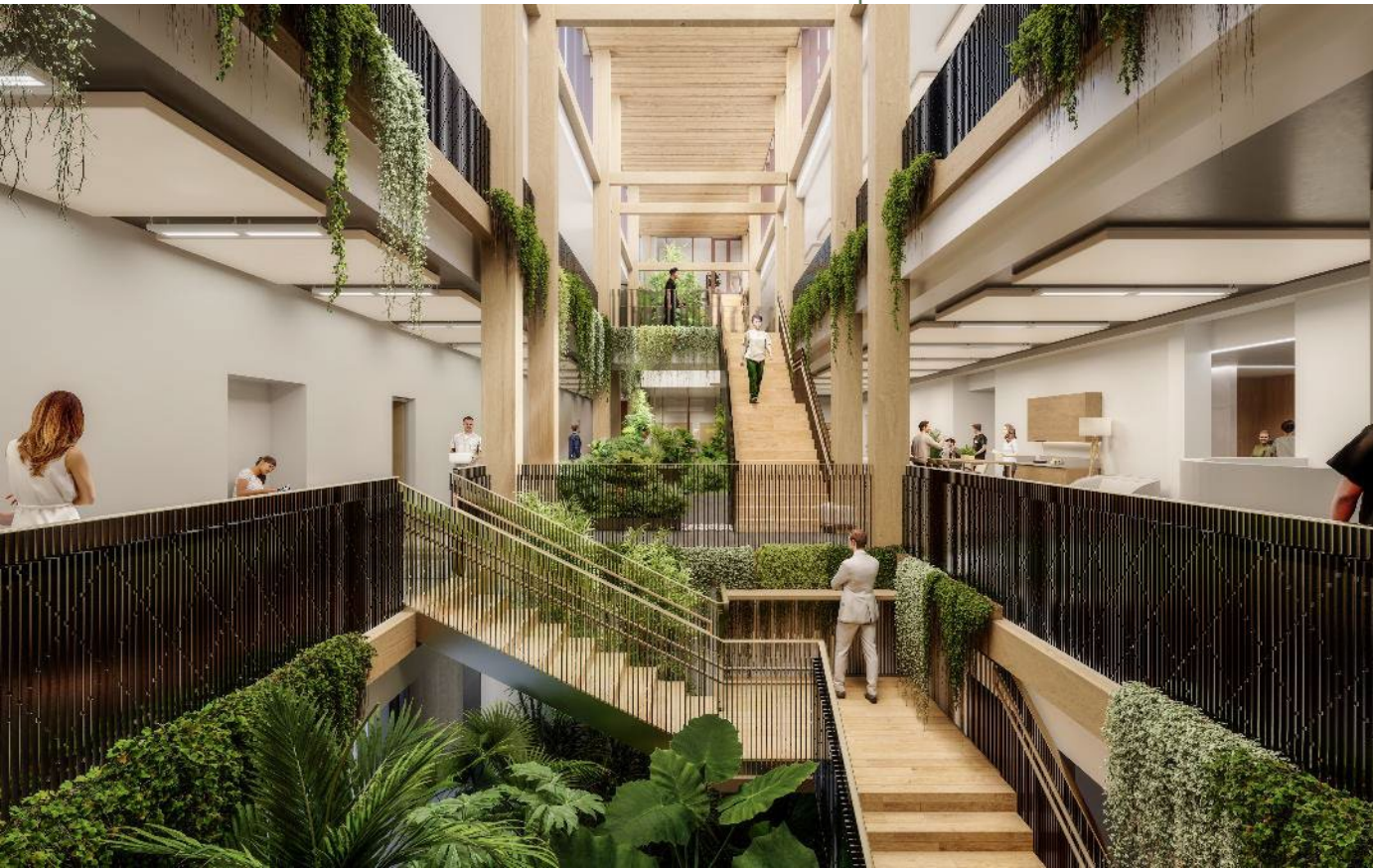


AHR presentation

Trauma-informed design in practice



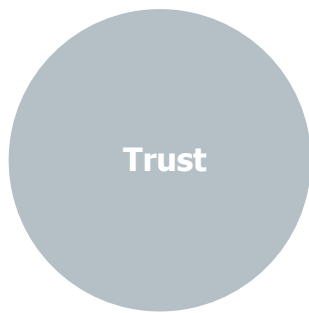
Insights on designing for sensory and emotional experience.

13 May 2026

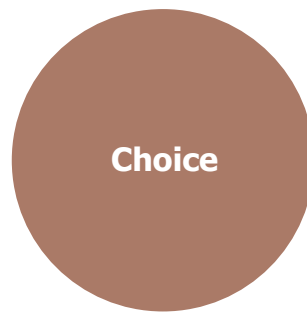
Trauma-informed care



Creating physically and emotionally safe environments



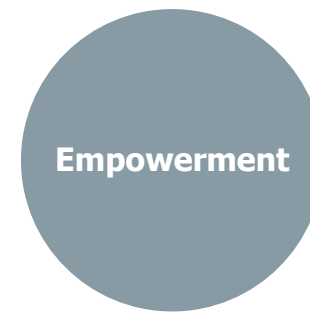
Being reliable, transparent and building connections.



Empowering individuals with options and control



Working together, and building partnerships



Supporting individual strengths and self-advocacy



Recognising and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds

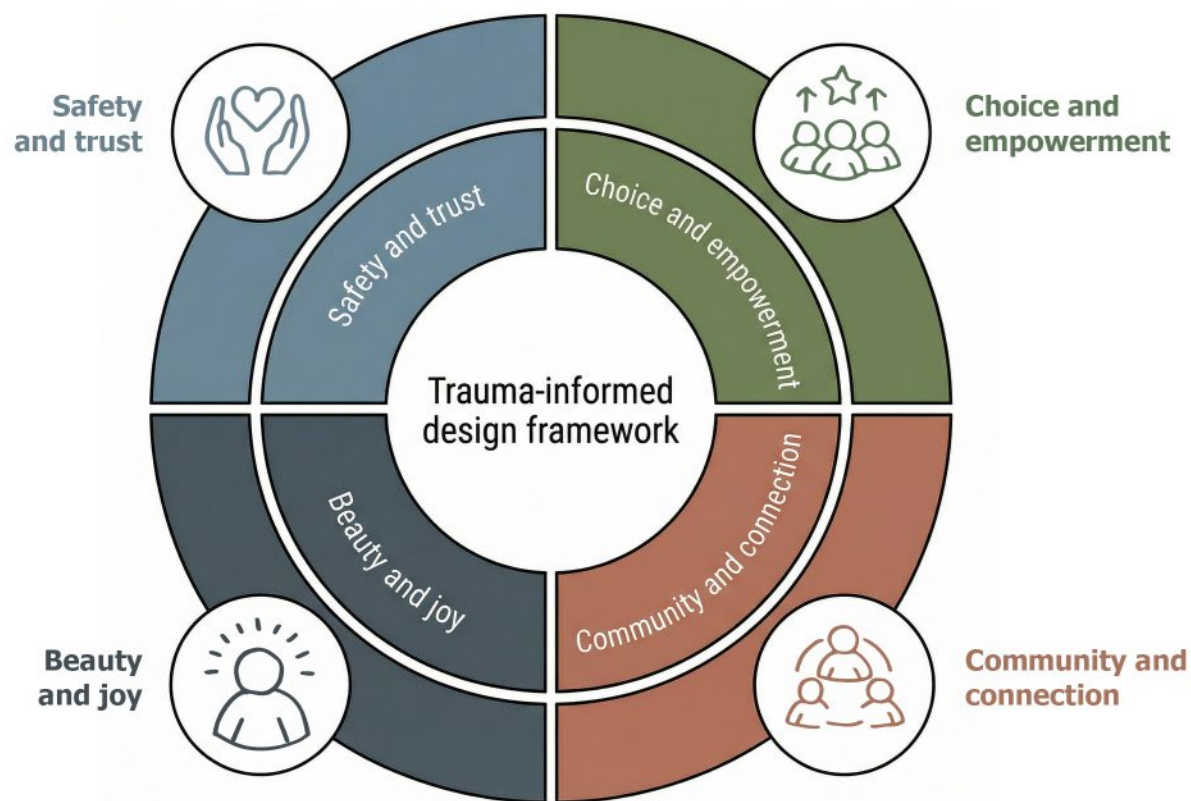
Enablers



Barriers

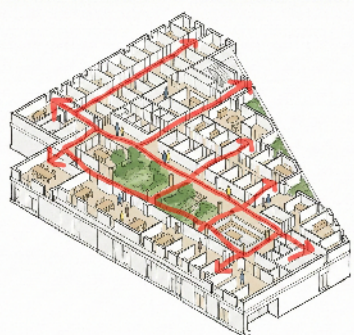


Designing for scenarios



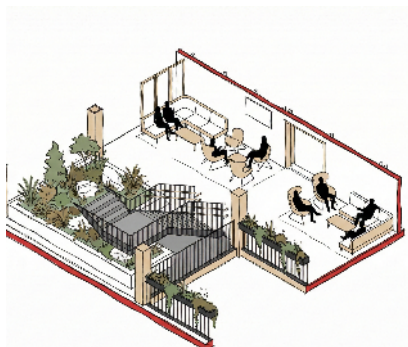
The four core principles of trauma-informed design.

Safety and trust



Simple, logical layouts

Intuitive wayfinding / circulation
Avoid long corridors or rooms



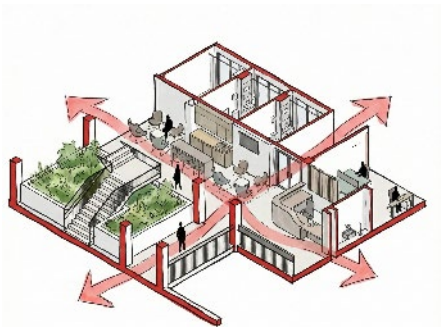
Clear sightlines

Support orientation
Reduce anxiety



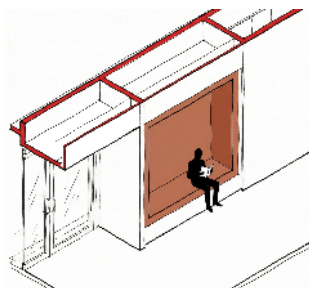
Lighting and Acoustics

Consistency
Prevent sensory shocks



Sensitive materials

Homely, not cluttered
Functional, not clinical

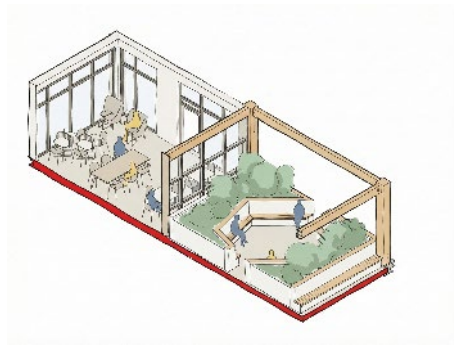


Dementia-friendly principles

HBN 08-02 guidance
Evidence-based design

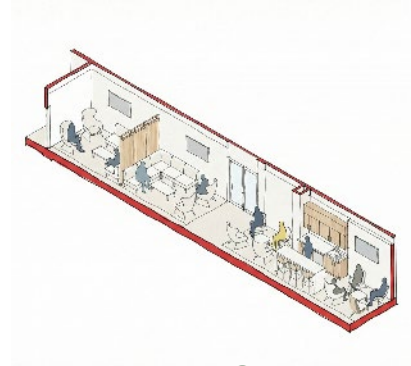
- More than an absence of danger
- Design for felt sense of security
- Trauma heightens sense of threat
- Predictability restores confidence

Choice and empowerment



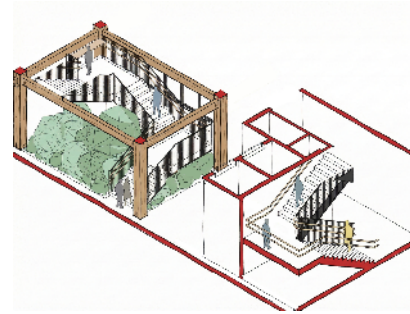
Spatial Variety

Open and closed environments
Choice and flexibility



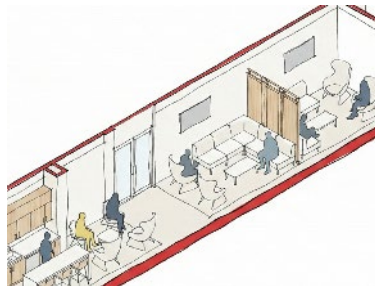
Adaptable Space

Private or social settings
People-centred waiting areas



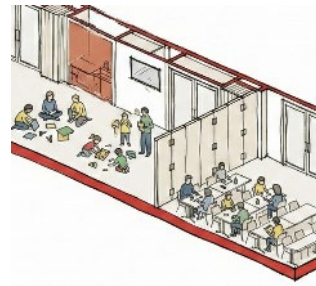
Multiple Circulation Routes

More than one way to travel
Freedom of movement



Environmental Controls

Adjustable lighting/temperature/ acoustics
User-controlled

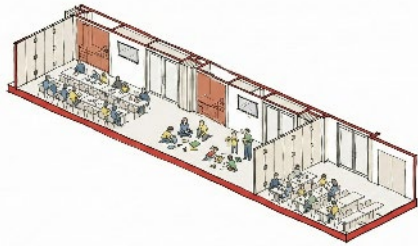


Moveable Furniture

Lightweight and flexible
Reconfigurable layouts

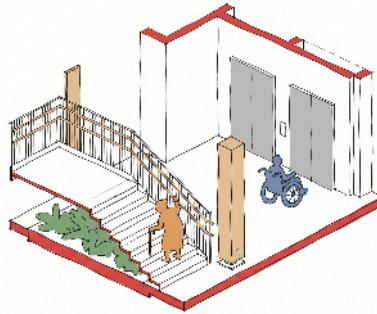
- Sustain a sense of safety
- Build in opportunities for control
- Autonomy promotes agency
- Restoring choice gives dignity

Community and collaboration



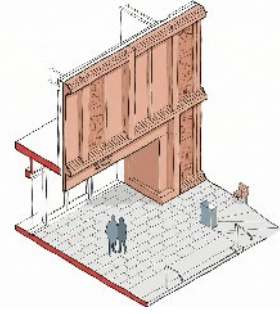
Multiple community facilities

Shared spaces for connection
Building social cohesion



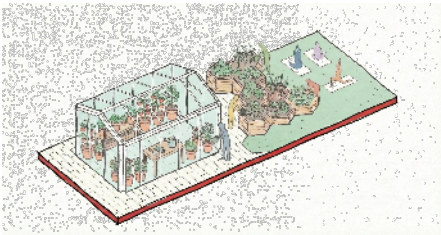
Inclusive access

Physical barriers removed
Universal design principles



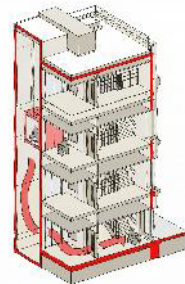
Cultural representation

Materials/colours/artwork/language
Reflecting diverse identities



Social prescribing opportunities

Gardens and outdoor spaces
Nature as therapeutic intervention



Emergency design with dignity

Safe refuge without abandonment
Dignified escape routes

- Community strengthens healing
- Design for social prescription
- Isolation deepens trauma's impact
- Build spaces that invite connection

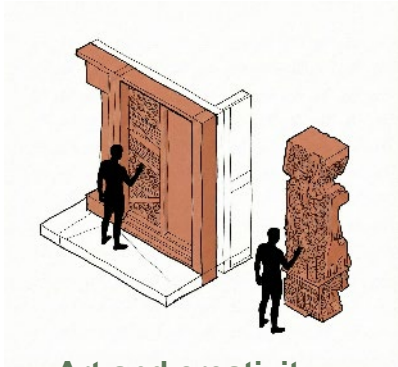
Beauty and joy



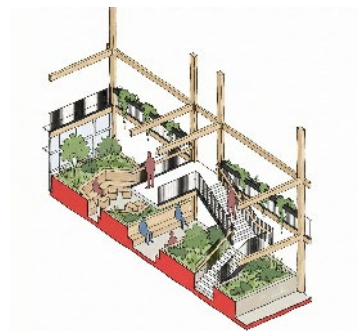
Natural light and views
Maximising access to daylight
Circadian rhythm and wellbeing



Biophilic design
Natural materials: wood/stone/plants
Connecting people to nature



Art and creativity
Integrating public art
Cultural expression and inspiration



Sensory experience
Colour/texture/scent/sound
Holistic environmental design

- Beauty is neurologically healing
- Encourages positive experiences
- Joy is a pain reliever
- Integrate uplifting elements

Conclusion

Briefing

Listen first, design second

The people using your spaces know what they need better than anyone. Slow down, ask real questions and design from a place of genuine understanding.

Design approach



Safety
and trust



Choice and
empowerment



Community
and connection



Beauty
and joy

Operating the building

Make it sustainable

Trauma-informed spaces only work if everyone managing the building understands and embodies these principles. Build it into your culture, your training and your policies.



Stay in Touch

Download the white paper to discover how emotionally intelligent design can shape places where people feel safe, confident and supported.

