

Hope Street

A Trauma Informed Design Case Study





ONE SMALL THING

One Small Thing's vision is a justice system that can recognise, understand, and respond to trauma. Their mission is to redesign the justice system for women and their children.

One Small Thing's commitment to systemic change for women and their children in the justice system, has inspired them to build Hope Street. From within a healing, trauma-informed, residential environment, women and children will have access to a range of specialist support. By taking a positive and compassionate approach, the aim is to create a blueprint for change that can be replicated across the country and achieve better outcomes for women, their children and society.

SNUG ARCHITECTS

Snug Architects are an RIBA Chartered Practice based near Southampton. They started working with One Small Thing in 2019 on the design of Hope Street.

INTRODUCTION

Hope Street is a pioneering residential community for women and their children who have experienced trauma and involvement in the justice system. Hope Street aims to:

- Reduce the number of women going to prison
- Prevent maternal separation and intergenerational trauma
- Support women and children to lead happier lives free from the impact of crime

Key to the success of this pilot project is women and children having a trauma-informed physical space.

This briefing is a case study written by Mike Worthington RIBA, Director of Snug Architects about working with One Small Thing on the design and build of Hope Street in Hampshire.

It explains how a Trauma Informed Design approach to the project was applied, highlighting the architectural thinking. The resultant project design is a collaboration between One Small Thing, the design team and women with lived experience of trauma and the justice system.



DESIGN GUIDE

One Small Thing worked with Heatherwick Studio initially to develop a design guide that describes not only what the building needed to accommodate, but how it would feel and how it could be experienced. This was an important and enlightening piece of work in setting the level of ambition for the project, and opening up the conversation for the role of the building in meeting the strategic objectives.

'Hope Street Hubs should feel like that of a village composed of a group of buildings coming together to form a safe environment, rather than one singular building...Our hubs should feel natural and sustainable, humble and warm, healing and welcoming...Planting will be fundamental to create a healing environment, with beautiful and playful outdoor spaces that connect and surround the buildings, raising the spirits. Our aspiration is that they will leave Hope Street feeling stronger and empowered.'

Extract from Heatherwick Studio's Design Guide

RESPONSE

We started with the idea that Hope Street would 'feel like home'. We developed the 'a home not an institution' filter that we were able to pass all design decisions through from the scale, form and massing to the materiality, lighting and furniture.

It was important to approach the design project informed by lived experience of justice involved women. As part of the design process, we held four workshops with women in Southampton and Portsmouth that drew out thoughts on architecture, landscape and interiors. These consultations enabled the design response to have a genuine trauma informed and gender responsive perspective.

We could see that the shared experiences of the women in the consultations were of very poor-quality environments and that there was an opportunity to try to provide a significantly different environment.

1. FIRST IMPRESSIONS

From the road side, the Hope Street Hub building is conceived as three domestically proportioned buildings, giving the impression of three houses rather than one large institution. Each house has a different elevational composition with varying symmetrical and asymmetrical pitched roofs that reinforce a child like informality, rather than an ordered authority. The intent is to communicate from first impressions that this is not an authoritarian environment, but a home.

The architectural material palette is a buff coloured brick, green zinc and vertical oak. The muted green zinc roof and aluminium windows and rain water goods reflect the landscaped character of the trees opposite the building and the biophilic approach taken across the scheme. The vertical oak timber is used to soften the architecture and to articulate key features and places of close contact. Brick, timber and green zinc work to reinforce the idea of a home rather than the adoption of a commercial or institutional cladding system.



2. ENTRANCE & ARRIVAL

There are two building entrances that sit between the three volumes or 'houses'. These are treated differently from each other to differentiate a primary front door to the public entrance and a discrete private door for the women residents.

The main entrance is more generous in width and is articulated as the primary entrance through recessing the front door, to provide a covered porch that is lined in oak, with a splayed wall to give a warm welcome. The primary front door is glazed to give a sense of openness with a tactile timber door handle and manifestations to the glazing in an undulating biophilic pattern.

The reception area sits within a double height space topped with an openable rooflight that gives natural light into the heart of the plan, assists in ventilation and anchors the reception as an arrival hall to the Hub.



3. SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CAFE

The cafe serves several functions. Most importantly it roots Hope Street and the women who are resident there, in and as part of the community, instead of removing them from society as prisons do. It also provides a space for women to carry out community service and to acquire employability skills. As a public space, materials are slightly different to other areas through the use of the earthy clayworks plaster, an aqua tiled coffee shop servery with white cork tiles and an acoustic ceiling.

The recycled scaffold board shelving, reception desk and coffee shop tables speaks of the refurbishment and restoration of materials, the essence of which is at the heart of what Hope Street is about in the lives of the women residents.



4. ACTIVITY ROOM

The activity room sits behind reception with views out to the front, providing a large space for a variety of activities from arts and crafts, to parenting sessions, exercise groups and yoga. The space can be divided in two with a sliding and folding partition to act as two smaller rooms, or removed to be used as a larger space.

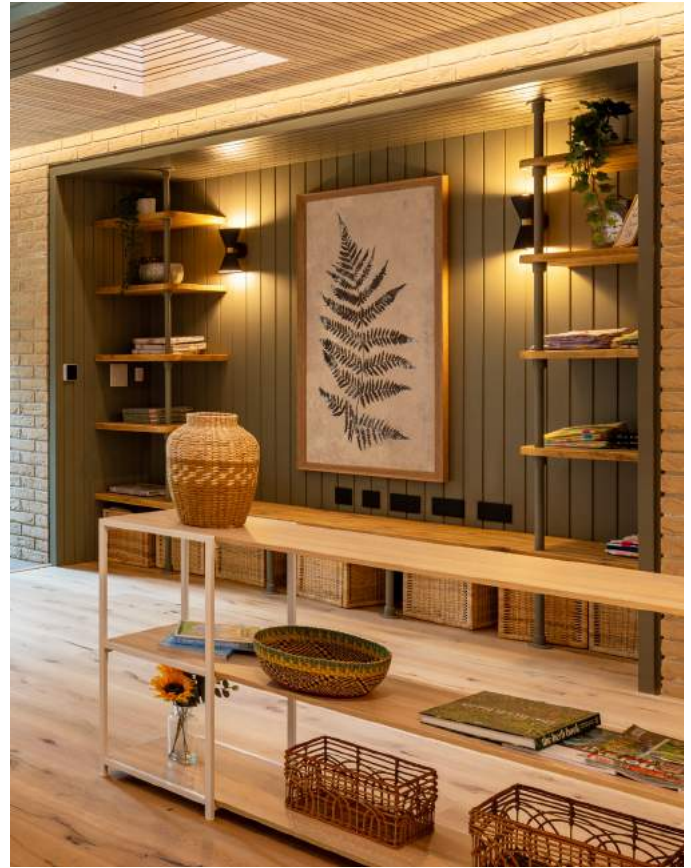
Glazed doors and screens also provide a sense of openness to the architecture. Brushed stainless steel ironmongery with its commercial associations were dispensed with in favour of bronzed door handles and ironmongery. Rather than using frosted films and corporate logos, privacy and glazed manifestations were introduced with a photorealistic biophilic pattern. This was based on the central River Birch tree in the therapeutic garden, selected as a symbol of hope, drawing the landscape design into the interiors with a liberally used natural pattern.



5. WELCOME LOUNGE

The second entrance of the Hub provides a more discrete entrance to Hope Street, which is narrower in width and is recessed back from the building line. Without being a side or back door, it gives a private entrance for the women living at Hope Street to be able to avoid the public entrance to their home. This is most critical at first arrival where many of the women will arrive from court. This is such an important first impression and will form the basis of if the women feel they are welcomed or processed, given dignity or paraded.

The private entrance gives way to the Welcome Lounge where women are greeted in a lounge environment that affords views out to the tall trees over windows, with biophilic manifestations that provide privacy from the street. There are no triage desks with high screens, but a recessed bench with recycled scaffold shelving containing plants and domestic decorations.



6. CONSULTATION & RECOVERY

There are three consultation rooms adjacent to the Welcome Lounge where women can be inducted at Hope Street and can meet with community partners, social workers or make remote court appearances during their stay. They are conceived and decorated as small lounges rather than interview rooms.

At the rear of the Welcome Lounge is a recovery suite that contains two ensuite bedrooms. Women arriving at Hope Street may have substance use issues or may be particularly vulnerable and require closer assistance before they are ready to be placed in one of the shared flats in the residential block. The recovery suite provides for this need without disrupting the autonomy of the majority living independently in the residential block. Both of the bedrooms have rear facing windows that look out on to the therapeutic garden providing a natural and tranquil aspect.



7. THERAPEUTIC GARDEN

The therapeutic gardens design by Harris Bugg Studio are based around an abstraction of a birch tree that is a symbol of hope in many cultures. A multi stem River Birch tree is situated within the centre of the therapeutic garden visible from the Hope Room. A labyrinth has been designed within the heart of the garden to provide a place of self-regulation.

The gardens provide space for individual reflection and sanctuary through secluded spaces for solitude and processing. One such space is the recessed bench at the rear of the Hub and beneath the Hope Room. It is wide enough that it creates an ideal location for two to sit in company without losing individual space. There are also spaces within the garden to gather as a small group to enjoy the gardens in community, strengthening ties and relationships with others, including paved seating areas and a small lawn area to sit down in the landscape.



8. RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

The residential building at the rear of the site includes four ground floor flats and four flats accessed by a first floor deck that overlooks the therapeutic garden. Each of the flat doors are operated with keys. This emphasises that the women have the freedom to come and go from their home, within any restrictions that may be imposed by a community order.

Each flat is equipped with a kitchen, small dining area and lounge for the women to live independently, in the same way as they would in the community. Single bedrooms provide an individual, sanctuary space for the women to call their own. There are some larger accessible bedrooms, and those which allow space for a cot.



9. HOPE ROOM

The Hope Room is the central space at Hope Street and is a therapy room used only for One Small Thing's Healing Trauma Course. Its specific architectural choices have reinforced its importance in the service. It is a space physically removed from the everyday activities of being 'at home', giving spatial hygiene between group work and home.

The form of the Hope Suite is of a tall vaulted room with a spine wall dividing the Hope Room from the lobby and WC. It a dramatic environment without losing a sense of human scale that is intentionally different to any of the other more domestically styled spaces. Its walls and pitched ceiling are the exposed cross laminated timber finish of the superstructure, creating a timber cocoon, and together with timber spine wall and natural jute carpet, provides a very biophilic environment. The rooflight and large windows create connections with nature and the therapeutic garden.



10. WOMEN'S LOUNGE & VISITOR GARDEN

Within the Hub building there is a communal women's lounge, kitchen and dining room which forms a shared space to relax in a domestic environment. This is a key part of fostering community. An entire wall covered in cork, which can be used as a giant pinboard, provides the opportunity for the women to occupy their communal space and fill it with the artwork and the activities from their time at Hope Street.

The women's lounge is located at the rear of the Hub building away from the public coffee shop, and acts as a space for the women to invite their friends and family during visiting hours to Hope Street. Central to the living room is a brick chimney with a realistic electric fire which communicates that the space is a domestic environment rather than an institutional waiting room. The lounge opens up to a portioned off area of the garden providing a garden outlook through large sliding doors and an opportunity for interaction with the natural environment.



11. CRECHE & GARDEN ROOM

Hope Street is 'a pioneering residential community for women and their children'. To this end, and to facilitate women who have their children with them at Hope Street being able to engage in the support and group work, a creche space is provided. It also allows children to have their own space full of toys and play equipment rather than this being spread across the site. We were mindful within the design to be sensitive to women staying at Hope Street who may have children who are no longer in their care.

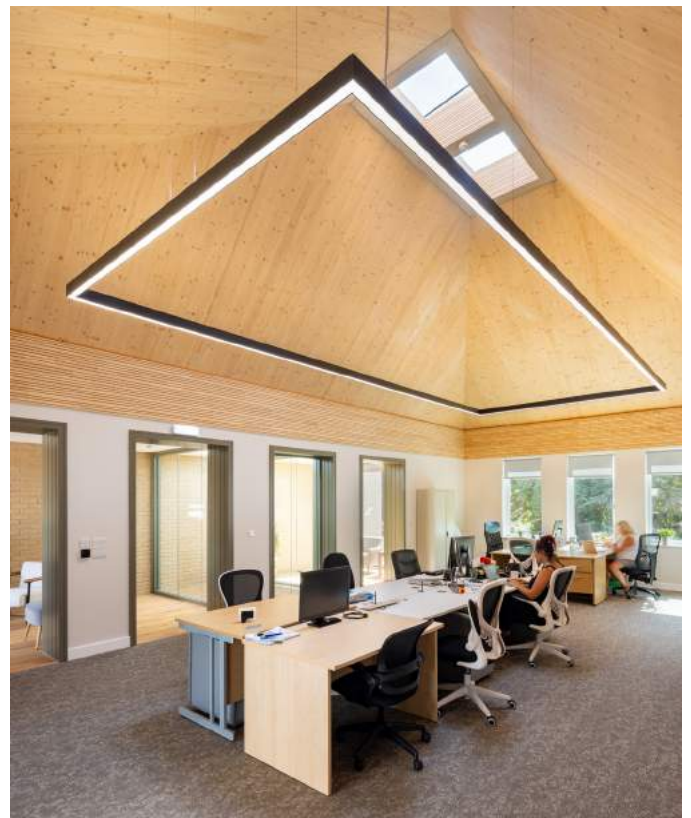
There is also a Kitchen Garden in front of the creche building. This provides home grown produce at Hope Street but more significantly opportunities for the women to learn gardening and horticultural skills, including growing food for our community cafe. Being able to spend time in nature, growing and nurturing plants has been demonstrated widely to be therapeutic itself and good for stress and mental well-being.



12. TEAM OFFICES

Other than the Hope Suite, the first floor of the Hub building is given over to offices for the running of Hope Street by its team and partners. This is a quality work space with individual offices, open plan working space and break out space to provide for the various needs of a collaborative team.

Large windows and roof lights give an open connection to the therapeutic garden behind and the trees opposite Hope Street to the front, drawing upon the natural environment. Portrait windows and sympathetic warm coloured lighting are designed such that the offices do not detract from the residential appearance of the building at first floor. A large seminar room sits in one of the vaulted volumes to provide space for training and to support Hope Street as the centre of a multidisciplinary team, that is critical to delivering collaboration with other services and partners.



ONE SMALL THING

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