Making life good in the community: When is a house a home?

Looking at how homely community houses are for people with an intellectual disability who have moved out of an institution

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Foreword

By Christine Owen, Manager, Disability Services, Eastern Metropolitan Region

Over the past six years, more than 370 people with an intellectual disability have moved from living in Kew Residential Services (KRS), a large institution to smaller group homes. Another 100 people will have moved by April 2008 when KRS will close. Making life good in the community is a research journey that, through reflecting on the experiences of the people who have left KRS, has explored issues of how people with an intellectual disability can be best supported to have fulfilling and active lives. The research project, which is being carried out by La Trobe University, has posed the question about the factors that are needed to create a good ‘ordinary’ life in the community for the former residents, who have spent many years in an institution and in many cases have limited networks of family and friends. A collection of papers, The story so far, was released in March 2007 outlining the findings at the mid point of their work, and a further report The role of the house supervisor was released in late 2007. This paper is one in a series of studies that will complete the qualitative research. A quantitative component will conclude the study in 2009.

One of the important issues highlighted through the earlier stage of this research was a concern that the houses people moved to were not developing into ‘homes’ — that they were new houses that did not yet look or feel homely. It was therefore decided that the issue of homeliness should be one of the key directions that should be explored in the latter stages of the research.

‘Home’ and ‘homeliness’ are elusive concepts, the meanings of which are shaped by individual values, preferences, cultural background and taste. What one person likes and appreciates and makes them feel at home will not necessarily be what another would like or choose.

So, what is the essence of homeliness? What make a house feel like a home to someone?

The research team has grappled with these questions in thinking about how homely the new community houses are for people who are living in them. Alan Robertson brings to the research his own wide experiences as a man with an intellectual disability who has lived in institutions, group living and now for many years has lived independently. He has been supported by Patsie Frawley, who has helped him develop a framework to consider the physical aspects, social dimensions and atmosphere in the house in order to understand what we mean by homeliness. It takes into account how homely the houses look, how homely they feel and whether they are social places that people share with the others who live in the house, friends and family.
The insights into homeliness in this report have made us further aware of some of the dilemmas that we face in striving for homeliness in the community houses for people with an intellectual disability. It can initially be challenging to know what someone would like in their house if they are not able to communicate this easily. The houses are also a workplace for staff and have important safety features included in the design which can work against a homely feel. Sometimes too the houses have features to protect the people living there from some danger, for instance in using the kitchen. The houses meet high design standards of accessibility for people with a disability but in achieving this, they include features like wide hallways and large bathrooms which give them a different look and feel from some other houses. These steps may not contribute to a homely feel. Another factor that we are aware of is that people who have lived in institutions for many years often lack their own possessions and so it is harder to achieve the little personal touches; any new house can take time to develop its own ‘personality’ and begin to reflect the characters and tastes of its residents and lose the ‘newness’.

A unique feature of this research is the involvement of a person with a disability as a co-researcher. The insights Alan has brought to the research findings have enhanced our understanding of the issue of homeliness for people with a disability. It has also demonstrated the value of the involvement of people with a disability as researchers and the very personal perspectives they can bring to looking at and thinking about issues.

This report outlines findings about homeliness and sets some challenges about how group homes can be made more homely. The findings of this paper and that of the Making life good project will be valuable in influencing future directions of service delivery for people with a disability and helping us to strike the right balance between the needs for disability accessibility and workplace safety, and the development of comfortable and welcoming places for the people who live there.

The report is written in Plain English in the hope it can be accessible to residents of group homes and self advocacy groups. I would encourage staff and people living in group homes to use the information and ideas in the report to think about and reflect on how they can make each house more homely. As the report recognises, outcomes of these activities will be personal to suit the needs and views of those live there.

Manager, Disability Services, Eastern Metropolitan Region

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The research has been made possible by the willing co-operation and assistance of the people who live in the selected houses, their families and the staff who support them. The support and encouragement of the Making life good Steering Committee members is also much appreciated in guiding this research.
1. Introduction

This research project is part of a bigger project called *Making life good in the community*. The big project looked at how people with an intellectual disability who have left an institution are now living in the community. This report is about a smaller project that looked at how homely the houses were for the people who had moved.

Who did the research?

Alan Robertson and Patsie Frawley were employed by the *Making life good in the community* research team, Dr Chris Bigby and Dr Tim Clement, to do the project on homeliness.

![Alan and Patsie](image)

Alan is a self advocate. He has lived in lots of different places since he was young. He lived in institutions, group homes, in a ‘Granny flat’ behind his sister’s house and has lived by himself in a flat that he has rented for 18 years. Alan lives pretty independently with the help of his sister
who lives nearby. She helps him to do his shopping, cooking and to look after his money. Alan hadn’t done any research work before this project but he has been involved in self advocacy for many years as a group leader, a workshop facilitator and a project worker. He also has a job as a gardener. He was employed to do this project because of his life experiences and because of his interest in getting institutions closed.

Patsie is a researcher with La Trobe University. She was employed to work with Alan on the project and to help him do the research. Her main job was to help Alan plan and do his work, manage all of the information on the computer, talk about the things he found during his research and put his ideas together in this report.

What we were trying to find out

Living in a house in the community should be different to living in an institution and living in your own home should feel different to living in an institution. But does it? And can a community residential unit be a home; can it look homely, feel homely and can you have social experiences there that help you see it as your home? Is it a place where you want to be? Can you do the things you want to do? Have you got things around you that are yours, which you chose, and that make you realise this place is yours?
The two main questions we were thinking about were ‘Are the houses homely’? and ‘Are they the best they can be’? Patsie and Alan met regularly with Chris and Tim to discuss ideas about the research.

**How we did the research**

The first thing we did was talk about what makes a house a home. Patsie asked Alan to think about the things that he thought made a place homely.

**Box 1: what Alan thought was homely**

- Nice carpet – clean
- Nice blinds and curtains – match the walls
- Pictures on the wall – ones you like or are interested in
- Nice kitchen – tidy, plates, knives and forks and spoons put away; some things out like a fruit bowl, fridge magnets that hold pictures, bills, notes
- Beds are made – most of the time, most adults have double beds
- Floors washed about once a week
- Got TV, radio, stereo, video recorder
- A home is what you make of it – deciding what you do and when and who with
- Having visitors, a girlfriend/boyfriend stay or visit, family, friends, other people - your choice
- Your home is what you want it to be
- You pay for it so you decide what its going to be like it is your choice, your right and your responsibility
- Mail comes that is addressed to you and you open it
- You can be independent in it
- Do your own thing – have choices like what you eat, when you eat it, where you eat what you wear and when you wear different things, when you have a bath or a shower, time you go to bed and time you get up
- Talking on the phone
- Furniture that you like which you have chosen, saved up for and bought
- Having special things like photos, precious things you like and that nobody else touches, things around that you like such as books and posters
- Privacy – shut the door or leave doors open
- Doesn’t have to be perfectly clean, just in good shape (*Research notes, 14.12.06*)
Around the same time Patsie read a research article about what ‘home’ meant (Annison, 2000). It said that there are lots of different meanings and it is a pretty individual thing but there are some common things too. These were:

- Being personalised
- Making choices
- Being comfortable
- Security and safety
- A suitable physical environment
- A place where you have relationships with people
- A good atmosphere – warm, cozy
- Allowing for privacy and freedom
- You could grow and develop there
- You were secure and you can stay there

After talking about these things and Alan’s list we decided there were three main things to look at:

- **physical** – what you could see and touch;
- **social** – what people do together, with friends, visitors, family and sharing of time together;
- **atmosphere** – what it feels like, what the mood is like.

We developed a framework (we also called this our research tool) that brought these things together because we thought the three parts had to fit together to make a house a home (*Appendix 1*). We also wanted to remember that these houses were different from other people’s
homes in the community. They were houses where people with an intellectual disability were supported and they were also workplaces for staff. We wanted to look at how a house could be these things and a home. Most importantly we wanted to see how much choice the people in the houses had over the things that can make a house a home.

Alan decided that he had not really seen a lot of homes and when he had, he wasn’t really thinking about what made them homely. He didn’t share his flat so didn’t know much about how people lived together and how they made them ‘their homes’. So we looked at some people’s homes in the community and talked about them (Alan’s, Patsie’s, and Alan’s sister’s house) and what made them a home. There were things in these houses that were nice and that the people there had chosen like furniture, pictures and things for entertainment like a stereo and TV. Different people came and went for parties, chats, get togethers and it felt good to come home to, because it was yours and you felt comfortable and ‘at home’ there. When we were doing this we were testing our framework (research tool) and it seemed to cover most of the things that were important.
About the research houses

There were five houses that were invited to be in the research, and agreed to take part after their residents or their families learnt more about it. They were all houses that were built and set up as part of the Kew Residential Services (KRS) redevelopment; closing the big institution at Kew and moving people into smaller houses in the community.

Most of the houses had five bedrooms but some had six (Figure 1). Each person who lived there (the residents) had their own bedroom. All of the houses had a room for staff with a bathroom attached that was for staff use only. The staff worked at night time (called ‘Active Night’) so they did not have a bed in their room. The houses had
two lounge rooms, one bigger one and one smaller one that was like a sitting room.

Figure 1: Floor plan of one of the houses
Sitting rooms/second lounge rooms

They all had one big bathroom. Most had a big bath called a Parker Bath that you get in through a door and sit up in it. These baths tilt up and down too. Some of them were like spa baths.

Main bathroom

Parker bath
When is a house a home?

They also had a smaller bathroom with a shower and a hand basin. These usually had shower chairs in them. They also had really big toilets with handrails.

![Smaller bathrooms with just a shower and hand basin](image1)

![Separate toilet with handrails](image2)

The kitchens either opened into the dining rooms or were in between the sitting room and the dining room.

![Kitchens](image3)

Some of the kitchens had gates that staff could close if they did not think it was safe for the residents to go into the kitchens (above right).
They all had some kind of courtyard either at the back of the house or the side of the house.

Most were in suburban streets and had a large carport out the front.

All of the people who lived in these houses had lived at KRS (except one house where a younger man had moved into a spare room – he had moved from his parent’s house to another CRU, then into this house).

Some had lived in the same units at KRS as each other
and some hadn’t. All of the people were men and most of them were not able to speak and needed help with dressing, bathing and other personal care. None of the people could cook their own meals or do their own washing or house cleaning by themselves. Some of the people used wheelchairs and walking frames but others could walk. Some had contact with their families and others didn’t.

2. Doing the research in the research houses

In February 2007 we started visiting the research houses. Patsie took photos of them with a digital camera so we could talk about them later. On the first visit the residents were not at home and either the house supervisor or another staff member showed us around. We did not ask many questions on this first visit, it was mainly to see what the houses looked like and what they had in them.

When we talked about the houses and looked at the photos, Alan kept saying, ‘They are more comfortable than an institution’ and ‘They are more homely than an institution’. That is when we decided that the research wasn’t comparing them to an institution; it was to see how homely they were. Also, Alan was really impressed with how new they were, how big they were and how much new stuff was in them like TV’s, CD players and new furniture. We talked about this a lot and Alan decided that
he was comparing them to what group houses used to be like when he lived in them and also to what he remembered of institutions. He also commented that the new houses had a lot more things in them than he had in his flat, and they were brand new, not second hand.

At this stage Alan also realised that he had not been in many CRUs recently, so we decided to do some more looking around to see what some other CRUs were like. We asked a non-government service if we could visit some of their houses and they agreed. They had older houses, new houses, and one house with a flat attached to it. They all had staff in them who supported the people who lived there and who slept there overnight if people needed help.

We saw some interesting things in these houses. One house had a pet dog, one house had really bright bedrooms, in another one the residents and staff had done a lot of work in the garden and decorated the courtyard with colourful tiles and pictures made out of tiles. Another house had a flat next to it that one person lived in by
himself; he could get support when he needed it. The person who lived there had it decorated with his own drawings and model houses he built. In one house another person had a double bed.

Some features Alan observed in non-government CRUs: (top), one house had a pet; (middle), a double bed); (bottom), residents’ own artwork used to decorate the walls.
After these visits we spent some more time planning the next part of the research. There were two things we wanted to do; interview the house supervisors, and see the houses when the residents were at home. This took a lot of organising.

Together we planned an interview sheet (Box 2). This was to remind Alan how to introduce himself, what he would do while he was there and a list of questions to ask the house supervisor. We also decided on a way for Alan to record his interviews with the house supervisors. He had to hang a digital recorder around his neck because we would be walking around the house while he was interviewing.
Box 2: Interviewing the house supervisors

At the houses:

1. Explain what you are there for
2. Look at the rooms
3. Ask questions about the rooms:
   - Who chose what is in them
   - Who uses the room
   - What do people do in the room
4. Look at the rest of the house – outside (the garden and courtyards), what the house looks like in the street.
5. Ask questions about the whole house:
   - Do people come and go?
   - Are there visitors?
   - What have you done to make it homely?
   - Record what you find out by using the digital recorder and the digital camera. (Research notes 06.05.07)
Alan asked most of the questions but sometimes Patsie asked questions too and reminded Alan about the questions he needed to ask. Alan didn’t like using the question list and usually kept it in his pocket. He preferred to talk to the House Supervisors as they walked around. Alan liked to tell the House Supervisors about his own life, in particular about his experiences in institutions and now living by himself and his independence. Although it was important to do this, Patsie sometimes had to remind him to ask more about the houses. Patsie noticed that when the interviews started some of the house supervisors spoke to her instead of Alan but this changed pretty quickly when Alan kept asking the questions.

After each visit, Patsie and Alan would talk about it in the car on the way home with the recorder going. Before Alan and Patsie met again, Patsie put all the photos on a CD, listened to the interviews and wrote down a summary of what was on the recordings. We talked about the houses a lot, looked at the photos together and read through the interview summaries. We then put the photos together and chose ones that showed different things about the houses. Alan talked about what he thought and we wrote these thoughts down next to the photos. An example is given on the next page.
Alan’s house visit notes:

Alan: ‘These are gates that can lock going into the kitchen. I think keeping people out of the kitchen is not a good thing. The House Supervisor said these gates are closed when the staff are cooking to keep the residents away from the hot food and stove. I suppose they have to protect them but they shouldn’t be locked out, they should be supported to be in the kitchen and maybe be involved.’

‘This is one of the lounge rooms. The house supervisor said she chose the pictures and the couches. You would think they could have involved the residents in this. The house supervisor said they got a book with different furniture and pictures that they could choose from. I think it would be better if the residents got involved in this and went out shopping for these things. It shows a lack of choice, and lack of opportunities to make their home look how they want it to be like.’
Alan was not so interested in the interviews and normally Patsie would say things to Alan like, ‘and the house supervisor said…..’ For some houses Patsie put together photos with the interview summaries so Alan could see what the house supervisors were saying about different things in the houses.

**Notes from house visit - pictures and interview**

![Images of a room with various items and decorations.]

**Alan:** Do people spend much time in their rooms?

**House Supervisor:** People come and go but only one person spends a lot of time in his room on a regular basis. People come and go throughout the day and night from the living rooms to their bedrooms but he is the only one who spends a lot of time in his own room. His mum visits twice a week, so when she visits they go into his room. That’s his space – he knows that’s where the other guys don’t really have the connection with their rooms. They know they come in there to sleep and their clothes and personal things are in there but I think he has more of an understanding that this is his spot.
We visited one house three times, visited three houses twice and visited one of the houses once. In four of the houses we arranged a visit when the residents were at home. Alan wanted to talk to the residents about what it was like in their new home but most of the people in the houses couldn’t talk, so we developed a list of things we could look for when we spent time in the house with the residents.

**What to look for**

*Things to look for in the house when the residents are home*

- People doing things together
- People doing things by themselves.
- People relaxing – watching TV, listening to music, reading
- Some people inside, some people outside
- People in different rooms doing different things.
- Doing jobs around the house – laundry, cooking, cleaning, packing clothes away
- People talking to each other (*Research notes, 06.05.07*)
Finding out how people feel

**Finding out how people feel about their home**
Most people in the houses will not be able to tell you how they feel because they cannot speak or communicate in a way you will understand, or in a way that helps them describe things.

Ask staff some questions:

- How do you know if the residents are happy here?
- How do you know if they feel safe, comfortable and at home?
- What do people do to show you they feel at home here?

Look for...

- Residents walking/moving freely around the house
- Coming and going from different rooms, going outside
- People laughing, joking, talking, smiling, mucking around together
- Resident know where things are and help themselves to things like food, snacks, turning on the TV etc (*Research notes 31.05.07*)

After the first visit to a house when the residents were at home Alan told Patsie he was not very comfortable with the people. Patsie noticed this during the visit and just went ahead and talked to the residents while Alan looked on and talked to the staff. We talked about this a lot in the car on the way home. Alan said he did not like how noisy it was and he wasn’t used to people who could not talk. We talked about what he could do about it for next
time and Patsie said it would be OK if Alan just looked on but it was important that he said hello to the residents and did not make comments about them to the staff instead of talking to them. After a couple of visits Alan was much more comfortable and on the last visit he spent the whole time talking to the residents even though they could not talk back to him.

After each visit we spent a lot of time looking at the photos and reading over the interviews and sharing ideas about what we thought. We did this for a month or more and we wrote all our ideas on butchers’ paper. Patsie then took all of this and started to write it up under each area: physically homely, socially homely, feeling homely.
3. Things we found out about the houses

Things we were looking for to see how homely they looked

Physical: What can be seen, touched

- Pictures
- Furniture
- Things people want and need
- Things that belong to just one person
- Things you own, have chosen, saved up for
- Things that are to look at that mean something to you
- Things for entertainment, TV, stereo, games, books, DVD player
- Things that are for decoration that you like and that make the place look good
- Everything does not have to be new, the main thing is it is wanted and needed

What Alan thought after the research about how homely the houses looked

The Design

- They are new, they are bright and clean.
- They look like Department houses not homes.
- The designs of the houses are all pretty much the same. You’ve seen one, you have seen them all.
- Most of the rooms are painted the same colours.
- There is not much variety with carpets or other floor covering.
- The big passages with bedrooms either side make them look a bit like a hospital.
- Bathrooms are too big.
- Passages are really wide and that makes the house look cold and bare and empty.
Having the big lounge rooms, kitchens and dining rooms down one end means the rest of the house is really empty and not used.

What is in the houses?

They have got new furniture, but it looks the same in all the houses. It did not look comfortable for some people, and did not look best quality.

They have got things like CD players and TVs in the living areas and in people’s bedrooms but not much else to entertain people like games, magazines, jigsaw puzzles — things people can do together or by themselves.

The houses aren’t very decorated. There are pictures on the walls but most have been chosen by others. It looks more homely when there are pictures done by the residents or things that are chosen by them on the walls.

People have got a lot of things that are their own in their bedrooms like photos and things they like to use. The rest of the houses don’t look ‘lived in’; there is not much stuff around in the shared living spaces, they are pretty bare.

They have all got a backyard with BBQs and outdoor settings, swing seats – they are all exactly the same.

There are things in the house that all people living there don’t need like the big baths (called Parker baths). In most of the houses the house supervisors said the people do not use these because they are either scared of them, they use too much water or people are uncomfortable in them. In one house the house supervisor said the residents have different nights when they have a relaxing bath in the Parker Bath.

There are huge handrails in the toilets, on both sides of the toilet. The only people who need these are people in wheelchairs and people who have to be
helped on and off the toilets. That is not everybody in every house. They don’t look homely.

- The houses are very tidy with everything put away.

Three main things about making a supported house look homely

1. How they look is about personal taste. Making a place a home when the person who lives there cannot say what he or she wants is hard. It becomes other people’s taste or what other people think the person likes.

2. They are Department houses and places people work, not people’s homes. They are all variations on the one design, it’s more or less the same thing for every house (one size fits all). Some of these things like huge passages, huge bathrooms, huge toilets and the furniture make it look less homely. They are there because the houses were designed for safety first, not homeliness first.

3. A home is the whole house. Shared rooms should look homely too and look like it is the home of the people who live there. Most of the work so far on making the houses homely is focused on people’s bedrooms, but most of the people we met did not spend a lot of time in their bedrooms. The rest of the house still looked relatively bare and not lived in compared to people’s bedrooms.
How homely did they feel?

What could a homely house feel like?

**ATMOSPHERE** – What the place feels like, the mood
- Excitement and fun
- Safe
- Relaxing
- Sometimes quiet, sometimes noisy
- Flexible, easy going

What Alan thought after the research about the mood and feeling of the houses

- They have not put enough thought and time into making the houses feel like homes
- The Department designed the houses and didn’t do much to make them different from each other. They are all pretty much the same; then staff and sometimes families helped decorate the houses and over time some of the houses have started to look nicer but still the ones we saw did not feel like homes
- They are too big and everything in them was chosen for the people not by the people. They did not have much choice only in their rooms so the rest of the house does not feel like it is the home of the people who live there.
- They are really organized places. There are a lot of routines.
- They do not feel very easy going, they are places where everything is planned and if nothing is planned people sit around in the lounge room with the TV on but in most of the houses they said people don’t really watch the TVs.
- It might take a lot more time to make the houses feel like the homes of the people who live in them but it will also take some changes to the way things are organized.
Are the houses social places?

Looking for social things happening

**SOCIAL** – what people do together or with their friends, family and others. Sharing time and activities.

- Choose who you do things with
- Choose what you do
- Some special events but lots of day to day social things like cooking together, eating together, chatting, relaxing, watching TV, listening to music
- Having visitors
- People who live together might have some of the same interests – they might do things together that are about these interests like gardening, playing a certain game etc.

What Alan thought after the research, about how social the houses felt:

- It is about what happens in a house, what things people do together.
- We saw people sitting in the same room together, like the lounge room with the TV on, but they were not supported to talk to each other and only some people were watching the TV.
- We saw staff spending time with one person at a time – but usually they were helping them with something like eating, or putting their bags away. They were not doing fun things or helping people do things together.
- In one house, staff said that some people spend time in the small lounge room with just one other person – they both might like the same TV show or they have their things in that room, like magazines and other things they like.
• ‘Active support’ is being used to get people to do more things in the houses so they know it is their home and they have to look after it. In one house we saw a person being supported to take the clothes off the line and then another person was supported to fold them up.

• People’s bedrooms have a lot of their things in them and things they can use when they are relaxing but in most houses staff said people do not spend a lot of time in their rooms. In one house a house supervisor said that one person likes to relax in his room, watch his own TV shows and lie on his bed listening to music. She said sometimes another resident will visit him and spend time in his room with him.

• One house of the five had a vegetable garden. In this house the house supervisor said people are supported to spend time in the garden together and are given active support to do things like weeding and other people can sit outside in the garden and watch and enjoy it.

• There were no examples where staff had found social things people could do together like hobbies or anything. Mostly it was either doing jobs or doing nothing.

• Things like cooking together and cleaning together, or working on a project together are good ways of being social but we did not see many examples of this. One good example was where people worked together on a painting for the lounge room.
4. Conclusion

The houses we saw didn’t really look homely, they didn’t really feel homely and they were not places where social things happened. In some of the houses there were examples of things that people had done to make them look homely like photos, creating pictures together to hang on the walls and starting vegetable gardens. ‘Active Support’ helped it feel a bit more homely because people were involved in their home but the houses still felt like mini institutions. The things that are needed to make them more homely are:

- Put more thought into designing houses so they are not all the same basic design.
- Get people involved in choosing personal things for their houses, not just their bedrooms.
- Get better furniture that always looks comfortable for those that use it and is of good quality.
- Support people to do more things together in their houses.
- Use more imagination so rooms look good and are places people want to spend time doing things.
- Encourage people to do different things at different times like: eat dinner in front of the TV; help themselves to something to eat or drink when they get home; not having an afternoon tea around the table; go outside and do some gardening or read a magazine.
- It will take time but during that time people should be trying out ways of making them more homely not just waiting to see if they get more homely.
What can services learn from this research?

‘If you listen to me you could have good houses that are like homes’ (Alan)

Ask people with an intellectual disability like Alan what they think about making houses homely: people who have experienced living in institutions or community residential units and living in their own homes in the community.

Use some of the tools we developed in this research to think about what a homely house is like and how to make a house more homely (see Appendices).

Talk about the things this project has found out and aim to make Community Residential Units homely by involving people in their homes and in creating a homely feeling.
Appendix 1: Research Tool: What makes a house homely?

**PHYSICAL** – WHAT CAN BE SEEN, TOUCHED
- Pictures
- Furniture
- Things people want and need
- Things that belong to just one person
- Things you own, have chosen, saved up for
- Things that are to look at that mean something to you
- Things for entertainment, tv, stereo, games, books, dvd
- Things that are for decoration that you like and that make the place look good
- Everything does not have to be new, the main thing is it is wanted and needed

**SOCIAL** – what people do together or with their friends, family and others. Sharing time and activities
- Choose who you do things with
- Choose what you do
- Some special events but lots of day to day social things like cooking together, eating together, chatting, relaxing, watching TV, listening to music
- Having visitors
- People who live together might have some of the same interests – they might do things together that are about these interests eg gardening, playing a certain game etc.

**ATMOSPHERE** – What the place feels like, the mood
- Excitement and fun
- Safe
- Relaxing
- Sometimes quiet, sometimes noisy
- Flexible, easy going

People with an intellectual disability make choices about these things and have some control of and influence about them

But supported houses are workplaces too which is different from other homes. How does this impact on the these things?
Appendix 2: Research Tool: What people do in their home

Things to look for in the house when the residents are home

- People doing things together
- People doing things by themselves.
- People relaxing – watching TV, listening to music, reading
- Some people inside, some people outside
- People in different rooms doing different things.
- Doing jobs around the house – laundry, cooking, cleaning, packing clothes away.
- People talking to each other (Research notes, 06.05.07)
Appendix 3: Research Tool: Finding out how people feel in their home when they can’t tell you

Finding out how people feel about their home

Most people in the houses will not be able to tell you how they feel because they cannot speak or communicate in a way you will understand, or in a way that helps them describe things.

Ask staff some questions

- How do you know if the residents are happy here?
- How do you know if they feel safe, comfortable and at home?
- What do people do to show you they feel at home here?

Look for....

- Residents walking/moving freely around the house
- Coming and going from different rooms, going outside
- People laughing, joking, talking, smiling, mucking around together
- Resident know where things are and help themselves to things like food, snacks, turning on the TV etc (Research notes 31.05.07)
References


CHANGE. (2007). CHANGE picturebank: CHANGE.