

2014 Commissioned Research on Dementia care

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Title of research project: Technology enriched supported housing – a study into the lived experience of elders with dementia and their carers

Abstract: As people age, it is not uncommon for dementia to develop. When it happens, over time, people may forget how to do everyday things to both look after themselves and keep safe. Eventually it may be risky for the person with dementia to continue to live alone, or even when they live with a spouse sometimes the demands of caring become too much. Daughters and sons who are caring for their relative from their own family base can feel very worried and stressed about how vulnerable they consider their loved one to be.

When living at home is no longer an option then alternatives should be available. Supported housing is one such alternative, bringing together best design of housing and care offering a real home like alternative to hospital care. Some supported housing now use technology, with sensors in the flats to let staff know how people are managing within their own place. Some schemes like this have been in existence in Northern Ireland for over 10 years, supporting people with dementia and their families. In this study we plan to explore these schemes, to find out what it is like living in such a place and what families and care workers think about these types of living options. The aim is to help us understand the good things about these types of schemes, what can be improved and what we need to change. Once we figure this out we want to share what we find with all those people who are interested in using, developing and monitoring these facilities – establishing good practice. It's a good thing we all live longer but it can be better if we live well – whether we have dementia or are related to someone who does.