

The East London Personality Disorder Unit - Case Study

Introduction

IHP was appointed as the Trust's Principal Supply Chain Partner in February 2004 for this highly significant pilot design project. As one of four such projects round the country, this project has been driven by the desire to learn from the design shortcomings which have bedevilled the design of previous mental health facilities.

The Trust clinical team had thoroughly researched the project by visiting similar projects in Europe and Scandinavia and had reached a clear view as to what form the building would take. At interview, IHP put forward a number of design options, one of which was ultimately built.

From the outset, IHP and the Trust worked as a team:-

- to create a building with an environment that will be appropriate to the care policies of the Trust
- to learn from the Trust's extensive research into the design of such facilities and
- to be proactive in identifying problem areas and working them through to provide beneficial solutions.

The PDU was the second ProCure 21 mental health project that IHP had been appointed to as PSCP. To benefit from the experiences of both Trusts a joint design workshop was held to share information on all aspects of design in a mental health context. Issues were raised in relation to the requirements for designing for anti-ligature and the effect this has on bathroom pod design, on door furniture, on window formats and on interior design in general.



The supply chain fully embraced the sharing of information and ideas in reaching solutions for serious design problems affecting the delivery of care for mental health patients.

Design Issues particular to Mental Health Facilities

With the same architectural practice involved in both projects, use was made of their concept of emotional mapping and sense sensitive design to determine the best arrangement of colour, design features and room layout. As a development that is essentially residential the design team, in collaboration with the Trust's team, has produced a design which will encourage the positive treatment of mental health patients.

Bathroom pod design for the PDU has been drawn from a number of previous projects, taking the best aspects and removing those that have been proved not to work. With the increasing use of sophisticated systems (for example, for the prevention of flooding from taps being left on, for time limiting the use of light fittings and for alarm requirements) a great deal of work has gone into co-ordinating these services to create the best design.

With window design, and the requirement to restrict openings, ventilation of bedroom spaces has become a key issue. The demand to allow patients control over their own environments means that the ventilation has to be capable of moderating the rise and fall in temperature. Given the need to consider anti-ligature issues at the same time, it has required, as with the bathroom pods, co-ordinated response from the design consultants and potential window suppliers to come up with an approach that will satisfy the key issue of environment control.

The Accommodation

The PDU provides accommodation for twenty patients in two wards of ten beds. Each ward has single bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms. The ward support accommodation provides a number of group therapy spaces together with dining and other communal rooms. A large communal space, which is well lit with natural light from high level glazing, has been created in front of the bedroom area. This allows room for a pool table and other activities.

As the PDU is a residential facility which effectively becomes home for the patients due to their length of stay, facilities were provided off-ward. These include a computer room and education library, an art space and a fitness room. A café, with television, dvd, video and music systems, adds to the social ambience of the accommodation.

Elsewhere on the ground floor, space has been provided for quiet contemplation.

The management support for the clinical functions of the building has been located on the first floor in a separate secure zone. This includes teaching accommodation in the form of seminar rooms and office accommodation for staff involved in community liaison work. Offices for the clinical staff can also be found here. A staff room is provided on this level, ensuring that staff, working within the wards and patient activity spaces, have a relaxation area away from the patient accommodation.



To facilitate the administration of the Mental Health Act procedures and appeals, a tribunal room has been included together with a clerk's office.

The PDU location sits within the former Hackney Hospital site, off Homerton High Street in East London. Although the building is surrounded by high fencing, the team researched the requirements for the landscaping in some detail. A five-a-side football pitch is included with an all-weather table-tennis table. The soft landscaping allows patients to cultivate their own plants and provides a welcome outdoor space for sitting and for activities such as barbeques.

Now the building is in use, the team is beginning to get feedback on the building's performance. The feedback is positive, describing the facility as "hotel-like". A full post-project evaluation will take place in January 2008 to begin to determine the success of the project.

The PDU now renamed the Millfields Unit was officially opened by the Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson, on 14th November 2007.