health

Residential aged care services built environment audit tool

Online version 1.2 August 2012

State Government Victoria

Department of Health

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Department of Health

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Acknowledgements

The development of Version 1.1 of this tool was an initiative of the Aged Care Branch, Victorian Department of Health which funded and directed the project, and engaged the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) to carry it out on its behalf.

The resulting tool uses a similar format to '*Improving the environment in Residential Aged Care Facilities: an audit too*l' (2008), which was part of the Environment and Vision Optimisation in Residential Care (EnVORC) project, also undertaken by NARI in collaboration with the Centre for Eye Research Australia. That project was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing under the National Eye Health Initiative.

The EnVORC tool is based on '*Improving the environment for older people in Health Services: an audit tool*' (2004), an earlier initiative of the Continuing Care Branch of the Victorian Department of Human Services (now Department of Health), and also developed by NARI. This resource is available online at:

http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Improving-the-environment-for-older-people-in-hospitals:-An-audit-tool

Other Victorian government departmental documents that have informed this tool are:

- Aged care residential services generic brief 2000 (currently being revised and updated) www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/publications/genericbriefs/index.htm
- Dementia Friendly environments. A guide for residential and respite care. www.health.vic.gov.au/dementia

Major contributions including photographs have also been made by:

- Department of Health
- agencies providing residential aged care

The tool has been updated to Version 1.2 (August 2012) by the Department of Health to include more feedback, further research and photographs.

This guide will continue to be updated with ongoing experience and research.

Introduction

The importance of providing appropriate and aged friendly features in residential services is widely recognised within the aged care industry. As such building design needs to consider the social inclusion, independence, sensitivities and reduced sensory abilities of older people.

The definition of the built or physical environment used to guide the development of this audit tool was sourced from *Everyday dementia care: a practical photographic guide including environmental management* (Grealy, McMullen, & Grealy, 2004). In this resource 'physical environment' refers specifically to the impact that building design, materials, colours, climate, lighting and odour have on older people and others working in, living in, or visiting the facility. This audit tool considers the impact of the physical environment on older people, including older people with dementia.

The background to the development of this tool is provided in **Appendix 1**.

The audit tool

The audit tool enables Residential Aged Care Services (RACS) to perform built environmental audits and to develop action plans for improving the physical environment for older people accessing their facility. This may include plans for 'easy to achieve' changes or long term more costly changes.

The audit tool is not intended to replace existing processes and audits for occupational health and safety, hygiene, infection control, emergency equipment and air quality within Residential Aged Care Services. It aims to complement and, in some instances, to assist these processes.

This tool may be useful in Mental Health Care settings but was not designed specifically for this purpose and needs to be used in conjunction with specific regulations for these settings.

Appendix 2 outlines the principles underpinning the tool.

Aims of the audit tool

The audit tool provides information and resources to:

- increase staff awareness and knowledge of how the built or physical environment interacts with and impacts on older people
- identify improvements to the physical environment to foster a safer, more accessible and comfortable environment for older people
- consider the impact of the physical environment on older people, including older people with dementia.

The audit tool should assist staff and management in RACS to identify 'easy to achieve' changes and to recommend long term, often more costly changes.

Guide to using the tool

Who can undertake the audit?

Although the audit tool includes many features that are relevant to architects and building designers, the tool is designed to be undertaken by people working within the existing Residential Aged Care Service (RACS). This includes nursing, domestic and maintenance staff.

When can the tool be used:

- on a regular basis for example, annually
- before and/or following changes to the environment for example, design planning or renovations
- if there are concerns about the environment – for example, resident falls
- when a new resident enters the RACS for example, does furniture in a bedroom need to be placed differently to suit this resident?
- a change or concern regarding the resident's ability to function in their environment, for example,. if their vision or mobility has declined.

Preparing for the audit

Suggestions prior to conducting the audit:

- Link the auditing process into the existing quality improvement framework to ensure the organisation records and follows up identified improvements.
- Become familiar with the items before undertaking the audit, as some recommendations repeat in different settings.
- Select a setting (unit, area or bedroom) in which to undertake the audit.
  - What activities will be undertaken?
  - What types of equipment and furniture will be used in the area?
  - How will this area interact with other areas in the facility?
- Gather input from people who use the setting being audited. They can identify potential hazards and provide knowledge of current practices

What the audit tool includes

Part 1. Audit tool table

The audit tool table has five sections or *parts*, as shown in Table 1. Each part can be used separately as required:

Table 1: Audit Tool

Part	Number of recommendations
A. External areas	25
B. Entrances and hallways	43
C. Communal areas (dining, kitchen, lounge and alcoves)	38
D. Resident room	50
E. Bathrooms, ensuites and toilets	37

Each *Part* has three columns per page which include:

Column (i) **Environmental Recommendation** for improvement

Column (ii) **Achieved? -** Action required if improvement is necessary

Column (iii) **Useful tools/tips** to help identify problems and ways to improve:

- ***Tips*** identifying issues and possible solutions
- ***Resources*** identifying links to the resource review by a number for example, [4]
- ***Camera icons*** identifying links to the photo gallery

Following Part E there is a list of **References** used in researching the recommendations, which includes standards, guidelines and other relevant evidence.

Part 2. Action plan template

The action plan records identified actions and timelines

Part 3. Resource review

The resources provide the evidence base used to develop the audit tool and details of how to obtain the resources for further information if required:

- list of resources
- evaluation of resources.

Part 4. Appendices

These provide more information supporting the use of the tool.

- Appendix 1 - Background and methodology
- Appendix 2 - Design principles
- Appendix 3 - Individual seating assessment tool.

Part 5. Photo gallery

The photo gallery provides photographs to help users visualise particular recommendations in the audit tool. Where the camera symbol (shown above) is included under the useful tools or tips next to a specific recommendation, refer to the gallery for a photograph and explanation that may help clarify the tip.

Disclaimer: Please note each photograph highlights a specific recommendation or tip only and as such may contain other elements that are not supported by current research and evidence.