

# Connect <sup>2</sup> Collab

DFSG e-Newsletter

## GOOD PRACTICES

Dementia-friendly environmental designs generally look into improving wayfinding, safety, identity and heritage, and ensuring ease of maintenance. Yishun is the first estate to incorporate dementia-friendly environmental designs in Singapore.

This project has enabled easier navigation for persons living with dementia in Nee Soon South. It utilises various dementia-friendly designs such as colour-coding HDB blocks into zones using a dedicated colour for each zone, featuring distinct icons (pineapples, fish, rubber trees) for each zone and setting up clearer signages throughout the neighbourhood.

The project is a collaborative effort between Nee Soon South grassroots organisations, Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), Nee Soon Town Council, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital and Goodlife!@Yishun.

**We speak to a key collaborator on the project — Dr Philip Yap, Senior Consultant (Geriatric Medicine), Khoo Teck Puat Hospital — to get his insights on dementia-friendly designs.**



### What were some key considerations in the design of the estate?

We wanted the design to be timeless and sustainable, so that community partners would be able to build upon the good work done by predecessors.

We also hope that people will be reminded of the importance of having dementia-friendly designs in the neighbourhood. Yearly community and dementia-awareness refresher events could help to sustain this awareness.

### What were some challenges you faced?

Blocking off of important landmarks due to unforeseen circumstances such as cordoned off areas from construction. Another challenge is the issue of overstimulation and cluttering, where having too many signages may be repetitive and overwhelming.

### What are your aspirations or vision for a dementia-friendly neighbourhood?

I think we need to start by raising awareness of the need for dementia-friendly designs. Whether that is piloting projects such as the CLC Dementia-Friendly Study or creating platforms to raise awareness on the need for dementia-friendly designs with architects and the community, we need to show the wider community that it is possible to implement such designs in neighbourhoods.

### Ways to Incorporate Dementia-Friendly Design



 <b>Visible Block Numbers</b>	Large and visible block numbers are painted against a solid colour background at the sides of blocks facing pedestrian pathways, allowing for good visibility.
 <b>Directional Cues</b>	Signages are put up to reduce confusion and guide people to access frequently visited parts of the neighbourhood such as markets, supermarkets, coffeshops, the community club, eldercare centres and transport nodes.
 <b>Symbolic Icons</b>	Simplified object designs related to Singapore's heritage are used as visual cues for memory recall.
 <b>Painting Design</b>	Good colour contrast and vertical strips are used in painting works. Each zone of HDB blocks is also demarcated by a dedicated colour.
 <b>Navigation Map</b>	Maps are put up at a central area within the neighbourhood to guide people in using the colour-zone methodology and related signages to reach their destination.

Eventually, the goal is to build dementia villages where persons living with dementia can live more independently. This will require a combined effort from ministries, from the health and social care sector, and the community.

### Your contributions to dementia-friendly initiatives go beyond the medical realm — where does this passion come from?

From a clinician perspective, we aim to attend to the needs of our clients by helping them live their best lives, which goes beyond giving diagnosis and medication. This includes looking at how to improve lived environments of persons living with dementia, as dementia-unfriendly environments would place more burden on our clients.





Residents at the Community Workshop in May 2022.

# CASE STUDY

## Dementia-Friendly Neighbourhood Designs: Local Study Utilising Whole-of-Community Approach

### The key issue


Existing local building codes and guidelines contain elements of Universal Design which increase accessibility of outdoor environments to people with mobility issues. However, design principles that include cognitive accessibility are currently limited due to lack of guidance in this aspect locally.

### What is the AIC-CLC Dementia-Friendly Neighbourhoods Study?

To address this gap, AIC is partnering with the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC) to conduct the **AIC-CLC Dementia-Friendly Neighbourhoods Study**, with research implementation led by the Singapore University of Technology & Design (SUTD). This study, which began in 2019, is being conducted on a pilot site in a Yio Chu Kang housing estate. This area was selected for its existing catchment of senior residents living there, the support of advisors and local grassroots leaders, as well as the presence of service providers.



Yio Chu Kang residents and community partners at the community engagement workshops.

	CLC	AIC	SUTD
<b>Roles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope research, oversee project management and convene stakeholders to translate and apply findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise and connect community partners, healthcare practitioners and experts on dementia/ dementia-friendly designs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and conduct research project</li> </ul>
	Co-produce dementia-friendly design guidelines 		

We speak to Elly Chiu and Lim Ren Ai from CLC as well as Tan Hong from AIC to get their insights on the study.

### How would you define a dementia-friendly neighbourhood?

A dementia-friendly neighbourhood is one that enables persons living with dementia to navigate safely and engage meaningfully with their community. It allows them to age in their chosen place by reducing the need for early institutionalisation.

Dementia-friendly designs will aid in better wayfinding, accessibility, safety and social bonding — for persons living with dementia and the general population. What is inclusive for persons living with dementia, is inclusive for all.

### What is one challenge that your team has faced in running this study, and how has the team managed to overcome this?

A dementia-friendly neighbourhood involves “hardware” (buildings and infrastructure), “software” (programming and services) and “heartware” (community networks).

To achieve this, we have involved stakeholders from multiple sectors right from the onset, to hear from them and co-develop ideas and solutions with them. A key difference in this study is how we have successfully engaged persons living with dementia on a first-person basis for their views and participation in the research.

We had adopted novel research methods that allowed persons living with dementia to communicate their daily routines through non-verbal ways, including engaging in a series of pictorial exercises and accompanied walks. AIC and CLC are continuously working closely with healthcare partners, social service agencies, grassroots, Town Council, government agencies and the Yio Chu Kang community to ensure the neighbourhood is inclusive for all.

Of course, it can be challenging to incorporate feedback from multiple stakeholders meaningfully. To address this challenge, what we found helpful was to hold regular consultation sessions with stakeholders to provide timely updates, gather feedback and incorporate their perspectives into the study's learnings.

### How has this study benefited our community partners?

The AIC-CLC study will test and develop dementia-friendly design principles that are contextualised to Singapore's high-density, high-rise public housing estates and neighbourhoods. This will help builders and town planners design outdoor environments that enable persons living with dementia and other seniors to lead active and engaged lifestyles in their communities for as long as possible.

This in turn supports community care partners in Yio Chu Kang and beyond to build Dementia- and Age-Friendly environments, so that they can conduct activities and engage their clients meaningfully in alternative environments beyond their own care facilities.

Indeed, to achieve a Dementia-Friendly society, a whole-of-community approach is needed — one which involves persons living with dementia, caregivers, service providers, agencies, community groups and neighbours.



# GET PERSONAL

## Helping Those Living with Dementia Find Their Way

One vital way to build a Dementia-Friendly Singapore is to incorporate dementia-friendly designs into our surroundings, such as wayfinding systems. Such systems help orientate people and guide them through their surroundings, allowing those living with dementia to travel safely and independently.

Emily Ong is no stranger to the local wayfinding scene. This dementia self-advocate was involved in various wayfinding projects, such as the 'Find Your Way' initiative with SBS Transit. Under the initiative, iconic murals are used in transport nodes to help persons living with dementia navigate their way independently.

She has her sights set beyond wayfinding projects and envisions a Singapore with a more inclusive environment. In this issue, we speak with Emily to learn more about dementia-friendly environmental design.

### Can you tell us more about environmental design?

Environmental design plays an important role in building a Dementia-Friendly Singapore. It's imperative for stakeholders — experts in their field such as urban planners, engineers and architects — to come together to design a space tailored to support the needs of those living with dementia.

Environmental design also requires inputs and insights from their target audience — which I represent. For instance, a quick environmental audit tells me that we can have additional features in lifts to make them more inclusive to those with cognitive impairment.

### How did you start to get involved in wayfinding projects?

I participated in Voices for Hope, an empowerment programme by Dementia Singapore (DSG) to help persons living with dementia and their caregivers embark on their self-advocacy journey.

For my first advocacy project, I was invited to build a more dementia-friendly community in Kebun Baru. We had a dialogue with Member of Parliament Mr Henry Kwek, Adviser to Kebun Baru Grassroots Organisations. After the dialogue, we decided to pilot a wayfinding project in Kebun Baru and did neighbourhood reces to see what environmental design features could be added.

SBS Transit came to know of our work in the Kebun Baru neighbourhood and contacted us to collaborate on their wayfinding project to support the wider community of people with dementia and the elderly. As a result, a working team comprising DSG, SBS Transit, dementia self-advocates, Anjang and I, and two mural artists, Didier and Cherie, was put together to co-develop 'Find Your Way' at selected bus interchanges and MRT stations.

### Who are the partners that you have worked with?

For transport-related projects, I worked with DSG as well as transport service providers such as SBS Transit, SMRT and Go-Ahead Singapore.

I was also contacted by key partners such as CLC and SUTD to be part of their dementia-inclusive projects.

In addition, the Ministry of Health Holdings approached me to ask for my input and feedback on the Community Care Apartments' environmental design. The Community Care Apartments is an initiative to expand housing options for seniors by integrating senior-friendly housing with care services that can be scaled according to care needs and social activities to support seniors to age independently.



[From left to right] Emily Ong, caregiver Sarimah, dementia advocate Anjang Rosli, DSG representative Mary-Ann Khoo and DSG CEO Jason Foo at the fourth launch of the "Find Your Way" initiative at Mattar MRT.



### What are your aspirations in the area of dementia-friendly environmental design?

Together with DSG, we are looking to establish an Environment Special Interest Group in Singapore. This group will be spearheaded by persons living with dementia and their care partners, supported by DSG and involve technical experts who are key stakeholders central to the role of environmental design.

The goal is to look into environmental design to improve the quality of life for people living with dementia. So we are inviting technical experts such as local architects, designers and occupational therapists to join us in developing dementia-inclusive guidelines for a dementia-friendly community, and eventually the whole of Singapore. This way, those living with dementia can continue to live on their own terms, in their own familiar surroundings.

# HELPFUL RESOURCES

## Guide to Developing Iconic Wayfinding Murals in Neighbourhoods

Wall murals of familiar objects can act as unique identifiers to enhance wayfinding and reminiscence for a person living with dementia. With more neighbourhoods joining in the dementia-friendly movement, community partners have readily stepped forward to initiate mural painting projects.

If you're keen to embark on similar projects, here's a simple resource that can get you started, which includes quick tips, best practices and recommendations.



## Mural Painting Project Process & Timeline

Project Lead	Expert	Person Living with Dementia (PLWD)	Volunteers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversee the project and coordinate relevant parties in discussion and implementation</li> <li>Monitor timeline and source for resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advise and facilitate the development of mural designs including facilitating focus group discussion(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide input on the mural designs</li> <li>Share experience in wayfinding the blocks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve in the painting of the murals</li> </ul>
Grassroots leaders (GRLs)/ Constituency Office	Dementia Expert (Service Provider) Mural Design Expert (Artist)	Residents living with dementia Caregivers	Youth/Students Residents Interest Groups

Phase 1: Planning	Phase 2: Consultation	Phase 3: Recce	Phase 4: Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form a project workgroup and share project objectives, timeline and desired outcome</li> <li>Project workgroup comprises of GRLs/ Constituency Office, professionals (artists, dementia care staff), persons living with dementia and caregivers</li> <li>Develop a project plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage community-at-large for buy-in</li> <li>Recruit persons living with dementia and caregivers to conduct focus group discussion(s) to conceptualise a theme and develop mural designs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct walkabout and select the walls to paint the murals on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Painting of murals</li> </ul>



## 360° Dementia-Friendly HDB Home Design Guide

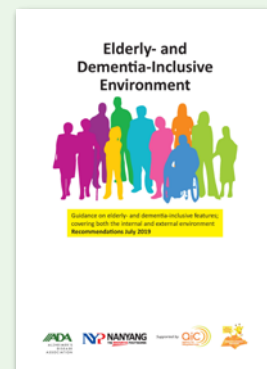
Caring for a loved one living with dementia can be complex and sometimes challenging. One such challenge may be having to adapt the living space to better accommodate changing needs. With this in mind, AIC collaborated with DSG to co-develop the **360° Virtual Reality Dementia-Friendly HDB Home Design Guide**. This interactive online design guide (best viewed on a desktop) allows caregivers to easily navigate around an HDB home, while providing solutions for caregivers to help make their home dementia-friendly.



## Elderly- and Dementia-Inclusive Environment Guide

Having a well-planned therapeutic physical environment is vital in enhancing the well-being of the elderly and persons living with dementia.

The Elderly- and Dementia-Inclusive Environment Guide aims to provide pointers for those unfamiliar with designing an elderly-friendly and dementia-inclusive physical environment. It offers a starting point for supportive, innovative and sustainable design especially in the context of HDB apartments where most persons living with dementia and their families reside in.



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