

Home from Home

The Outreach Centre

Maisie Russo

This project provides a space that will be aimed at vulnerable individuals who are struggling financially, mentally and physically and are 'stuck' in a negative loop. It will provide a place to get physically clean; with showers, new clothes and an opportunity for a haircut and also a chance to improve mental well-being and gain support. The design principles which led the project revolves around the vulnerable position of the intended users. One of the main psychological barriers identified is the sense of insecurity and the lack of a feeling of belonging. The project thus focused on creating spaces which range in the level of privacy they offer to allow users to tune the use of the spaces to their personal requirement, in addition it was important to create access points from multiple areas; one obvious and public and some less so, to address and soften social psychological barriers. Whilst the Westgate is privately owned, the project is founded on the idea the public is interested in keeping public spaces democratic and socially sustainable, therefore would advocate for such a project to be developed on site with the support of the local council and charities such as Crisis. A key objective is to create a new vibrant and diverse community space which seeks to remove the stigma behind homelessness. An important design feature is that the space should be provided with two entrances; one entering from the rear of Westgate accessed from the back street and the other entering from the main Westgate entrance. This is an important feature putting the people's' vulnerability central to the design philosophy recognising their feelings of insecurity at the beginning of their journey.

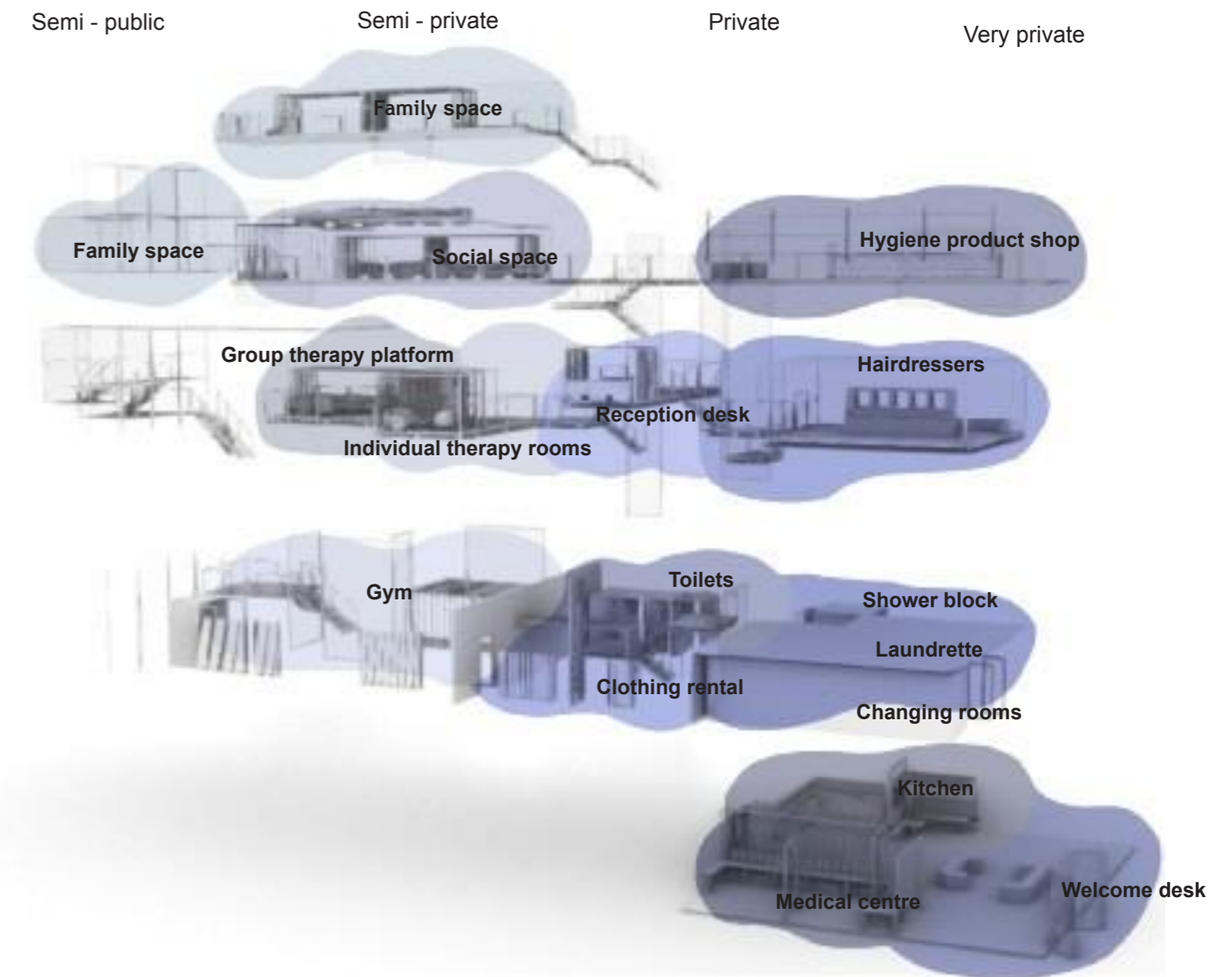


More people sleep rough in **Oxford** than most places in the UK, excluding Central London.

79 households were homeless in Oxford in the first quarter of 2023.

Rough sleeping in Oxford up by 13%

56 homeless people aged 22 and over use emergency accommodation at **O'Hanlon House** each night.



The Outreach Centre has multiple levels and degrees of transparency depicting the different uses of the space within the centre. At the rear of the centre are the more private areas, which are closed off from the public eye. Here the polycarbonate panels are opaque, giving maximum privacy to areas where people feel most vulnerable. As you progress through the centre towards the main entrance onto the shopping centre, the polycarbonate panels are more translucent and the shades of blue become lighter, allowing more visibility and creating a semi-public space. This engages with the general public and encourages them in.

Oxford Poverty map



Visible Vulnerability



Crisis will run the Outreach Centre with the benefits of their knowledge and experience doing similar projects in other parts of the country

About:

Incredible things happen when people unite around a shared goal, the lives of people experiencing homelessness are changing due to the support of the charity.

Crisis are creating a new standard of living in the UK, they work with the political leaders to achieve this and ultimately fulfil the most basic human right of all: a safe and stable home. - Matt Downie, Chief Executive at Crisis

Provide one to one support to help people access benefits, health care services, employment opportunities and more.

In Oxford, they have a cafe which is run by the homeless and open to the public thereby providing job opportunities.

Who will come to the Outreach Centre?

Volunteering facilitators



Unpaid volunteer



Professional psychologist

The Outreach Centre will be open to everyone, whatever their level of needs. Those more vulnerable will initially enter from the rear entrance away from the general public until they feel ready to enter from the main entrance.

The general public will be more likely to enter from Westgate, visiting the centre when they are passing by during the day. Trained professionals will also be coming to the centre, giving advice, guidance and support to those who need it.

Participants from the local community



Mother of 3 children



Elderly couple



Single father

Vulnerable individuals attending



Veteran suffering from PTSD



University Student in debt

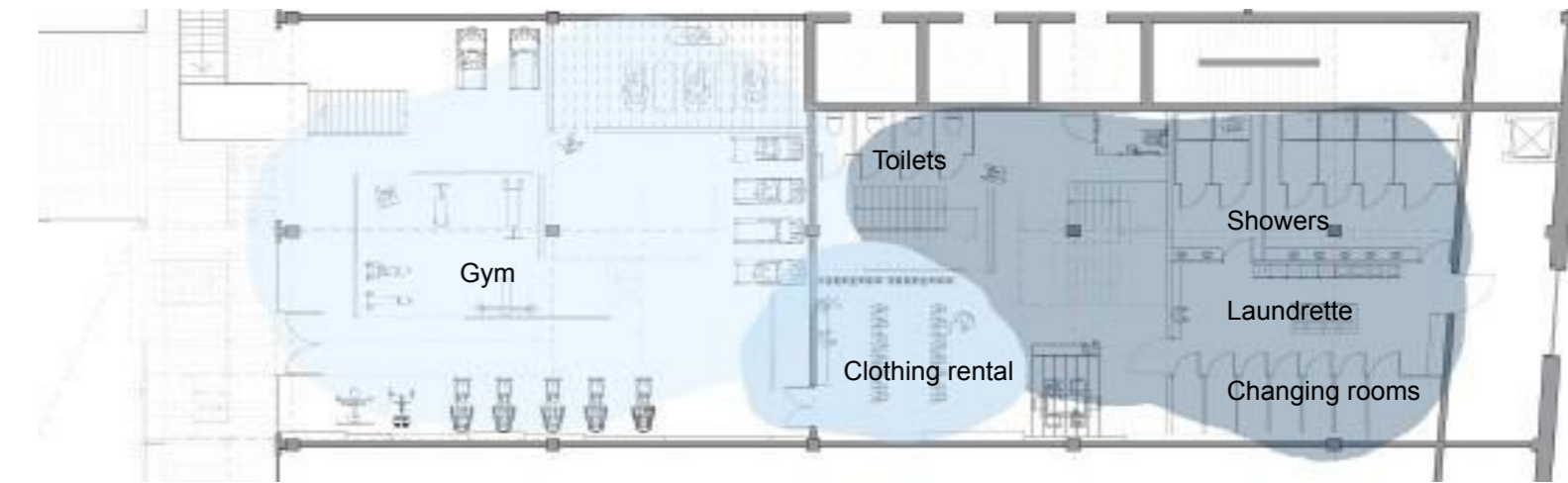


Teenage boy abandoned by family



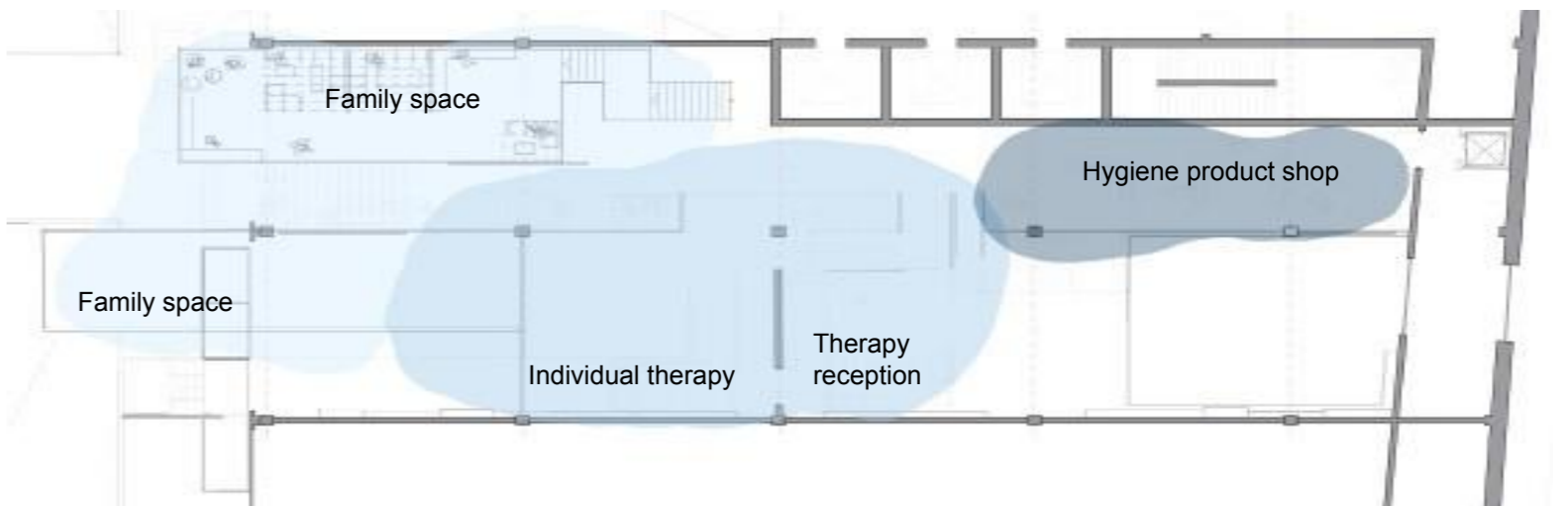
Individual struggling to apply for jobs

First floor plan

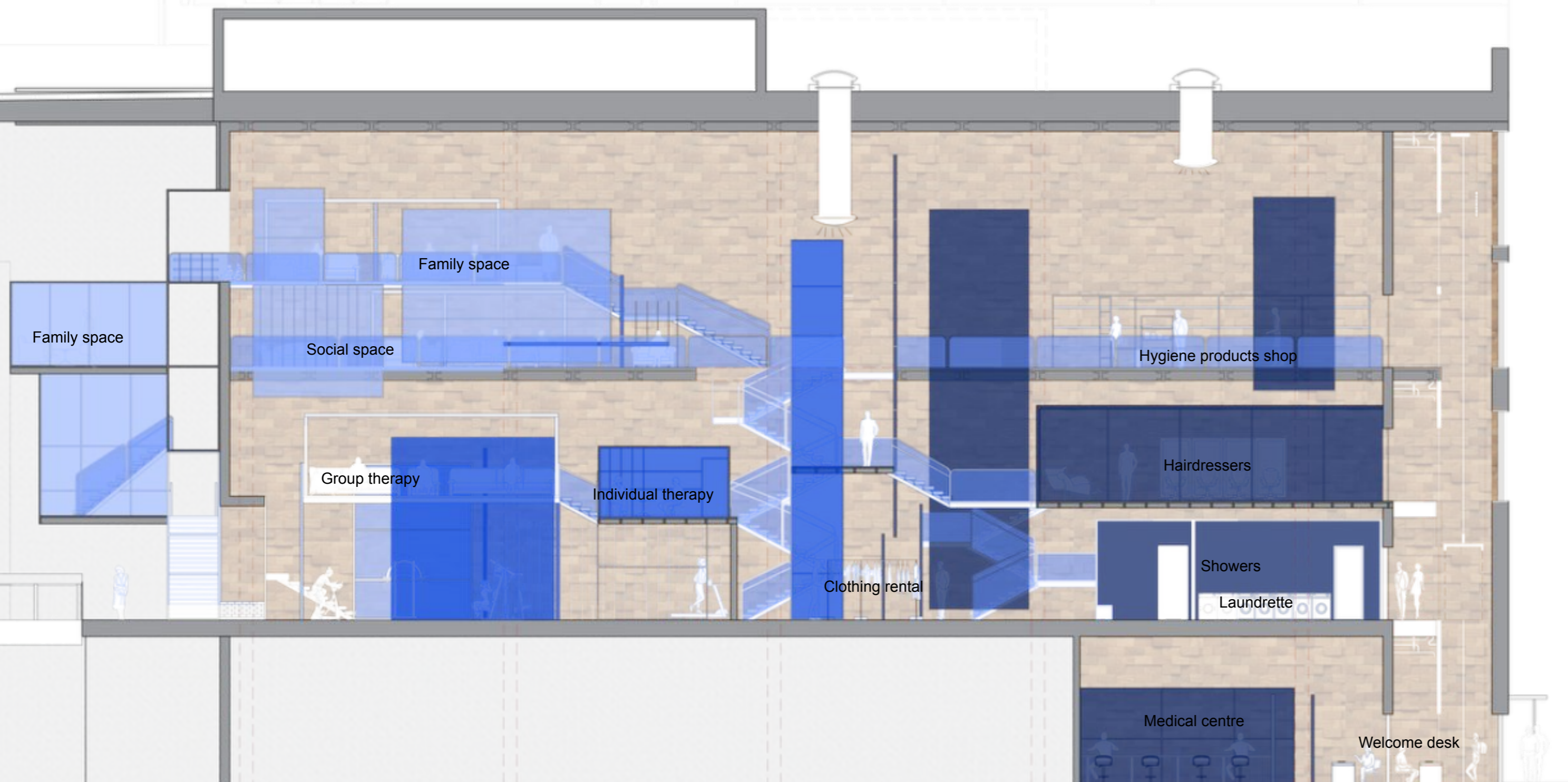


On the first floor the level of privacy at the back of the centre is much more closed off as this is where people will feel most vulnerable, moving towards the front, the activities are semi-public allowing more interaction with the general public.

Mezzanine 2 plan

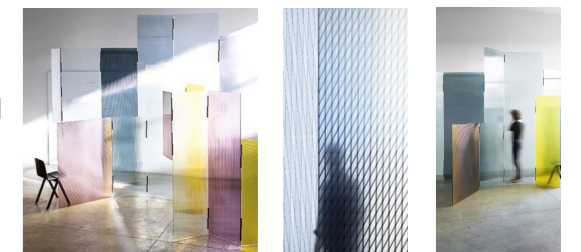


When moving up the levels the degree of privacy at the back of the centre reduces and the areas start to become much more open. However, the therapy rooms will still need a level of privacy due to the sensitivity of the conversations that take place.



Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec

The versatility of these translucent finished panels enables the construction of screens and dividers that not only carve out private spaces but also modulate light, casting it back in a beautifully surreal and poetic manner.



Psychological effect of travelling to the Outreach Centre

Individual struggling to apply for jobs



Desperately trying to turn his life around but the thing that keeps stopping him is the interview process and lack of experience in producing CVs, covering letters and conducting oneself in an interview.

Social environment:

- Isolated individual with few people to turn to for support
- Lacks confidence and professional experience

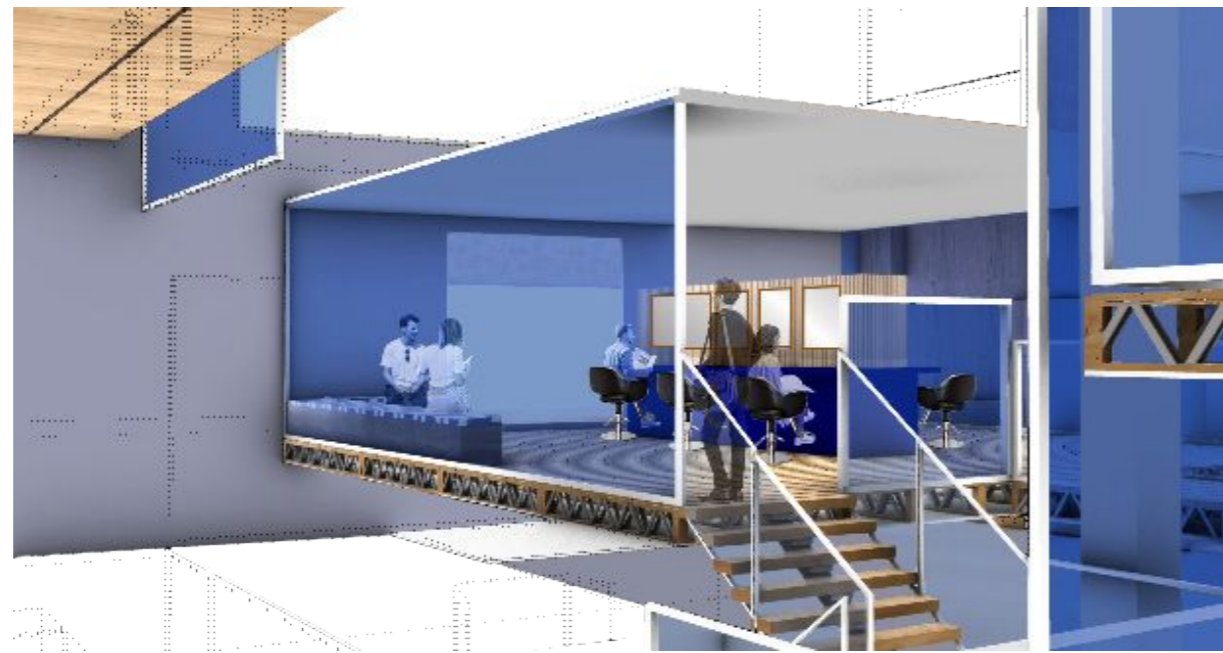
Reasons to engage with the Outreach Centre:

- Individual sessions tailored specifically on how to apply for a job
- A chance to interact with others gaining confidence
- Financial support and legal advice sessions

Resistance with the Outreach Centre:

- Hard to ask for help
- May feel watched/ judged by others

Mezzanine 1 - Hairdressers

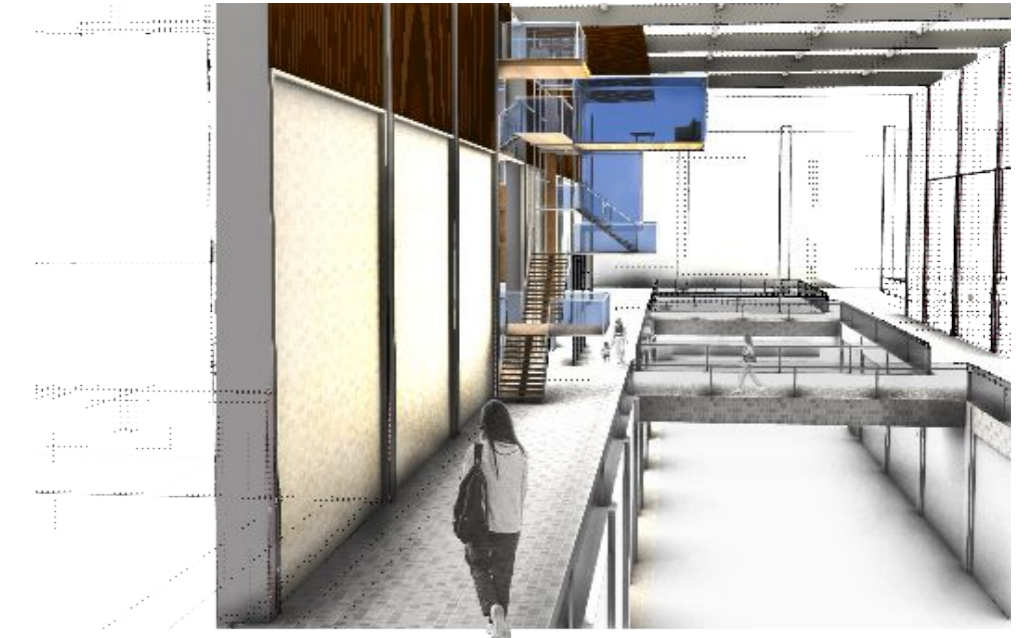


Entering the Outreach Centre

People who are feeling more vulnerable will enter from the back of centre on Old Grey Friars Street, which is more private and results in less public scrutiny. They may use this entrance as many times as they need until they feel more confident to come in the main entrance.

When they have gained confidence and feel ready, participants will enter from the main entrance in the shopping centre. This will indicate that they are feeling more comfortable and ready for the public eye. Other members of the general public will enter through the front of the centre, using the facilities as they require.

Participants entrance



Vulnerable entrance



The effect of colour, light and materiality



Complementing materials

Steel

The white steel beam structure is used in this design as it creates a scaffold type feel and it allows for multiple levels at a variety of heights.

This material was chosen because it looks slender and non intrusive, therefore creating a calming, relaxing environment.

Timber

Introducing timber as a secondary material for the floors, walls and stairs softens the atmosphere of the building and to avoid creating a sterile hospital-like setting.

The timber creates a feeling of home and this is very important to the target audience as this should be a place they can come and feel safe and welcome.

Tinted glass

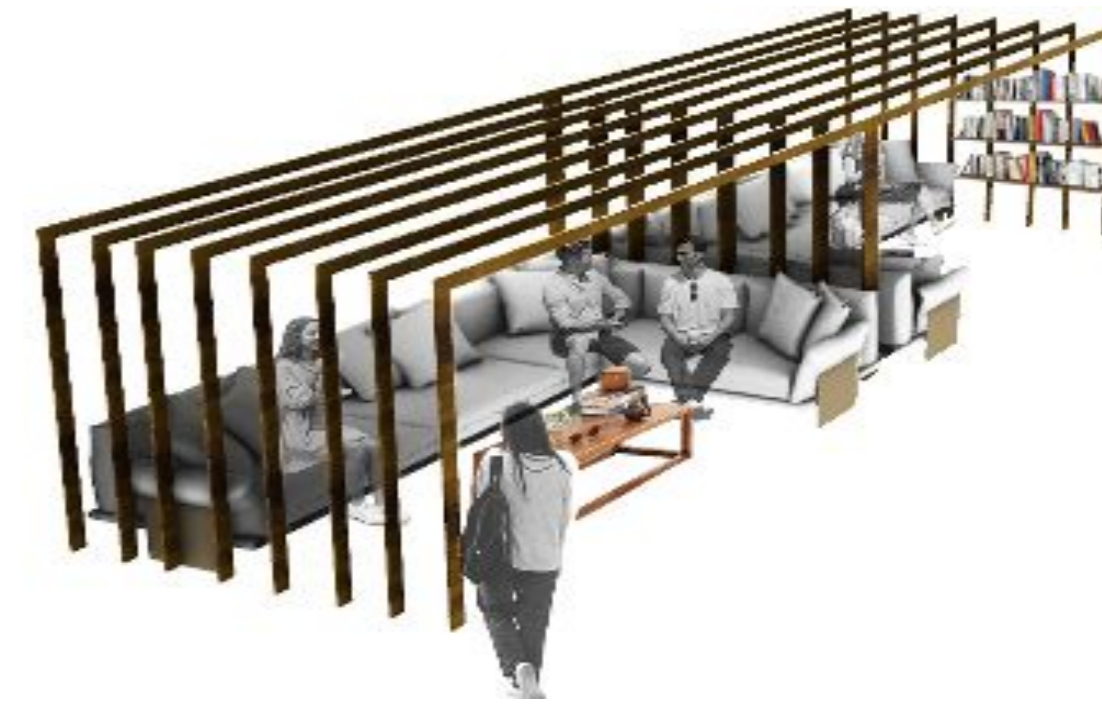
The range of blue from dark opaque cobalt blue to a light translucent blue reflects how people feel when they enter the facade. To begin with, they will want privacy and when they become more confident and move up the Centre it will reflect them gaining more confidence.

The darker shades create a more confined environment, making the user feel safe and less exposed. This is especially important when providing support to vulnerable individuals as they may feel judged and not want a lot of attention, particularly when they first arrive.

Variation of seating

Social seating

This seating is located on the 2nd floor, it is a social area that allows people to interact with others, sharing experiences and advice. Alongside this it is a relaxed area, where people can come to sit down, get a cup of tea and have a chat.



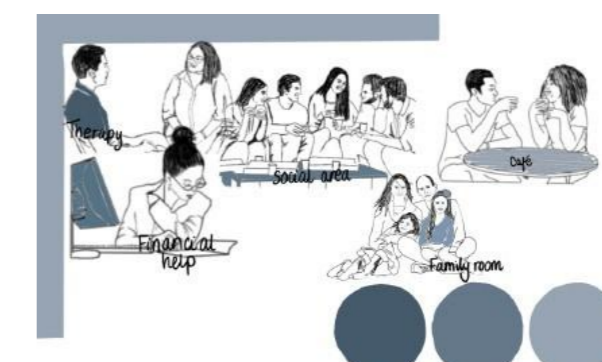
Cafeteria seating

This seating area is located on the ground floor, accessed from the back entrance. As people first enter the centre this is an area where they can sit down help themselves to drinks and get comfortable with the environment before proceeding to the rest of the centre. There is bench seating with table and chairs in this area.

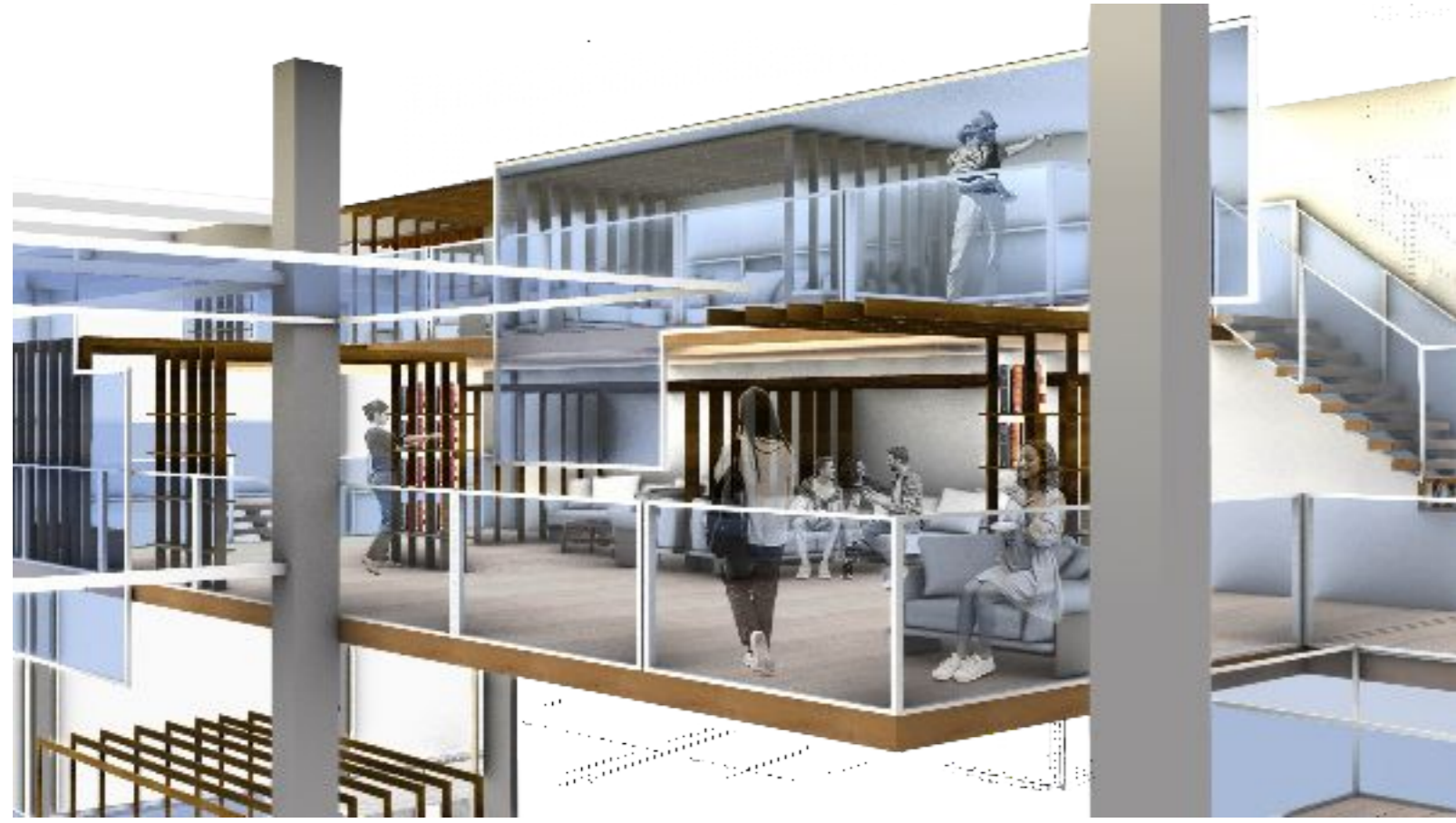


Hidden wall seating

Along the first floor wall is a variation of different size seating embedded into the wall. There is a choice to sit alone or in small groups, set back from the main activities. The walls enclosing the seating area makes the space feel more intimate and secluded, providing the chance to take a step back from the activities going on in the centre.



Creating a warm and welcoming environment



Through taking inspiration from the Maggie Centre, I have placed cafeteria seating at the welcome area on the ground floor drawing people in and giving them a direction when entering the project.

When first arriving there will be a welcome desk, providing help and support. Just past this will be a kitchen table where there people can go make themselves a cup of tea and slowly start to interact with the project. The kitchen table will act as the place to 'break the ice', taking away any expectations of the project and not forcing anyone to do anything until they are ready.

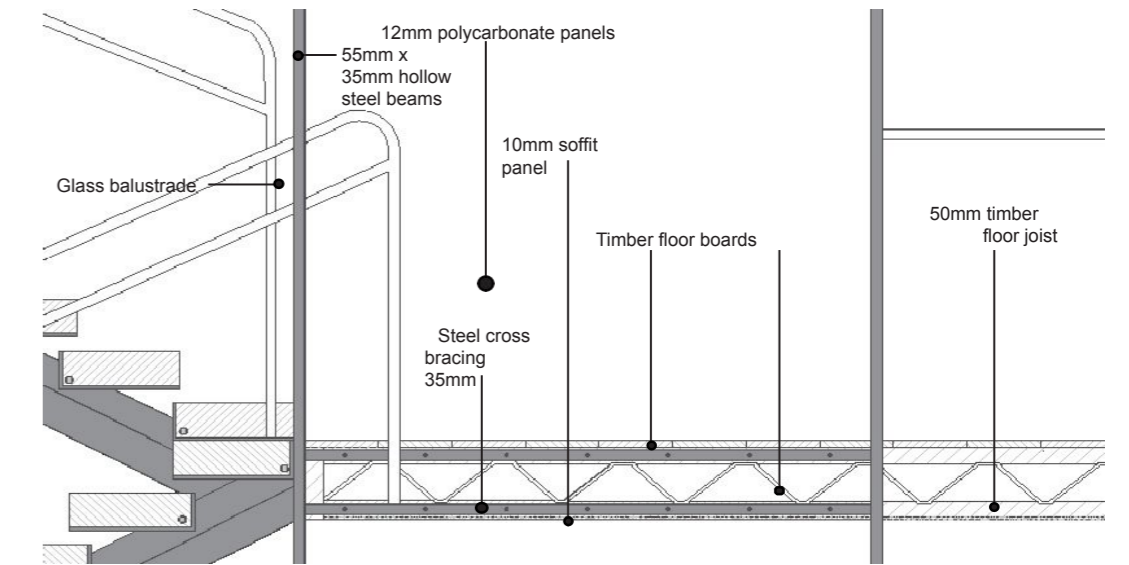
Subconsciously the mind will be drawn to the sound of happiness when first entering the project. Acting as a key reminder of what home and family represents. By having a kitchen table as the 'heart' of the project, it will make it feel more like a home, the thing that many of the individuals lack and want to experience again.

Throughout the centre the main primary structure will be a white steel beam framework, this will enable the polycarbonate panels to be attached subtly to the frame. The overall structure will be strengthened with the addition of the timber floors which will provide bracing across the levels.

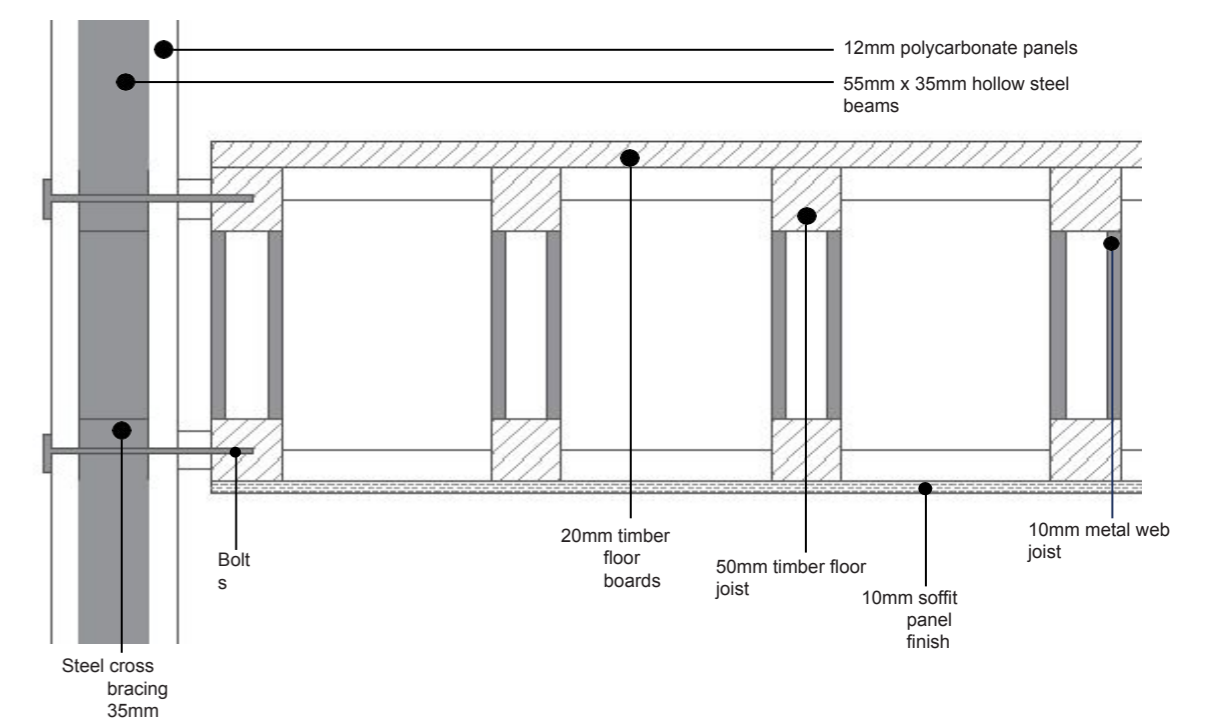


Polycarbonate connection to steel beam structure

Front section showing timber floor connection to polycarbonate panels



Side section showing timber floor connection to polycarbonate panels



Maggie's centre principles

At the heart of every Maggie's Centre is a kitchen table. This is a place for people to sit, read, talk to others and gain support from professionals.

The Maggie Centres have a very relaxed feel allowing you to make a cup of tea at any point, with no pressure (until you are ready) of having to talk about the help being offered.

