

Anti-viral measures built in at Edinburgh care home

Owners of an Edinburgh care home have revealed how the innovative design of its building has helped protect residents from the coronavirus.

Cramond Residence, which cares for up to 74 older people, says its success to date in keeping the virus at bay is partly because the building was specially designed for enhanced infection control.

Bosses of the £2000-a-week service have praised staff and relatives of residents for their efforts in halting the deadly disease, while revealing their secret weapon has been the architecture.

Director Graeme Kelly, himself a qualified surveyor, said: "Fortunately our care home was purpose built and when it was being designed, we ensured that infection control was a top priority.

"We worked with the architects at every stage to include the most up-to-date best practice. So far, those measures have stood up very well to the challenges our sector is facing from Coronavirus."

Among the most important design elements are self-contained, small-group living units, a clever air extraction system and specially laid out bathrooms.

Mr Kelly added: "We'll never be complacent, because nowhere is

immune from Coronavirus. However, the thoughtful design of our home has been an extremely important factor in protecting our residents so far, along with the professionalism of our clinical-led care team.

“It’s well known that large, communal areas can lead to the fast spread of infection throughout a care home. Our design addresses this, because Cramond Residence is designed to function as nine separate homes across three storeys.

“Each small group living area has up to eight bedrooms, with a private lounge, dining and snug facilities. When necessary, residents can be cared for in small groups using the self-contained facilities.

“This is excellent for privacy and quality of life generally, but really shows its true value when everyone is working together to reduce the potential for an infection to spread.”

The small group living philosophy also extends to staff. In periods of heightened infection risk, the care and services teams adopt a system known as “cohorting”. This sees specific staff dedicated to just one of the Residence’s nine self-contained homes, dramatically reducing possible infection spread from staff movement.

Another innovation at Cramond Residence is the negative-pressure ventilation system, the same kind of ventilation used in hi-tech hospitals and medical centres to prevent cross contamination.

Rooms contain a single air extract drawing air out of each individual room – and the system is designed to create a negative pressure, that extracts airborne germs and droplets from each bedroom. This significantly reduces any drift of airborne infections – like Coronavirus – into shared spaces.

The third crucial design element is that every room has en-suite facilities, removing any need for residents to share

bathing and toilet areas, further reducing cross-contamination and making personal hygiene targets easier to achieve.

Mr Kelly added: "These design elements have come into their own during the pandemic, but it would all be for nothing if we didn't have such a dedicated, well-drilled and professional team.

"We're incredibly proud of how our staff have responded to the pandemic. Thanks to them we were recently given a positive inspection report from the infection control and prevent experts at Health Protection Scotland."

Cramond Residence maintains a care staff to resident ratio of at least 1:4 at all times. Even before the pandemic they undertook rigorous hygiene and infection control training, while managers held regular reviews to test and develop robust contingency and emergency plans.

During the outbreak staff have meticulously observed the strictest social distancing and PPE protocols, which extend beyond the care team and applies to agency staff and also to colleagues in catering, housekeeping and maintenance.

Meanwhile visits from friends and relatives of residents have been kept to an absolute minimum and allowed only for the most urgent reasons and with strict social distancing and PPE protocols.

Mr Kelly said: "As a relatively new care home we realise we are in an incredibly fortunate position to benefit from the latest protection modern design can afford us.

"As well as bringing peace of mind to those who have loved ones being cared for here, we hope that our experiences will help to positively inform and shape the many changes which are likely to come to the care sector once the pandemic is under control."

Cramond Residence provides a combination of luxury accommodation and the highest quality of care. Set in a leafy location, it offers small group-living in nine houses, with all residents enjoying a wide range of amenities and activities, delicious food and bespoke care.

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Graeme Kelly