

# New housing tool set to improve life for older people

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A new housing design tool, which will help improve the quality of life for older people in the UK, has been launched by researchers at the University of Sheffield this week (21 September 2010).

The EVOLVE evaluation tool, which has been funded by the Economic and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), can be used to assess how well a building contributes to both the physical support of [older people](#) and their personal well-being.

The project was based upon research into extra care housing and involved a team of experts from the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield and the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) at the University of Kent, in partnership with the Department of Health Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN) and EAC (Elderly Accommodation Counsel).

The EVOLVE tool, which is free to download, consists of a set of checklists ordered in the sequence of the rooms or spaces encountered in a walk through a building. The checklists relate to user requirements in key areas specific to older people such as accessibility, health and safety, and security, as well as universal requirements such as comfort, privacy and personal care. Each checklist requirement can be answered 'yes' or 'no' and once the list is completed, it is given a domain score.

The tool can be used to assess a housing development in use, as a briefing and design guide or to evaluate design proposals for new

buildings. EVOLVE is designed to evaluate a range of different buildings, from large village schemes to individual houses. The tool evaluates a building in terms of how well the accommodation and facilities it offers support older people, not the number of facilities available. Therefore, a small building with limited facilities can score the same as a large complex development.

Judith Torrington, Reader in Architecture at the University of Sheffield, said: "The population of people aged over 65 will increase substantially over the next 25 years. It is important that the housing options available meet their needs both in terms of supporting them physically as they age and enabling them to maintain a good quality of life. EVOLVE is an easy to use tool which can be used to assess the design of the home environment, whether it is a large new housing development or an individual private home."

Provided by University of Sheffield

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