

PRP

Safe, Happy & Together

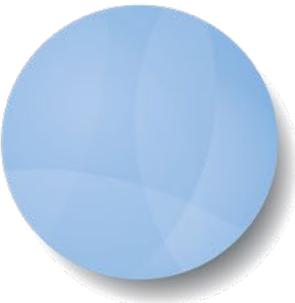


Design ideas
for minimising the
spread of infection
whilst nurturing
social interaction

... in later living communities



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Introduction

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on our older generation. In light of the current pandemic, we have been working closely with our clients to review how later living communities can be better designed. Looking at how best to respond to the challenges of bacterial and viral spread, whilst also addressing key lessons learned including the distressing impact of self-isolation and social distancing.

Building owners, managers and care staff have had to cope in unprecedented conditions to keep residents and each other safe, happy and together.

We have reflected on how good design can hugely benefit mental and physical health and overall wellbeing in extreme circumstances, as well as the everyday benefits it brings.

Later living, in this paper, refers to residential accommodation consisting of self-contained apartments with associated communal, support and ancillary spaces under one roof. In this model of housing, the accommodation is fully self-contained and this has enabled residents to self-isolate quite easily during the pandemic. In addition, with the right training and protection for staff, it is possible to deliver a high level of support and security to residents which includes access to outdoor space, meals, deliveries, virtual social events, safety information and personal interaction with staff.

The ideas presented here are for consideration and discussion and may indeed have a financial impact on build costs and this must be acknowledged. There will be conflicting requirements for cost-efficient space planning and a desire to ensure the environment is domestic rather than clinical. We would like these ideas to be taken further into interior and landscape design concepts where the building and its finishes create an intuitive sense of how to move around the building and enjoy life, safely.

We hope to engage with other designers, operators and developers so that we can continue this thinking and keep talking and learning from each other. Sharing our experiences is critical.



We'd love to hear your thoughts, so please get in touch if you would like to comment or discuss further:

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Good practice ideas for every day infection control and social interaction

Planning for a pandemic, winter flu or norovirus outbreak etc., are likely to be similar. There are measures that can be considered vital all year round and those that could be brought into play temporarily. These initial ideas are to be developed and considered in the context of legal rights of tenure and the ability for staff to manage additional tasks which could be asked of them.

Main entrance for residents and visitors

- Ideally the main entrance and foyer should only be used for residents and their visitors. Consider staff access and deliveries to be via a separate entrance. This may not be easy to manage, although it is already standard practice to have a separate delivery access point for catering supplies and associated refuse.
- The lobby at the main entrance should have the ability to control the inner and outer doors independently. This is already good practice to control heat loss and gusts of winds into the foyer. Provide a facility for visitors to speak to staff via an intercom or hatch from outside the building (or within the lobby). This will allow staff to redirect deliveries to an alternative entrance or control access for visitors whilst they are under-cover.
- Hand washing facilities should be provided in a discreet place very close to the entrance and clearly signposted so that all visitors and residents can wash their hands on entering the building without the need to enter any rooms or touch any door handles. An area for two basins could be designed within the lobby area of the unisex disabled WCs, stylishly set into a fitted cabinet, easily cleaned and just out of sight.
- During a crisis a temporary hand wash basin should be installed between the lobby doors. Water and drainage connections should be available for swift installation and removal.

Natural ventilation, light and views out

- Natural ventilation is scientifically proven to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses. The provision of generous window openings, opening roof lights etc. will therefore assist with infection control.
- Ventilation to circulation corridors should be maximised by means of ensuring external windows or a mechanical system.
- Advice can be sought from an M&E consultant to design a ventilation strategy which ensures a positive air flow around the building and sufficient air changes to reduce the spread of airborne viruses.
- Open deck access would enable the optimum provision of natural ventilation, light and opportunities for social interaction at a distance. This would bring huge benefits.
- Balconies are essential at all times to provide safe access to some outside space for residents. Opportunities for shared balconies off communal areas and circulation spaces could be considered.
- The added benefits of generous windows and roof lights are the ability to maximise natural light, communicate the weather, orientate and allow views of activities outside the building for occupants.





Considerations for the building plan

- Passing points in corridors or on deck access should be considered to ensure that in the event of social distancing it is possible to pass others without being closer than 2m. Passing points could be provided via occasional 'pop-out' balconies, seating bays or recessed entrances.
- Sliding folding walls could be included to large areas of open plan communal space so that the spaces can be used differently in the event of a health crisis (e.g. testing area, storage of PPE or for family visits).
- Front doors to apartments should be arranged at least 2m apart.
- Fixed kitchen windows into corridors could be included to provide social connection for the residents and a safe way for staff to discretely check on resident's wellbeing. Feedback from extra care schemes that have internal windows to flats has been really positive during the COVID-19 social isolation.
- Projecting balconies should be at least 2m apart and full width balconies should be capable of accommodating a 2m high screen in the event of needing to social distance from adjoining neighbours' balconies.
- Locating one of the main communal rooms adjacent to the front of the building with a large sliding/folding window could provide an opportunity for residents to safely see and speak to family members via supervised visits in the event of having to socially distance.



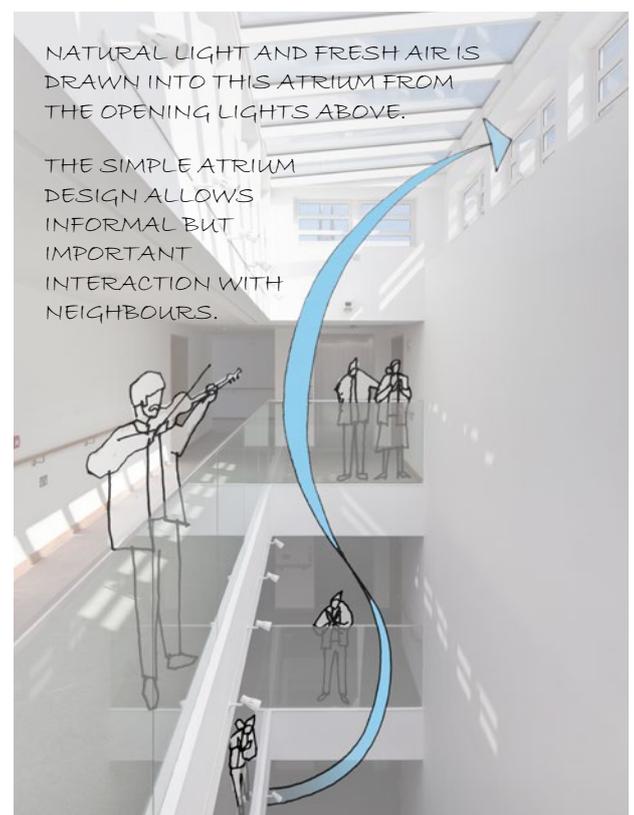
Communication

- Technology will play an important and on-going part in keeping residents informed, socially connected and healthy (used for medical assessments and consultations). Individual smart tablets and communal information screens have been used with great effect and should be accommodated in the IT/coms specification of any new building. Investment in good wi-fi coverage to avoid the need for hard wired add-on technology is critical.



Deliveries

- Provide separate entrance for kitchen deliveries and a clean separate space for disinfecting/wiping down.
- Consider providing a holding area or post room within the foyer for personal deliveries in the event that it is not possible to deliver directly to residents' apartments.
- A generous shelf or cupboard could be provided outside each resident's front door for parcels or meals to be delivered without going into the apartment.
- Supplies for management should be immediately stored in a holding room close to the main entrance.
- Where deliveries are 'held' this could be for an amount of time to avoid contamination from external sources or for wiping down/disinfecting etc.
- Ideally deliveries and collections should avoid overlap with the main entrance, communal spaces or residential corridors. This does not necessarily require a different location on the site.





Movement within the building

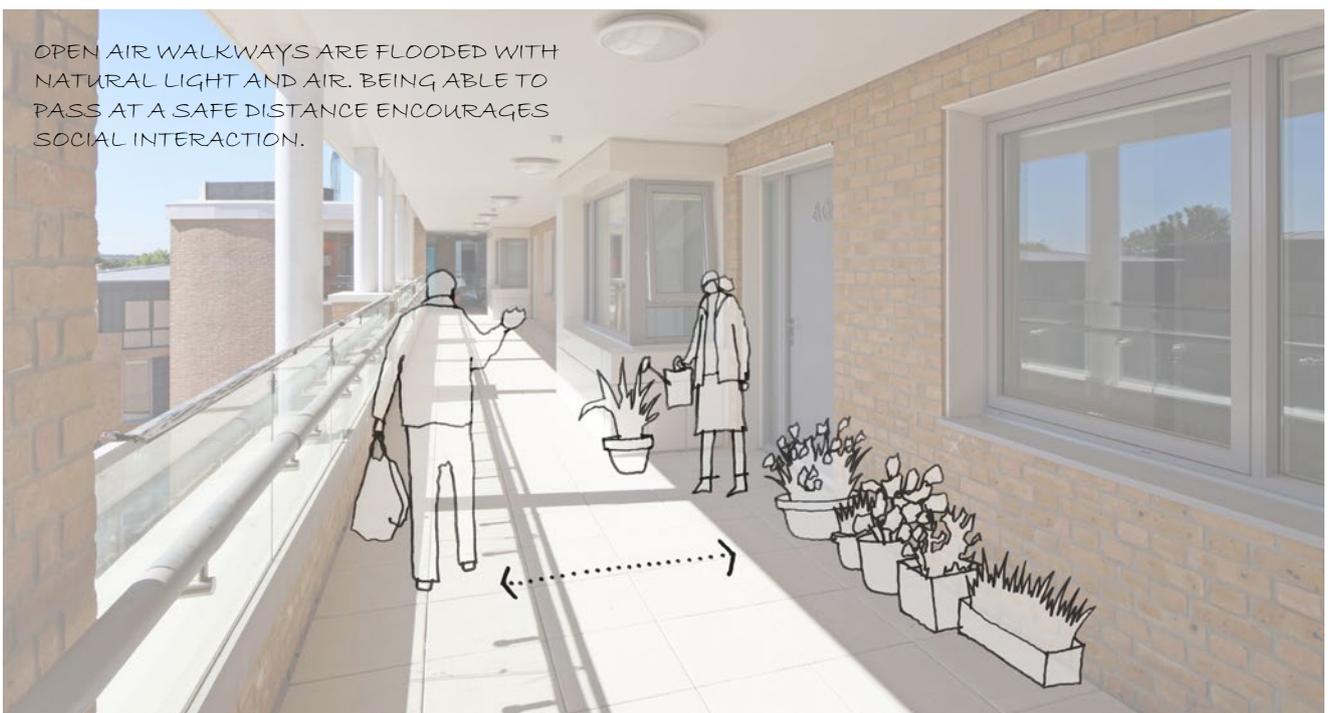
- By considering the already essential fire escape strategies, plan for increased routes to move around the building to lessen the potential for contact with others when necessary. Reduce bottle-necks and the need for two-way traffic in confined spaces. This will affect the location of lifts and stairs and necessitate passing bays in corridors.
- It may be useful to include additional cross corridor doors on hold-open devices to enable further levels of 'lockdown' or to guide people to take alternative routes.
- Incidental spaces within circulation areas can act as passing or pausing points. Even small moments of social interaction and views out can be facilitated when such spaces occur.
- Fob controls could be programmable so that in the event of having to lockdown and subdivide the building, residents could be discouraged from entering certain areas of the building.
- Ideally there should be multiple access points to the garden and out of the building, which again could be controlled with fob access.



Gardens and external space

- Access to meaningful external space is even more important for maintaining wellbeing and exercise during an outbreak of illness in the building.
- The garden should be sufficiently sized to accommodate several residents at once while social distancing.
- Walking routes which circulate so as to enable a procession in one direction which avoids cross overs.
- Several seats should be provided to enable multiple residents to sit down at once to talk, whilst being 2m away from each other.
- External furniture should be chosen so that it can be wiped down between use.
- Sheltered or covered spaces should be included to encourage residents to go into the garden for some fresh air, even during inclement weather. These areas could also be used for visiting relatives and friends without the need to go through the building.
- Several access points should be provided to the garden to avoid each zone of the building coming through the main entrance and communal spaces. Access through the stairs may achieve this.
- Balconies arranged around a courtyard provide visual contact with other residents.

OPEN AIR WALKWAYS ARE FLOODED WITH NATURAL LIGHT AND AIR. BEING ABLE TO PASS AT A SAFE DISTANCE ENCOURAGES SOCIAL INTERACTION.





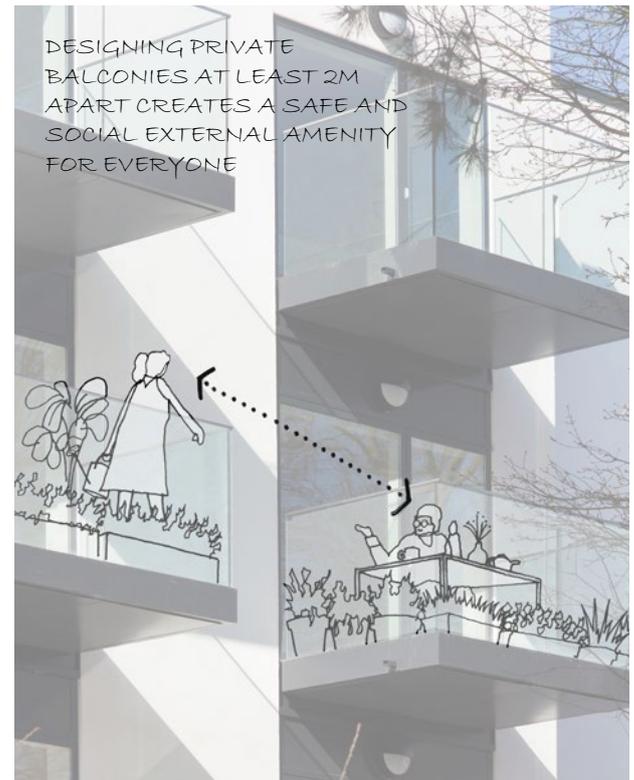
Sanitation

- Hand washing with soap rather than the use of hand sanitizer is proven to be more effective in reducing the spread of infection. The new normal will see hand sanitiser or washing stations being placed in locations we are not used to seeing, already some station platforms have handwash facilities.
- Hand washing stations at all entrances, designed well, should be considered and additionally at each lift/stair landing. These should be well designed to avoid the building looking clinical. As a minimum, no-touch hand-sanitiser dispensers should be provided, there are some good examples which are operated by foot.
- Residents should all be provided with a washing machine in their own apartments to avoid the need to use a shared laundry.
- All doors to communal rooms and corridors could be provided with PIR operated automatic openers to avoid contamination via door handles. Cross corridor doors needed for fire reasons could be on hold open devices.
- A staff laundry, where required, should be designed to sufficiently separate clean and dirty linen with a clear route in and out of the room (like that of a care home).
- The choice of materials should be considered carefully to facilitate hygienic cleaning. This could include antibacterial plasterboards, vinyl floors and the replacement of all ceramic tiles and grout with attractive vinyl wall finishes such as those by Multipanel. Copper has strong antiviral properties and could be considered for high touch areas.
- The ability to be able to clean bathroom and kitchen spaces needs careful attention to detail with services boxed in.



Multi-purpose and flexible use spaces

- The ability to re-purpose a room or space has been essential during the pandemic. For example, use of spaces for storage areas and staff sleepover instead of guest sleepover areas, spaces for treatment and also prayer, reflection and relaxation have become very important.



Storage

- Additional storage for PPE, ventilators, sanitation equipment etc. should be planned for.
- Storage local to each zone or floor of the building should be provided.
- Consider multiple cleaning stores with at least one per floor.



Staff

- Staff changing, lockers and showering facilities could be provided immediately inside a secondary staff entrance, so that staff can wash and/or change when entering or leaving the building. It is important to be able to store clothes and personal items from home, before putting on PPE if required.
- Access to the catering kitchen directly from the outside is essential with dedicated staff hand washing/ changing space located immediately adjacent to the entrance.

Ideas for additional measures during a pandemic like COVID-19



Meals

- The kitchen could be designed and sized to be capable of three meals a day for all residents. If necessary, residents could have meals delivered to their apartments, avoiding the need to shop or receive food deliveries during a lockdown scenario. This is particularly important to consider where kitchens are fitted out as a 'regeneration' or 'reheat' only service.
- Trolley space would need to be allocated close the main kitchen and, on each floor, or zone of the building.
- Access to the kitchen should be directly from the outside with staff wash space and changing located immediately adjacent to an external door.



Deliveries

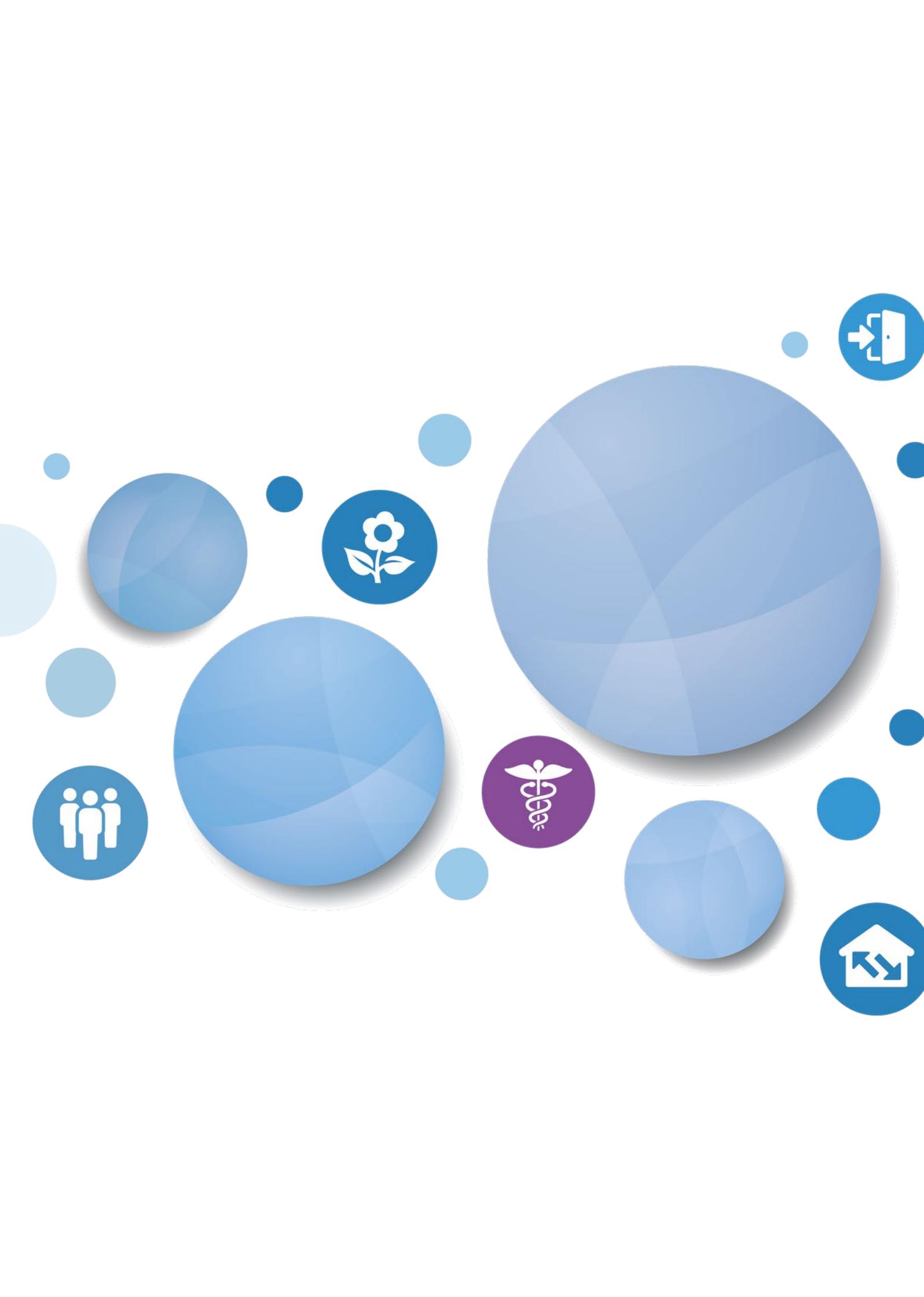
- In the event of a health crisis, allocate space for deliveries and sorting, all residents could receive their everyday essentials from a single delivery rather than multiple deliveries. Holding areas either in the building or stand-alone units outside could be incorporated into the crisis planning.



Visitors

- During a lockdown scenario or health crisis, if any visits are allowed and thought to be beneficial to a resident's wellbeing, a safe arrangement for pre-arranged and supervised visits from family could be considered. This could be within a generous lobby or air-lock at the entrance, using a glazed or sliding/folding screen for separation. Seating on either side would allow relaxed visits and conversation.
- A traffic light system in the lobby could be included to control movement in and out of the building.
- Alternatively, a 'pop-up' shelter in the entrance courtyard or back garden could be provided for supervised visits. Meeting outside has been a real option and should be considered when setting out landscape designs.





The background is a solid purple color with several overlapping, semi-transparent purple geometric shapes (triangles and polygons) creating a layered effect. Scattered across the background are numerous white circles of various sizes, some of which are partially obscured by the purple shapes.

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