The Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) was established at the University of Stirling in 1989. From the outset, design for people with dementia was central to its work and Professor Mary Marshall quickly became a pioneer in this area. She set about establishing international links with key researchers, and was influenced by leaders in the field such as Uriel Cohen from the USA, who she heard speak at the Alzheimer’s Disease International conference in 1989. Two years later Uriel Cohen published his ground-breaking book in the newly emerging field of architectural design and dementia. Events like the ADI conference also provided opportunities to build links with fellow researchers such as Richard Fleming in Australia, who had recently been involved in designing specialist units for people with dementia with behaviour problems. The DSDC began a programme of collaborations and study exchanges which continues to this day.

The team gave lectures across the UK and internationally, speaking in Finland, Norway and Australia. There was a keen interest in dementia-friendly design wherever they went. Research into the evidence-base supporting their work led to the publication by the DSDC in 1993 of Mary Kelly’s book, Designing for people with dementia in the context of building standards. The same year, for the first time, DSDC advised a housing association in their development of affordable housing designed to be suitable for tenants with dementia. This development, called St Leonards, was designed by Richard Pollock of what is now BPA Architecture for Edinvar Housing Association. BPA still specialise in dementia-friendly architecture and design, and maintain strong links with the DSDC.

In 1994 the DSDC assisted the working group charged with designing a prototype dementia friendly apartment for the Lillehammer Winter Olympics in Norway. The team gave a presentation at the associated conference.
The DSDC’s work has always been evidence-based and in 1995 Mary Kelly published *An evaluation of the design of specialist residential care units for people with dementia*. By this time the St Leonards housing project was well recognised, and that year Richard Pollock gave a lecture to Alzheimer’s Disease International on designing housing for people with dementia, based on guidance developed with Mary Marshall.

Significant publications followed including Professor Marshall’s ‘Design and Technology for People with Dementia’ in Jacoby and Oppenheimer’s *Psychiatry in the Elderly*, published by Oxford University Press in 1997. ‘Therapeutic design for people with dementia’ was published in *Dementia: Challenges and New Directions* the same year.

The international flavour of the work continued when Mary edited *Design for Dementia* with Stephen Judd from Australia, along with Peter Phippen. This was published in London in 1998.

It was a UK first when the 1999 Glasgow City of Architecture and Design festival chose the theme ‘Dementia, just another disability’ for a set of projects. The DSDC was closely involved in this, led by Mary Marshall. Ricky Pollock was one of the architects appointed and as part of the project a care home was refurbished and a council flat adapted. These provided home-grown examples illustrating the work being done by the DSDC through its publications and international conferences.

Mary Marshall continued to speak all over the world, and in 2000 her book *Homely: the guiding principle for design for dementia* was published in large text format. Despite the work being done by the DSDC, it was clear that focused education for architects, planners, clinicians and designers was needed. So in 2000 the DSDC held the first of its internationally acclaimed Design Schools.
The Design Schools were initially offered twice a year, and now run three or four times a year in different locations. They provide a unique opportunity to learn about dementia design from the differing perspectives of the person with dementia, clinical staff and planners. During this period the Iris Murdoch Building was conceived, designed and built with charitable donations through the Dementia Services Development Trust. The same year, the DSDC published Designing gardens for people with dementia by Annie Pollock, landscape architect. This celebrated the prize-winning Dementia Garden which formed part of the Scottish Garden Show. Following this success, the new Iris Murdoch Building was given a beautiful dementia friendly garden that attracts international interest to this day. The opening of the building by Dame Judi Dench coincided with the publication of the first edition of Designing interiors for people with dementia.
In 2008 David McNair, the DSDC’s Director of Lighting, led a team that produced the first edition of Light and lighting design for people with dementia. The legacy of the Design Schools was beginning to have an impact, and in 2008 the DSDC was asked if a standard could be set for dementia friendly buildings. Its Design Audit Tool was created, piloted and published the same year. This can be used to assess whether a building has appropriate features to make life easier for people with dementia and their carers. Following the successful introduction of the audit tool, the DSDC launched its formal design accreditation process. Gold awards started to follow, and some examples of these can be found here (INSERT LINK).

The DSDC’s Design and Technology Suite was opened by Wayne Hemingway within the Iris Murdoch Building in March 2008. Furnished as a hybrid domestic/care home setting, this suite of rooms showcases assistive technology and examples of good design for people with dementia and older people in general. Visitors can take an audio tour and try out some of the gadgets. The suite currently welcomes an average of 1,000 visitors each month.

Alongside these developments, Professor Marshall continued to write prolifically on dementia design with contributions to the Oxford textbook of old age psychiatry, the Dutch Assistive Technology Research series (volume 24), and the Australian publication Older people, issues and innovations in care.

2010 saw the publication of the first of a series of free online guides on telecare and dementia, which are adjuncts to other aspects of design. Telecare and dementia explores how telecare can support the person in their own home. At the same time another DSDC publication, Home Solutions 2, also became available online. This book describes a range of housing complexes and illustrates how they did – or did not – achieve their aim of being dementia-friendly. During this period the DSDC expanded its range of specialist publications focusing on specific elements of dementia design. The Dementia Design series was launched in 2010 with Hearing, sound and the acoustic environment for people with dementia, Designing balconies, roof terraces and roof gardens for people with dementia and the second edition of Light and lighting design for people with dementia.
Designing outdoor spaces for people with dementia (an international collaboration) was published in 2012, along with Design features to assist patients with dementia in general hospitals and emergency departments. In addition, the brief guide 10 Helpful hints for dementia design at home was produced for the general public and families. To support the Design and Technology Suite visitor experience, and thanks to a grant from the Nominet Trust, the DSDC created a virtual care home (available to view at www.dementia.stir.ac.uk/virtualhome). This has clickable information points on the screen describing key design features, enabling users to experience the suite via the DSDC website. In the first few days it had over 3,000 visitors. A brand new evidence-based audit tool for general hospitals and emergency departments was also launched in 2012, alongside an update of the original Design for people with dementia: audit tool.

"I feel the need for space to think without interruption. These moments out in the garden give me strength to keep going and also lift my spirits."

Alec, who is living with dementia.

228 pages • paperback • £35.00


Stirling’s Dementia Services Development Centre – pioneering dementia-friendly design for nearly 30 years
Publications included a third edition of *Light and lighting design for people with dementia*, along with a new book on housing design for people with dementia. Called *Improving the design of housing to assist people with dementia*, this was published in partnership with the Joint Improvement Team and the Chartered Institute of Housing. It is also available as a free download from the DSDC bookshop. Over the years the DSDC has received many requests for advice on reconciling good design for people with dementia with statutory building design recommendations. A free download from: INSERT LINK. Since the establishment of the DSDC in 1989, both its team of design specialists and their international reach has grown considerably. DSDC experts are to be found speaking at conferences, study days and design schools across the world. Interest in dementia-friendly design has flourished. The ‘pop up’ dementia house has been erected in a range of locations to demonstrate the fundamental principles of design that help people with dementia to live well and happily for as long as possible. During 2013, the online virtual care home is being joined by a virtual dementia friendly hospital. This has been funded by the Robert Bosch Foundation in Germany, and is another collaboration that is typical of the international approach the DSDC has used to disseminate its design message effectively since 1989.