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Background

People living with mental illness (PLWMI) discharged from wards often move to inadequate homes, with poor conditions affecting their health and leading to re-hospitalisations.

Despite research on psychiatric wards and the central role of the built environment (BE) to deinstitutionalisation and social reintegration, little is known about the BE after the discharge from the psychiatric ward and how PLWMI’s living conditions affect their health, including clinical outcomes, wellbeing, and social reintegration.

This cross-disciplinary research brings healthcare architects, clinicians and psychologists, aiming to highlight the importance of the BE as an integral part of a comprehensive rehabilitation plan.

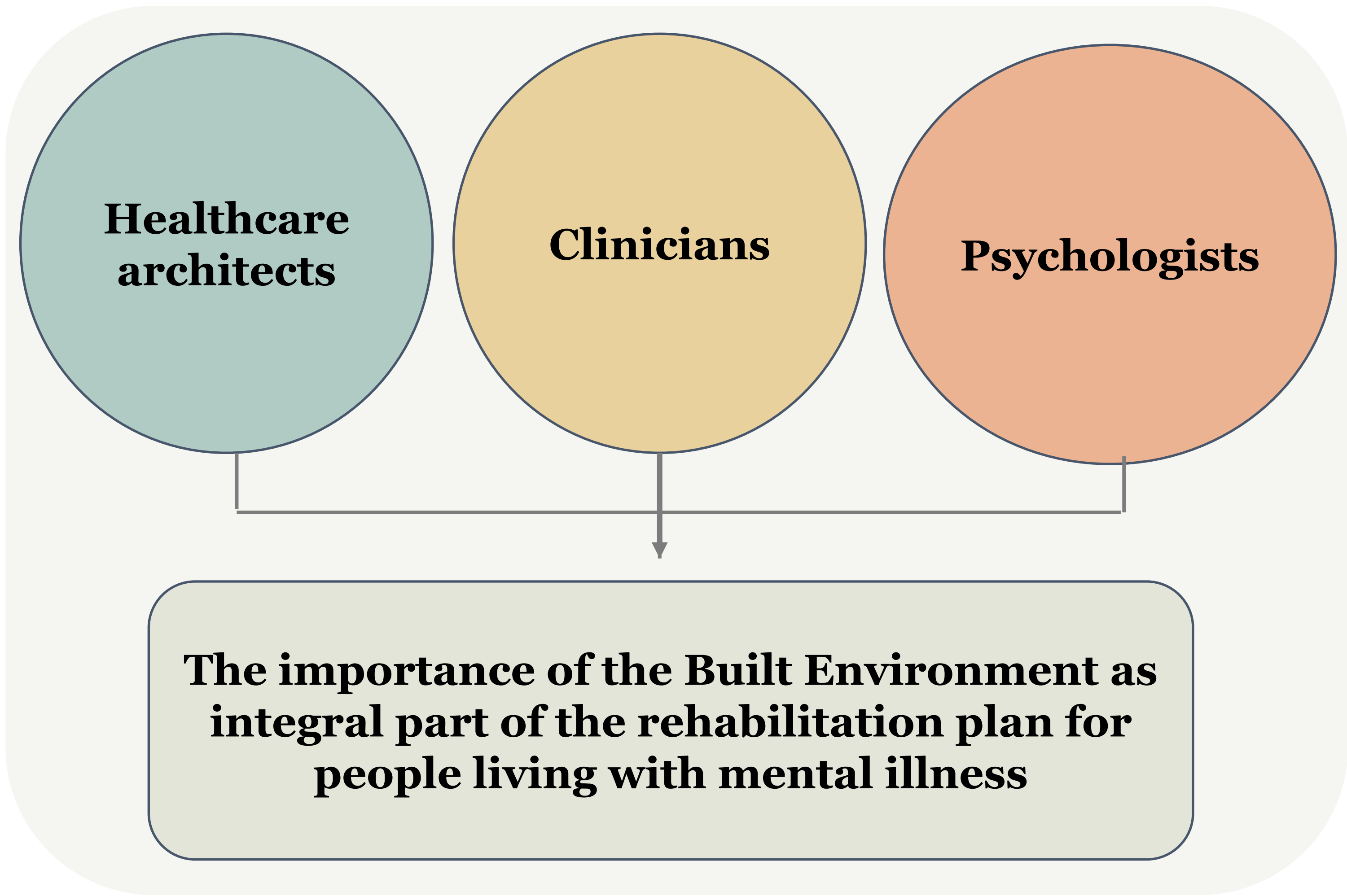


Image 1. Cross disciplinary research

The research is examining the home environment needs of post-hospitalised PLWMI in independent living accommodation in the community, to prevent relapse and encourage psychosocial reintegration.

Methods

- Methodology includes:
- a systematic review on the needs of PLWMI related to their home BE and
 - the development of a checklist for evaluating the home BE to support PLWMI.

To validate the checklist, the research team will employ site visits to recently discharged PLWM living in the community to perform the checklist and conduct semi-structured interviews. The research is underpinned by the SCP theoretical model of environmental provision (Chrysikou, 2019).

Discussion

By adopting this cross-disciplinary approach, this research is addressing the issue from a 360 perspective, both from the built environment and psycho-social aspect.

Findings comprise improvements for the living conditions and support the psychosocial re-integration of PLWMI into the community, targeting social services and government policies on housing and facility conditions for social care, strengthen social workers' skills to assess premises in an informed way and evaluate living conditions, especially in reaction to the environment.

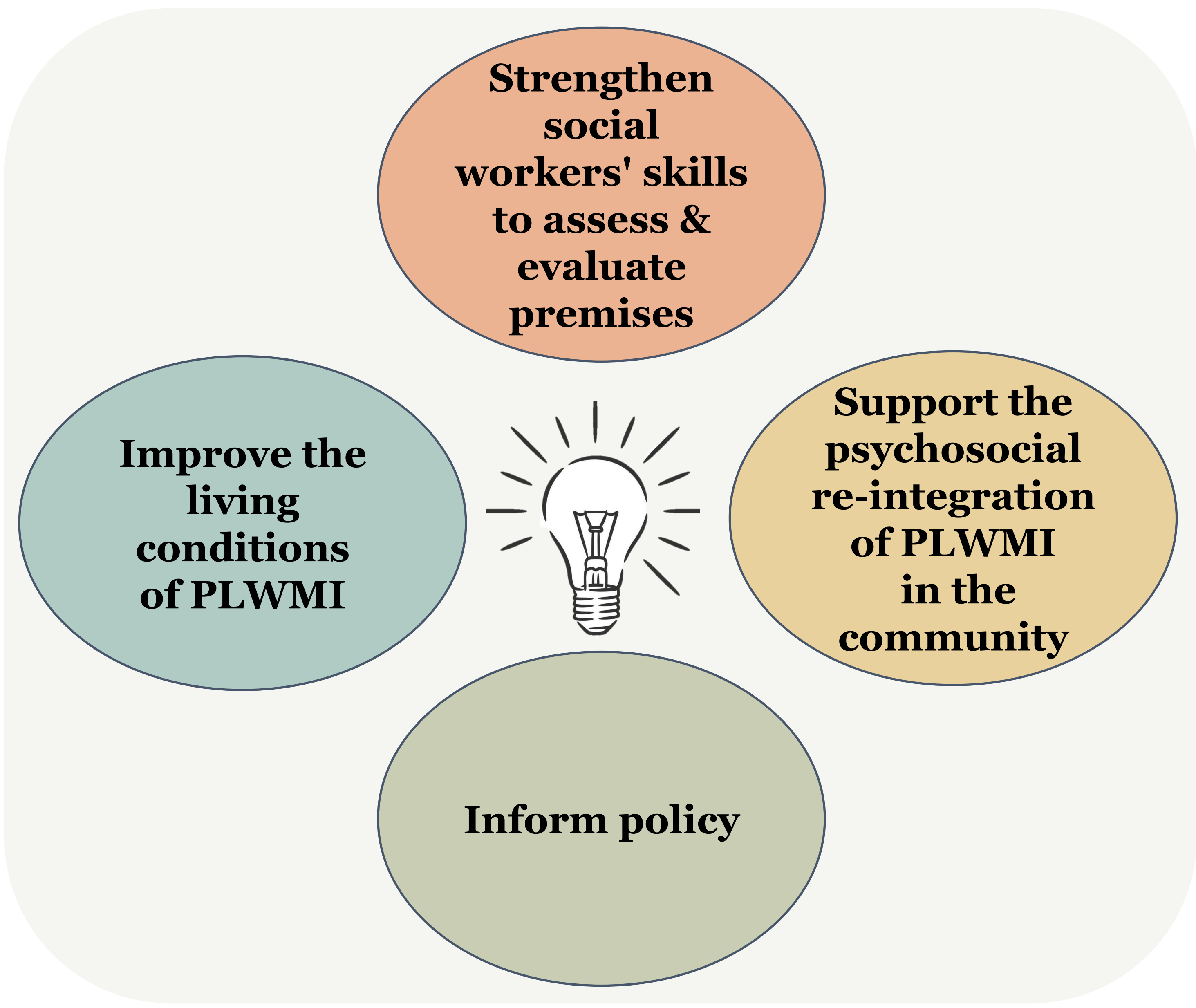


Image 2. Findings

Conclusion

This research project supports that psychosocially supportive environments promote independence for PLWMI.

- The project findings and validated checklist could be used to:
- inform policy makers, urban planners and housing providers, enabling them to make more informed decisions,
 - develop policies, design guidelines that prioritise the needs of PLWMI,
 - create more supportive and inclusive home BEs,
 - improve community integration and improved health and well-being,
 - benefit PLWMI, carers, health authorities, and health and social policies.

References
Chrysikou, E. (2019). Psychiatric institutions and the physical environment: combining medical architecture methodologies and architectural morphology to increase our understanding. *Journal of Healthcare Engineering*, vol. 2019, Article ID 4076259, 16 pages, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2019/4076259>

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