
- Adequate lighting for the space and the tasks that need to be conducted in that space.
- Pendant lighting can become a target for hitting.

4.5.8 Interior Spaces

“They’re not living on top of each other either, and because they’re not living on top of each other, minor squabbles and disagreements, there’s a wee bit space to get away from it. So that’s been a huge improvement. It’s been impacted upon somewhat due to the fact that the sunroom keeps getting used as a bedroom...Two public spaces was very helpful before we had to use it as a bedroom.”

Consider:

- Sitting rooms:
 - The age range of the young people who will be staying in the house.
 - The need to balance robustness and comfort with the ability to move items for cleaning.
 - Furniture must be sturdy enough to withstand levels of use.
 - Sharp edges can be dangerous, especially if metal.
 - Low tables are not good for doing homework or studying.
- Dining kitchen area:
 - The open plan dining kitchen tends to be the hub of the house.
 - Cooking facilities need to be placed in a safe spot and not along access routes to other rooms or exits.
 - Young people switching on the gas in the kitchen.
 - The dining table should be large enough to accommodate all young people and staff.
 - Worktops should be broad enough and have sufficient space between them and wall units to be functional.

- **Bedrooms:**
 - Establish the degree of personalisation in residents' bedrooms.
 - Appropriate level of personalisation dependent on whether the residency is long-stay or short-stay. In the latter case, a quick turnaround of space is necessary.
 - Need to balance robustness and comfort with the ability to move items for cleaning and personalising space.
 - Fixed elements, like the headboard of a bed, reduce flexibility for moving furniture and personalising rooms. This can be an issue for some children who have been abused and have a need to change the location of furniture.
 - Durability of furniture needs to be considered especially when children are acting up.
 - Carpets can be easily stained or damaged.

- **Bathrooms:**
 - Tiles are practical and easy to clean.
 - Younger children tend to prefer baths where older children prefer showers.

- **Office:**

The requirement for an office should be challenged. The office can be a barrier to interaction between young people and staff, particularly where residents have to knock on the office door in their house. Some staff consider an open door policy to be impractical at times because there is a need for privacy and access to confidential material. The placement of the office or an alternative workspace, and how the space is used are, therefore, important considerations. Consider:

- Staff requirements for workspace.
 - Office space and alternative options.
- **Hallways:**
 - Hallways on a more domestic scale rather than long corridors.
 - Bordered carpets can look more like a hotel than a house.

4.5.9 Interior Features

Consider:

- Adequate storage for the needs of residents and staff.
- Wall décor:
 - Personal preferences for colour vary widely.
 - Different types of paint and wall coverings require different approaches to cleaning and maintenance.
- Health and Safety:

There is a general acceptance that certain health and safety features (for example, fire extinguishers, fire doors and signage) need to be accommodated. However, they could be concealed, for example, fire alarm boxes do not need to be on display at the front door. It is important that they are easily accessible.

Consider:

- Placing health and safety features, e.g. fire alarm boxes and fire extinguishers, out of sight in a known and easily accessed location.
- Stairwells and emergency exits.
- Glass should be toughened or laminated to reduce possible injury.
- White Goods:
 - White goods must be large and robust enough to accommodate the number of users and frequency of use.
- Ornaments and Decoration:

“Since I came in I’ve bought new plants and the two cats [ornamental cats in the kitchen] they haven’t been touched. Things that’s been brought in since they were here it’s made a difference rather than the things that was here when we came. Things that have been bought recently the kids are more buying in to that.”

Consider:

- What staff buy to make the space more homely is not necessarily what children would select.
- Pictures of residents and staff can help to make the space more homely.

- Window Dressing

Consider:

- Vertical or Venetian blinds on windows can provide privacy, but still allow staff to see outside. With roller blinds there is less control as they can only be open or drawn.

4.5.10 Consultation

“They only have one room in the house that’s totally theirs: let them have it. There is only one area in the house that they have sanctuary in and it’s their bedroom. They should have what they need in there to make that a place of security and comfort.”

Consultation must be carefully planned and managed and feedback provided to participants. This is especially important where suggestions cannot be implemented. Expectations should not be raised beyond what is achievable or this will lead to disappointment.

Consider:

- Input from young people and staff for long-stay houses.
- Input from young people and staff for short-stay units.

5 Key Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Key Findings

The design of children's homes has a significant impact on young people and staff and can provide both increases in status and feelings of self-worth. Design approaches are recognised and provoke comment and response. Young people tend to comment upon aesthetic qualities whereas staff generally focus on functional aspects of space or features. It is apparent from this exploratory study of four children's homes that, generally, what staff feel is appropriate to create a homely environment may not be what young people would choose. Style and function are both important although prioritised differently by the two groups. It is concerning that this research found staff reflecting very low aspirations for the children and young people in their care. While this focused on design and the living environment, other research has shown how such low aspirations are related to the poor educational and health outcomes of looked after children and young people.

South Lanarkshire Council commissioned Graven Images interior design consultants to help de-institutionalise children's homes by providing high quality interiors and designing spaces that are appropriate for users.

In the three houses where the interior design consultants had input, there was more comment on particular features in the house than the one interior that was selected by social work professionals. On the whole, the spaces designed by the professional interior designers were liked by young people, although in some cases they suggested changes to colour and pattern, or replacing particular items in the house.

Comments on interior design centred around the personalising of space, aesthetic considerations and functionality of features. Colour provoked most response from both groups. Young people indicated a desire to be involved in consultation, particularly regarding the design of their bedrooms. Consultation with young people and staff allows key design requirements to be articulated and considered during the design process, and can facilitate the personalisation of space. However, it is important to note that some young people are in care for a short period of time and, as such, the consultation process must be carefully managed to ensure that expectations are not raised that cannot be fulfilled, and that the flexibility of space is maintained to easily accommodate new residents.

It was apparent that both the architecture and interior design of a space have an impact on relationships and can help or hinder social interaction. Some staff considered that quality furniture and fittings were aspirational and positively

impacted on young people's self-esteem. Others, with no factual information on cost, perceived the expenditure to be excessive and suggested that the furnishings chosen were beyond what young people could achieve on leaving care and so could have a negative effect at some possible future time. This viewpoint is restrictive and this lack of aspiration could further disadvantage children and young people. It also highlights a possible need to fully engage staff in the design process. Furthermore, a professional design approach was shown, at times, to be less expensive than that of social work professionals.

There is a constant tension between providing a homely environment and recognising that a children's home is not the same as a domestic home. Designers therefore face many challenges including balancing health and safety regulations and providing a suitable workplace for staff while thinking creatively and not being restrained by these requirements and still creating a welcoming, homely environment.

The success of the design approach is also dependent on other factors including whether the house is over-occupied. This has an effect on access to shared space and interferes with the functioning of the house. Staff commented that they wished to use the house with the number of residents for whom it was designed. Other issues involved the type of workspace available to staff and accessibility to young people; and the attitudes of staff. Design of space can challenge core working practices. The existence of the 'office' is one area where some staff strive to maintain a traditional and more institutional way of working. The provision of educational environments, how the relocation to the house was managed, and community relations also affect the success of a house.

A nation-wide survey of Scottish local authorities indicated that no comprehensive design guidance or best practice information exists for the design of children's homes although this is regarded as desirable and beneficial. At present there is a reliance on the commissioning client to guide the design process and to identify key design issues. The result is a constant pioneering approach to design, which obstructs the creation of a body of knowledge that can be shared to reduce the learning required in each project. Design guidance should be comprehensive covering information on interiors, exteriors, site selection and costs.

5.2 Recommendations

Design and social care professionals must challenge accepted norms and be more creative in dealing with regulatory and utilitarian requirements when designing a children's home.

Professional interior design input should be included in future projects. It can lead to additional benefits relating to quality and appropriateness without, necessarily, being more expensive than traditional in-house approaches. It also stimulates more response from young people and staff, whether positive or negative.

Design expertise should challenge embedded working practices and the institutional aspects of child care.

Consultation with the children and young people as well as staff is necessary. Consultation must have input from design professionals to ensure design requirements are properly captured and addressed. It is important that consultation with children and young people becomes central to the different stages of the design process.

Consultation must be appropriately managed to ensure that expectations are clearly defined and can be met while catering for a regularly changing population.

Different opinions of young people and staff must be captured during the design process, which can be facilitated through consultation.

The relatively low aspirations of some staff for young people in care must be challenged. One option would be the more effective engagement of staff in the design process, with particular emphasis on how a professional design approach can provide tools to enhance their role and the experience of young people in care.

Effective management of the relocation to a new house could benefit from an assigned project manager who would be responsible for managing the move. They would involve young people and staff in planning, timetabling and purchasing of necessary goods to establish good culture and practice, and ensure that snagging issues were addressed and finishing was to the quality expected before occupancy.

Post-occupancy evaluation is necessary to determine whether the objectives for the house are met. This will tend to be longer-term and will involve tracking young people after they have left care.

Design guidance for children's homes is desirable and perceived to be beneficial by design professionals and social work professionals.

Examples of best practice in the design of children's homes are required.

More detailed research is required to develop a framework for design guidance that can be used by social work professionals and designers.

More detailed research needs to be undertaken on what makes an educationally stimulating environment.

This small-scale study of the interior design of residential care homes for children provides a starting point for the development of a more systematic evidence-based approach to the improvement of the quality of residential accommodation for children and young people. Hopefully, this will mean that more and more often children and young people will have positive experiences of residential care.

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