



Where is your front door?

For many people living with dementia the ability to have free access to outside spaces is essential to their well-being. So why are so many care home residents essentially locked in?

THE FRONT DOOR IS THE GARDEN GATE.

When we designed our new community for people living with the earlier stages of dementia we consulted with the experts at the Dementia Centre at Stirling University. One of their principals came to visit us to discuss our plans. As we showed him round he made a very interesting observation. "I have visited hundreds of care homes. This is the first one where the garden gate is the front door".

THE GARDENS AT ROSE LODGE.

At Rose Lodge our residents have access to the gardens. There are generous terraces just outside the lounges, an allotment garden with raised beds, a fish pond, dove cotes

and domestic animals, and paths that allow residents in both of our two communities to go for a stroll and visit the community next door. There are shady corners and benches, and generous lawns. In summer many of our activities such as art, live music, and Tai Chi take place in the gardens.

IS IT SAFE?

Resident safety is often raised as a reason for restricting access to the outside spaces and this also concerned us initially. But we found that with thoughtful design and appropriate staffing levels our residents are perfectly able to use the gardens safely. Some of our more active residents use the garden independently while others use them safely with the support of carers.

THE SIMPLE PLEASURES OF LIFE.

Fresh air, the sound of birds, the trickle of water, the colours and fragrance of flowers, the dappled shade of a big tree, your cat chasing the squirrels. Perhaps most of all, the ability to simply lift your eyes to the horizon and feel part of the world. Why would we ever want to make do without these simple pleasures of life? ♦

Peter de Groot is a principal at Dementia Care Devon which operates the Cottage and Lodge at Rose Lodge, two small communities for people living with Dementia.



Gold Award