## Data attached to Work Package 4 of the Designing for Healthy Cognitive Ageing (DesHCA) Project

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## Data Archive Link and Reference

McCall, V; Rutherford, A (2024): Serious game data archive for the Designing for Healthy Cognitive Ageing (DesHCA) Project. Version 1. University of Stirling, Faculty of Social Sciences. Dataset. http://hdl.handle.net/11667/227

## Background

The Designing for Healthy Cognitive Ageing (DesHCA) aimed to test, understand, and identify facilitators and barriers for various stakeholders, including older people, in achieving cognitively sustainable housing, in both new-build and retrofit contexts.

The DesHCA project has developed a co-produced legacy tool called ‘Our House’ as part of its Work-Package 4, led by Professors McCall and Rutherford. The archived data attached to this work-package has been generated from 10 playtests of the serious game legacy tool that was developed. Our House is a serious game that was developed to generate research insights on how to deliver housing for older people that is cognitively sustainable and inclusive.

## Overview

This is the transcript from playtest session 4, which took place on the 26th of May 2023. The playtest comprised of 9 participants. This transcript has been fully anonymised, with all identifiable characteristics, including the participants’ names, removed, or replaced with pseudonyms.

I: All good. So, yeah, I just wanted to capture your feel for, actually, the game, and what it's done for you. And I guess, feedback for us as well, how do we improve it, how do you think we can use it, kind of, key learning points. I've popped into a few questions, just up here, to help us have a think. And I suppose, the first one was, what do you think informed your decisions about when building your house, you know, what was the kind of, key things that you brought out of today, I suppose, that would be really helpful to know? Who would like to start? I'm going to pick on Zhuri, because we're all here because of Zhuri.

R1: I think we went with the vision of the houses in a generation for that period in time. With a view that, people did buy their houses years ago, and stayed in it, and some people do want to still retain in it, that was able to adapt it to suit any later physical ailments that somebody has. So, interestingly, although we done a lot of, we done, kind of, a big adaptation on our house, it was, it had the ability to let Derek stay in the house longer. Which I felt was really beneficial.

I: Yeah, stay in the house for longer, was your driving motivation?

R1: Yeah. It really made us, it was quite thought-provoking, actually, the whole design.

R2: Yeah.

R1: Because we, kind of, talked about it, Noah, eh, and we were like, hmm, do we have an ensuite bathroom, do we have this, and everything, at the start, but we wanted it to be a challenge for us. That at the time, in that generation, and that house being built, what it would look like from that stage to adapt, rather than do all the adaptations at the beginning.

I: Yeah.

R2: Aye. It's assessing that trade-off, with the money you've got to invest in the adaptations, what can you afford, and what's most practical. And because he was a homeowner, it's like, you know, there is that asset value, increasingly declining, you know, heritance for offspring, and what have you. But I think what's thingy with me is that, on your example, where the private owners were able to go and future-proof it, when they started that, and they could say, right, let's just do the whole ground floor. So, if it is their condition deteriorates, you know, you've already done it. And I think, for a social landlord, that’s probably less likely to happen, because they’ll look at, what is the OT assessment, what are they asking for now. Not necessarily, what are they asking for in 10, 15 years' time. Because with a social tenant, you might not get that 10, 15 years' time, they might move elsewhere, and what have you.

So, I think from a landlord's viewpoint, it's probably less likely that they do that. But I think the key thing is, with your team and the new builds, is factoring in as much as possible. And we're already doing that – low level access thresholds, you know, downstairs bathrooms that have a shower capability, and the drainage is all there underneath the floor, and stuff. So, that’s already happening, and you know, the more you can build into that, from a social landlord's viewpoint, then you want to do that. But, and in terms of private owners, to me, there is the scope that we should be looking at, if they can afford to pay, then let them pay, you know. And give them that information, that guidance, that support, that knowledge, that access, to be able to enable that.

Whereas, maybe now, they don't know that, and they only know that if they ask the right people the right questions. And you don't know what you don't know, so how do you know to ask those questions. So, there's that element that probably comes out of it, for me.

I: Yeah, absolutely. And I think, we were talking about that, the activeness, that is sometimes further down the journey at that point, as well. But if the information and advice was at this side, maybe that could have been mitigated.

R2: Yeah.

I: Some, yeah.

R1: Yeah.

I: I think that’s a really good point. And I was wondering about your, Zhuri in particular was like, and them, and that’s what they do. I wondered, has it made you think about your own house, you know, this game?

R1: Absolutely, I was just saying that to Adalee and Naomi earlier on. My house is 20 year old, or something like that, and it was adapted inside. It's a new build, but it was adapted inside with wider doors, and things like that. And we converted our garage when we went into the property, with a view in the future that we could, if anything happened to us and we couldn't get up the stairs, that that room could be used as a bedroom, with potential access to the toilet that could be adapted, the downstairs toilet that can be adapted. But you also think, well am I going to always live in that house, or you know, so there's always that question. But will it suit my needs? And it does make you think, it is really thought-provoking, and is your house really suitable, and should you downsize. I like where my house is, you know. There's a lot of questions, it makes you really think, it definitely makes you think about your own property.

R2: And I think, I mean, the real aim is trying to maintain people in their tenancies for as long as possible.

R1: Yeah.

R2: And, you know, there's business cases for that, like you've mentioned in terms of, you know, the cost of void turnover, disruption for tenants, and what have you. But even for private owners, there's that cognitive, mental wellbeing, that that’s probably their family home, it's where their memories are, and their friends are, and their support circle is. So, you know, as much as you can do that, that’s what your real aim is, eh?

I: Yeah, definitely. And I think that your vignette really embodied all of that. And out of all the teams, you were very strategic on the pros and the cons, you always listed them, each one, and noting the, what one do you have to give up for the other, that’s quite interesting. So, well done. It shows it's a messy process to actually go through, doesn't it?

R2: Yeah, there's usually not a perfect answer, there's just the best of the worst answers that you can come to. Because, generally, your health's declining, and your mental health is declining as well, you know. And, you know, death comes to all men, as they say, I think, was it Hamlet who said that. But it's easing that journey, and having the quality of life through your journey, as long as possible.

I: Yeah, definitely.

R1: I think the question is, you always think it's never going to happen to me. That’s one of the main points. But it does make you think, because well, when you see some of that, and the stories, and scenarios around the table, it can happen quite quickly to people. Which was quite a scary thought, actually, but it makes you think. I enjoyed it.

I: Good. We'll go onto Sean and Kerry, as well, just because you've been pointing out to us somebody who did well, in sorting out the ground floor. What are your thoughts, and, yeah?

R3: Well, for us, we started off, we went well over our budget. So, we were putting in luxury bathrooms, because it was a four bedroomed cottage, and things like that. So, we really had a panic moment of trying to address, kind of, what we had put there before. So, obviously, as I said, it was a big property, a big family property, as well. And her parents had issues with Alzheimer's, so that, kind of, we were thinking about it, and we would imagine there was some, sort of, future-proofing going in there already. So, we were trying to think along that lines, we made sure there was a downstairs bedroom. So, it really, kind of, stood us in good stead going forward.

I: Uh-huh.

R4: Yeah, and I guess from my point of view, a lot of people, you know, want ground floor properties, and there's not enough to go around, you know, and to future-proof for everybody. So, it's trying to get a link for people, you know, who are applying for social properties, you know, can they do anything to adapt the current properties that they're in. And does everybody need to go on, you know, our ground floor list, you know, because we do have quite a big thing for this, don't we? Because I'm the person who, you know, I look at putting people on it, and you know, it doesn't always sit right with me as an OT, you know, because I can see that there's potential in the current property that we're not looking at, at the moment.

I: Yeah. And that’s why you were able to give us very specific adaptations, as well, a bit of bilateral.

R4: Yeah, and on the other side of things, people had choices, you know, and they want to, and you know, we can never stop people moving, too. You know, and if you want to move from a two storey to a ground floor, you know, it's quite a murky, yeah.

I: Yeah. What's your main ask as an OT, what do you think we should be integrating into every house?

R4: Hmm. Yeah, I mean, yeah…

I: If you had a wish list.

R4: …like, to be inclusive. So, yeah, I guess, because yeah, definitely, larger hallways for turning, to make it, future-proof it for wheelchair users. Because, like our stock, we have a lot of older stock, with very narrow hallways. So, as an OT, especially in ground floor properties, to have larger hallways for people to get through doorways.

I: Yeah.

R4: So, it's quite small.

R2: Aye, and that’s a disparity between social housing new build, and private new build. Where social housing has to have larger hallways. Where, maybe it's changed, but it used to work in Balcarres, where private properties don't need that same amount of space. But it's the same people that’s living in it, regardless of what their tenure is.

I: Uh-huh.

R2: And they’ll have the same needs. But just picking up on your point. One of the things I think we should be looking to put in every single house is, like, you know, quality broadband, so that people can get that GP, on the Facebook, they get the support network on the Facebook, they can get access. So, they can almost be homebound, but travel the world, to a certain extent. To me, that’s where, a key thing that should be going forward.

I: Yeah, absolutely, I think that’s a really good point. And that was one of the main mechanisms for cognitive support, that we maybe sometimes overlook, so yeah.

R2: Yeah, and kind of, picking up on your point about, it slows down the rate of, you know, wellbeing, if it's a medical adaptation and change, but you don't see that in the cognitive, there's still that sharp drop-off. And that’s where, maybe, that would help on the cognitive in terms of, what's the adaptations that’s going to help the cognitive not have the same drop-off.

I: Yeah, I like this.

R3: And that’s definitely what Adalee picked up on, in quite a lot of our things, that whole, kind of, like using the technology, the Alexas, and that kind of thing.

R4: Yeah, they can, they're really good solutions to all sorts of issues, and they're really simple. Like, having Alexa can really, you know, just like, you know, it's five o'clock, time to take your pills, you know, that kind of simple stuff, but really, really effective.

I: Uh-huh.

R4: And, yeah, the wifi is really important. And, yeah, to make sure it's accessible to everybody…

R2: Yeah.

R4: …and everyone can afford it as well.

I: Yeah, and they're not as pricey as they used to be, yeah, everyday technology, make a big impact. But you need the infrastructure, so yeah, good point, very good. I'm going to come to Joseph, what were your thoughts, any examples of how the life changes has changed your understanding of ageing?

R5: I think, for us, our health, both physical and cognitive, decreased across all of the changes. So, it was how marked the difference was, very, very quickly our home became unsuitable for us. So, it was trying to future-proof that, but keep it within budgets, and looking at options. But also, the impact on wellbeing, as well. We didn’t have the same, kind of, ties to the home that Noah and Zhuri's vignette seemed to have, so we were quite amenable to moving, and we did move. But I think, that then had an impact on their wellbeing, because we were moving to areas that, maybe…

R6: Less...

R5: …yeah, less attractive to us, in terms of meeting friends, or public transport. So, it was, I think the other thing, was trying to understand, you know, what our needs were going to be in the future.

I: Uh-huh.

R5: Because it's impossible to predict. So, we were trying to future-proof our home, but then we would get something, or get an example that, you know, wee didn’t think of, or weren't planning for, and then have to go in a completely different direction, and we've spent our budget on something else entirely. So, it's really difficult just to, to have a plan, and then stick to it, because you don't know what's going to happen.

I: Yeah.

R6: Budget was a big thing for us because we were in the private sector, and you didn’t have access, maybe, to the grants, or your landlord wouldn’t do things, so you were quite restricted, compared to if you're an owner/occupier, or if you're in social rented, you're, kind of, a lot more…

I: Yeah, yeah.

R2: It's the worst of both worlds, almost, eh?

R5: It's a bit about tenure, isn't it, because you can't, you need that landlord approval to put in the adaptation. And if you've not got a social landlord that’s going to pay for things, and you're expected to fund things on your own, and you've got difficulties to try and get social housing, and need to move.

R2: Aye, maybe that’s where the legal side, you know, the Government side needs to step in and start forcing private landlords to say, if it's an OT assessment, you will pay for this. Ultimately, they're in there to make money, so why are they allowed to make money, but not invest in what is a social cohesion, the tenants that are in there. To me, they’ve got a moral responsibility that they need to accept, it's not just about banking, you know, their monthly rent. So, for me, the Government should be looking at stepping in, and enforcing that.

I: Uh-huh.

R4: I think the OTs do, if they are recommending, they do write and ask them, and they have to get a formal, you know, refusal, or…

R2: Yeah.

R4: …there has to be a reason. Because there is a legal obligation under the, whatever Act, isn't there, now.

R2: So, there already is that?

R4: Yeah, uh-huh.

R2: Well, maybe they can force them to do it, then, yeah.

R4: Yeah.

I: But it's actually very difficult, in reality.

R4: It is very difficult.

R2: So, there's quite a few loopholes in it, then, maybe that’s what needs tightening.

R4: Yeah, because a lot of our applicants, you know, are handing over houses, because they say the landlord won't agree, and it can be small adaptations. And we don't actually check that out. So, you know, it's more people on the list, as well.

I: Yeah, and I think that’s what you were all saying earlier, then everything that you don't get a solution for, it goes onto the social housing list, yeah.

R4: Yeah.

R2: And that’s a problem that, you know, can't be, you know, absorbed infinitely, you know.

I: Yeah, well definitely, we're not building enough homes to do so.

R2: And the majority of private landlords are actually letting what used to be social housing, you know, under the right to buy scheme. Which, you know, you can argue the merits of that, plus the minus. But you are where you are the moment, a lot of that stock that’s sitting with private landlords, is ex-social housing.

I: That’s a good point, yeah, absolutely. But you've got different tenures, that expect different standards, expectations, different processes. And I think you all brought that out very well. I'm going to come to Ben, now, any thoughts from Ben's team, has the game helped visualise your own experience?

R7: Well, listening to everybody else, we probably had the easier one than everybody else, although Ben was ill. But it does make you think outside the box, with some of the things that they do. And they need to, as I was speaking to you earlier on, we all seem to make changes when we get to stage three, when it's a bit too late, where maybe, stage two, should we start making changes. And it's harder for us, as a Council, to do changes in properties, because the majority of the houses are old, although, from the last meeting, the new builds, they're making changes in that. But it's too late for all the old tenants, because a lot of them, well Ben was in that property for 40 years, and although it was an ideal house for him, one level, and we could adapt things, right at the start, before we moved to stage one, we adapted some stuff for him.

But as landlords, as I say, we haven't got that today, because the houses are already built at that old, and as you were saying, the halls are narrow, upstairs bedrooms, no access to toilets upstairs, where they need stair-lifts, they need level access trays, like for showers, because they make a big difference in people's lives, as we said, when they need help. So, it did make me think about that, yeah. I just don't know how we're going to deal with it. Because the finances just are not there to make the changes, as well.

I: Uh-huh, so changes in the finance system to support future-proofing earlier, would have been necessary.

R7: Aye, it would be a good idea to try and future-proof earlier…

I: Yeah, absolutely.

R7: …than wait to stage three.

I: And what would be on your wish list? We've got halls, wifi, anything else?

R7: Well, again, I know some people like a bath, as we were speaking earlier. But I think, wet-floor showers is a main thing, because it does make it easier for people getting in and out. Widening doors, is one of the issues we had as well. Sometimes they can't get access into different rooms, for a wheelchair. And ramps into their property, is a big thing, because they just haven't got the…

I: Level access, uh-huh.

R7: …level access, and they can't, yeah.

I: And I forgot to ask, what would make your life easier as an allocations team?

R5: More housing.

I: More housing.

R6: More of Elizabeth's housing, probably. Because the stuff, like the ones in Cowie, or the ones in Bannockburn, and that, they're your, kind of, ideal, because you know it is…

R5: Yeah, accessible.

R6: …built to a standard that will mean that people can live there, and live there, yeah.

R5: I think, if you look at the demands on Stirling Council, for instance, the biggest demand for accessible housing, is larger wheelchair accessible housing. So, families with children who need wheelchair accessible housing, because we just don't have that type of stock. And I can think of, off the top of my head, there's maybe ten, a dozen families, that need that type of housing. And you're lucky if we allocate one wheelchair accessible property, that’s three bedrooms or more, a year. So, we just don't have the stock to house these people. And as we spoke about earlier, there are very, very few alternatives.

And what we're dealing with is people that view it as the Council's responsibility, and in a certain aspect, it is, because you can argue that these families are homeless, because their current properties are no longer, it's no longer reasonable for them to remain in that property. And it's really, really difficult for us to set expectations, and provide housing options, type advice, and look at other options, because quite simply, we just don't have the stock. And that’s even with the targets for wheelchair accessible homes in new developments, and things, it's just not being built quick enough.

I: How do you offer housing options, when there's no options.

R5: Yeah, that’s what we do, and there are very, very few options.

I: Yeah.

R5: In fact, there's none, outside the social housing, if you need a three or four bedroom, or larger, wheelchair accessible property, it's social housing.

R6: Even within, it's really the Council, because not many other housing associations in Stirling will have adapted properties.

I: Yeah.

R2: And that’s where there's a wee disparity, as well. Where RSL, registered social landlords, will get an annual grant to do adaptations, and obviously, say they’ve got a list of 30, and they can only afford to do, you know, the 15 that’s in that time, a priority, they’ll do them. And the other 15 will just sit and wait 'till the grant the following year. Now, sometimes, RSLs will get a late budget allocation for somebody else that’s underspent. But the disparity is, local authorities get no budget allocation, they need to pay that out of the normal HRA spend. And we're not talking, you know, 20 or 30 grand, we're talking, you know, significant sums of money, you know, 100,000, 200,000. So, at the moment, Stirling Council is pretty much on the ball, so you know, we're on top of any adaptations that come through, and we get them done, you know, quite quickly.

But, you know, if it was a case that there was a high number of adaptations, it would have a significant impact. And I know other local authorities find that disparity quite challenging to manage.

I: Indeed, indeed.

R5: I was just going to say quickly, I think the expectation is that, it's the Council's responsibility, whereas the RSLs don't have it to that extent, as well. Because when you speak to elected members, and you speak to people on a housing list, when you're speaking about housing options, or even speaking to employees of RSLs, they don't see it as their responsibility in the same way as the Council do, that we have to provide suitable accommodation.

I: Yeah, that extra pressure.

R5: Yeah.

I: Can I go to Elizabeth, because with the new builds, so we've talked a lot about existing properties. But what do you do to make your new builds inclusive, what would be on your wish list, as well?

R8: So, all new builds, now, need to have level access. And you also need to install, so if it's a two-storey property, you need to install a downstairs WC, and you need a drainage point in for the future. We do a lot of single-storey, which have quite, well, 1200 hallways, kind of thing. We started fitting, so when we initially started our builds, we fitted standard bathrooms, and we were changing so many of them to wet-floor showers. Because they were, some of the few ground floor properties we had, so now as standard, we just fit wet-floor showers to them all.

I: Yeah.

R8: So, in terms of our overall stock, you know, they're much improved. But, probably, now thinking about it, for me, and thinking about it is, the properties that are a two-storey, where you’re putting a downstairs WC, and you're putting a drainage point in where a shower could be added, but realistically, that ground floor, the floor areas are now so tight, that probably you're not actually getting room for a bedroom, or you would lose the living area, you know, kind of thing. So, realistically, that’s a family house, if something, that’s still not going to be a lifetime home, because you know, you're not going to be able to use that as a downstairs bedroom, and have level space in it. So, but then, the challenge is, how do you build on a large scale, but accommodate all of that.

I: Yeah.

R8: But I think, even thinking about the adaptations that we were talking about, our future-proofing, thinking about the actual impact of having to get some of those changes made. And likes of the existing housing stock, a lot of is unsuitable, because a lot of is replace and rebuild, kind of thing. So, trying to change walls, or knock doorways through, or widen doorways, is major work. And the impact that has on the wellbeing, you know, kind of thing, of that person, while that work is ongoing.

I: Uh-huh.

R8: So, thinking about it now, so in terms of the regs, and in terms of the guidance, and housing for varying needs, you know, we're ticking all the boxes, but realistically, we're probably a long way away from actually making it a lifetime home for somebody, you know, kind of thing, or a lifetime home for a family to live in.

I: Yeah.

R8: But, for us, we try and, obviously, do the actual structure of the property, and you provide the level access, you provide the wet-floor shower. But then, looking at it, we're limited with what else we can do, because until there's an OT assessment done for a specific person, because there's such a huge variety of needs, you know, of anything. So, we still end up going in and doing the adaptations afterwards, but actually, that’s having, probably, a huge impact on that person's wellbeing, or the family's wellbeing.

I: And later budgets.

R8: And budgets. So, I don't know what the answer is…

I: Yeah, no it's a tricky…

R8: …to tick all the boxes.

I: …yeah, it's a tricky one, isn't it?

R2: And builders will always push back on the availability of land, you know, they try and cram properties in, that’s why plots are so small, and they're so tightly condensed, you know. And that’s, again, it comes down to, it's legislation that needs to change, in terms of what's allowable in planning.

I: Uh-huh.

R2: Without exception, you know, so that it is future-proofed. I mean, look at some of these new housing estates, and they're, I mean they're, frankly, like, really, really poor. I mean, you just see it and say, what's that actually affecting people's wider wellbeing, and social cohesion. Because, aye, they're cohesion, because they're like that, next to each other, living. You know, they do need space, and you know, that comes with internal space, as well. So, to me, there's a big challenge there, and it's fundamental, core at the beginning of the process, that needs to change.

I: Yeah, I think that’s it. And I've run out of time. I would actually talk about this for another hour. So, this is fantastic. Sorry. So, was the game helpful?

R2: Yes.

R1: Yeah.

I: Yes.

R1: It was really helpful, really good.

I: Are you all going to go back and look at your own homes in a different way?

R1: Yes.

I: Okay, that’s good, then. Sorry, I forgot to ask.

R5: [Inaudible 0:25:23].

**End of transcript**